



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY TO PERMANENTLY OPEN LOW-INCOME HOUSING WAITLISTS ON NOVEMBER 14TH

Waitlists will be split by those seeking a Housing Choice Voucher, and those interested in living in one of Tacoma Housing Authority's subsidized units

TACOMA, WA – September 25, 2024— At a regular meeting of the Tacoma Housing Authority's (THA) Board of Commissioners, the Board voted to approve a resolution allowing THA to maintain separate and continuously open waiting lists for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program and subsidized THA units. Additionally, the resolution will revise THA's current waitlist policies to serve households more efficiently. The resolution comes after considerable internal consultation, and a public comment period in which two public forums and two staff forums were held to discuss the proposed changes.

THA maintains a waitlist for households hoping to access housing and/or rental assistance. In the recent past, THA maintained separate waitlists for households interested in living at THA-owned properties and one for those who wished to receive a Housing Choice Voucher. In 2018, facing low voucher utilization rates and a shift to a new software system, THA's Board of Commissioners approved consolidating all the waitlists into one waitlist. The intent was to try and serve households faster by offering them the first available form of assistance—a voucher or a unit. At that time, Tacoma's rental market was becoming more competitive and THA's voucher was less desirable than a THA unit. A consolidated waitlist allowed THA to issue vouchers to families who did not originally apply for one.

In 2022, the Board of Commissioners approved sunsetting the Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) which offered households a flat subsidy and transitioned households to a traditional, income-based Housing Choice Voucher. For many families, this resulted in a higher subsidy. THA has seen the community need for assistance increase. Many households turn down an offer of a THA subsidized unit in favor of a housing choice voucher instead. In addition, about half of the applicants selected from the current consolidated waitlist do not respond to THA's offer of assistance. By keeping separate and continuously open waitlists, the list will be more reflective of and responsive to the community's housing needs.

"We've been thinking about these changes for a while," said Amber Prentice, Director of Rental Assistance at Tacoma Housing Authority. "After carefully examining the current processes, response rates, and reviewing over 100 public comments, we are moving forward with this new continuously open waitlist approach so that families will

have the ability to apply to our waitlist the moment they find themselves in need of housing assistance.”

It's important to note that applying to the waitlist does not guarantee that a household will receive housing assistance. Households must meet all income and eligibility requirements, which will be verified when they are selected from the waitlist. Though a continuously open waitlist will help to ensure that anyone needing housing assistance can apply at any time, it will also mean significantly more people on the waitlist. THA will conduct random selections from the waitlist as vouchers and units become available. As a result, it will be impossible to predict how long it will take for households to receive an offer of assistance. THA encourages anyone in need of affordable housing to continue their housing search and not wait to be selected from the waitlist. For individuals and families currently facing homelessness, please contact Coordinated Entry by dialing 2-1-1. THA has partnered with multiple community organizations to accept direct referrals for families experiencing homelessness in hopes of getting them the housing assistance they need sooner.

Households interested in applying for either the Housing Choice Voucher waitlist, or the THA-subsidized unit waitlist can do so beginning Thursday, November 14th, 2024, at 9 AM. To apply, households must first register as an applicant for the RentCafé online service portal. Detailed instructions on how to register can be found at tacomahousing.org/resources/register-for-the-tha-service-portal.

For more detailed information on THA's waitlists, please visit tacomahousing.org/waitlist.

About Tacoma Housing Authority

Established in 1940, Tacoma Housing Authority provides high-quality, stable and sustainable housing and supportive services to people in need. It does this in ways that help them prosper and help our communities develop equitably. THA develops and manages real estate and provides rental housing. In partnership with thousands of private landlords, it helps families pay the rent in the private rental market. It delivers supportive services to help families succeed as “tenants, parents, students, wage earners and builders of assets who can live without assistance.” THA seeks to do its work in ways that help our community be an “attractive place to live, work, attend school, shop and play,” and that help Tacoma be “safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive and just.” Learn more at www.tacomahousing.org.

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