



2024 Issue Paper: Affordable Housing & Homelessness

Position Statement

The LWWUS believes that the “federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons in the United States regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability” and “In order to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families, the LWWUS supports policies and programs designed to prevent or reduce poverty.”

The LWWUS has worked on fair housing since the late 1960s and supported passage of fair housing since 1980. In 2002, the LWWUS formally endorsed legislation to establish the National Housing Trust Fund, which uses surplus funds from the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to create new housing for low-income families. In 2005, the LWWUS urged Congress to create the Affordable Housing Fund, a long-overdue step toward addressing the housing crisis that confronts low- and extremely low-income families. It also urged House members to protect activities of the nonprofit groups providing the bulk of housing services for our poorest communities.

The LWWUS has specific criteria for income assistance, supportive services, and housing supply in its Impact on Issues 2020-22.

The LWWWA policy on housing, HO-1, states that “All levels of government and the private sector share the responsibility to help alleviate the housing shortage in the low-income sector. Identifying housing needs and planning to meet these needs is best done at the local level. The state should set minimum standards for safe and decent housing and provide for their enforcement. Policies should be formulated to allow for maximum use of available federal funding as well as encourage the participation of industry, business, local and nonprofit groups in meeting housing needs. The state government should provide information, assistance and coordination for housing programs at all levels.”

Summary of Recent Legislation

The prevailing cause of homelessness is the very large gap between housing costs (both purchase and rental), which have been increasing dramatically, and wages, which have not. It is important to recognize that many adults experiencing homelessness are employed. After the eviction moratorium ended, many landlords instituted exorbitant rent increases. The massive shortfall of housing units in Washington state, which disproportionately affects low-income people, has increasingly been acknowledged by the Legislature, as has the need for homelessness prevention measures and services to support people experiencing homelessness.

In 2022, policies that increased protection of tenants, added eligibility for the youth independent housing program, and created a policy of housing as a medical need, thereby allowing supportive housing to be funded upon the release of someone experiencing homelessness from the hospital, were all passed. Financial support for home ownership, new affordable housing unit development, rapid rehousing, weatherization and utility support, tenant representation in eviction proceedings, affordable housing tax incentives, and much more, were all funded in the 2022-adopted budget.

In addition, a number of Growth Management Act amendments focused primarily on creating more opportunities for affordable housing by increasing density and allowable housing types, such as ADUs, were proposed and League supported them; but none of them passed.

In the 2023 legislative session, which some are now calling “the year of housing”, major investments were made in funding for affordable housing: \$400 million for the Housing Trust Fund; \$40 million for land acquisition to quickly acquire land for affordable housing to be built; \$14.5 million for shelter and housing for homeless youth and young adults; \$6 million for preservation and investments in manufactured housing communities; and \$60 million for infrastructure needed when building new affordable homes.

In addition, appropriations in the operating budget that help people at risk of becoming homeless or experiencing homelessness included increases in the Aged, Blind and Disabled grants; Housing and Essential Needs rental assistance program; eviction prevention and tenants’ right to counsel; home ownership opportunities for people harmed by racist real estate practices such as restrictive covenants and redlining, and more. Further, an increase in wages for frontline workers dealing with people experiencing homelessness was appropriated.

Anticipated in the 2024 Washington State Legislative Session

Many legislators recognize that the lack of affordable housing and the homelessness crisis remain and intend to continue to promote additional revenue sources to fund more housing and support services. However, because this is the short session and only a supplemental budget can be adopted, the extent to which these needs can be addressed further in 2024 remains to be seen.

Although these are primarily longer term, some objectives that League would support if the opportunity arises in the 2024 session include:

- Increase funding to speed up affordable housing production
- Adopt policies that can stabilize rent for tenants and manufactured homeowners
- Scale up investments in homelessness services to ensure safe shelter for everyone who needs it.
- Reject and repeal laws that make it a crime to live outside.
- Create equitable access to homeownership—and the wealth it can generate—for Black, Brown, and Indigenous people.
- Protect people experiencing homelessness until everyone has a home.

- Prevent homelessness by taking care of our neighbors with good jobs, access to health care, and support in hard times.

Coalition: [Washington Low Income Housing Alliance \(WLIHA\)](#)

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