



HATC Community Report 2024

Affordable Rental Housing: Award Winning and Financially Self-Sustaining



The Olympian's Best of South Sound 2024 reader poll awarded the top honor, gold medal, in the “Apartment Complex” category to the Housing Authority of Thurston County’s *Olympia Crest* apartments. This non-subsidized apartment community provides quality housing at below market rates, making it affordable to neighbors who might otherwise be unable to access housing in our market. HATC’s property portfolio is financially self-sustaining with no reliance on current or future government programs to maintain quality. That is an unusual attribute in the affordable housing sector. Properties are enhanced annually with capital improvements.

Left: The final expansion of HATC’s Olympia Crest community completed in 2024, adding three buildings, 28 units.

HATC: Community’s Largest Provider of Below-Market-Rate Rental Housing

HATC began buying and developing below market rate rental housing in the early 1990s. Today it owns 581 housing units. Another 84 units are in the planning and development phases. HATC has never had HUD funded “Public Housing.” HATC was formed after the federal government moved away from that model in the early 1970s and toward tenant choice voucher rent subsidies. HATC’s rental housing strategy is to offer an affordable alternative for neighbors who might be eligible for rent subsidies but are not fortunate enough to receive a voucher. While about 170 tenant-based voucher holders choose to live at HATC properties, most HATC residents do not have a rent subsidy voucher.

Collaborative Housing Leverages Resources for Special Needs



By regulation, the HUD Housing Choice Voucher program focuses on tenant choice vouchers. It gives participants broad freedom, within the payment standards, for home location. HUD allows HATC to use part of the Rental Assistance grant for project-based vouchers subsidizing operations in specific apartment communities that provide permanent supportive housing. Zero project-based vouchers are allocated to HATC properties. They are all contracted to properties run by non-profits serving special needs, notably neighbors coming out of the nightmare of homeless experiences, veterans, and behavioral health clients. The Collaborative Housing strategy has helped create and sustain over 500 more units.

Left: HATC staff who completed Housing Quality Standards inspection of all 64 units of Lotus Court prior to its 2024 opening.

Funding Limits Number of Households Served with Rental Assistance

Most federal social safety net programs are “entitlements”, they serve all eligible people. Food Stamps aka SNAP is an example of an entitlement program. The Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance program is different. Congress funds the program at a level nationally that at best serves 25% of income-eligible households. The situation is no better in our community. Like nearly all public housing authorities, HATC operates with a voucher waiting list.

Every few years the waiting list for tenant-based vouchers is opened for more households. An electronic lottery places households on the list. When pulling names from the list, HATC gives preference to people who either live or work in Thurston County and applies community priorities.

HUD provides HATC with Budget Authority of approximately \$25 Million for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. It serves approximately 2,000 local households for as long as they remain eligible. Rents have risen faster than participant incomes, causing HATC's average subsidy per household to increase 57% over the past five years. The funding has not kept pace with rising costs. In early 2025, the forecasting model indicated HATC would require more than its HUD Budget Authority to ensure that existing participants continue to be stably housed without overburdening the participants' financial capacity. HUD is providing additional funding to meet that need; however, it requires cost saving measures, including no new households can be pulled from the waiting list and no new project-based voucher agreements can be considered for Collaborative Housing. Participant attrition will ease the requirements.

Attrition occurs when participants leave the program for sad reasons, such as passing away and for good reasons, such as their incomes rising to a level where they no longer need rental subsidy. The opportunities for rising incomes are limited for HATC's participants because approximately 75% are elderly and/or have a major disability.

HATC's Family Self Sufficiency program provides a supportive pathway for able participants to increase their incomes and to ultimately graduate from needing financial assistance. The process generally takes up to five years. In a classic success story, a participant started in the Housing Choice Voucher program as a single parent with no income, limited educational and work experience, and was dealing with the trauma of surviving domestic violence. The participant's journey with HATC included enrollment in Washington State University's online studies, discovery of an interest in accounting, and earning a Bachelor's degree. HATC celebrated with the participant in 2024 when the need for rental assistance ended upon the securing of a professional level auditing position.

Operations that are Responsible and Responsive

HATC maintains HUD's highest public housing authority rating, "High Performer."

For 25+ years, the Office of the Washington State Auditor has issued a clean audit of HATC financials and operations.

Audit reports are available at <https://sao.wa.gov>

HATC expands its Housing Choice Voucher program by fully using the HUD voucher Budget Authority grants and by winning awards of special purpose vouchers such as Veterans Administration Supportive Housing, Mainstream, and Emergency Housing Vouchers. HATC increases its below-market-rate rental housing through development and acquisition funded with internal equity, local and state capital grants, tax-exempt bonds, and bank loans.

HATC is an independent local governmental entity directly serving 5,000+ neighbors. It receives no local or state tax dollars for its operations. Public housing authorities are defined, enabled by state law (RCW 35.82) and are created by local resolution. HATC is governed by six board members. Five are appointed to staggered terms by the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners. The sixth member is appointed by the five others. By law the sixth must be a person receiving rental assistance from HATC.

Leadership Team

HATC Board of Commissioners

Jay Goldstein, Chair

Jolene Gioulis, Vice Chair

Aaron Quitugua

Brittany Ferguson

Jim Cooper

Lisa Vatske

HATC Lead Staff

Craig Chance, Executive Director

Karen McVea, Director of Rental Assistance

Tammie Smith, Director of Housing Stability

Tom Rawson, Director of Development and Administration

Housing Authority of Thurston County 1206 12th Ave SE Olympia WA 98501 360-753-8292

Mailing Address: PO Box 1638, Olympia WA 98507-1638

<https://HATC.Org>

