

Jessica Blakely, Development Director

Salem Housing Authority

360 Church Street SE

Salem, Oregon 97301

2/14/2024

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

900 Court St NE

Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support Preservation funding request for Orchard Park Apartments

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs, and members of the committee,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Salem Housing Authority and our community to request your support for a critical funding allocation of \$5,000,000 from the state legislature. This funding is essential for the rehabilitation of Orchard Park Apartments, a vital community asset that provides affordable housing to 224 families in Salem.

Orchard Park is not just the largest affordable housing community in Oregon outside of the Portland metropolitan area; it is a cornerstone of our community, supporting a diverse population of low-income families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. As the property has transitioned out of its initial affordable compliance period, we were able to form a public-private partnership to acquire the property and prevent its conversion to market rate housing. While we were able to access funding from OHCS to assist with the acquisition of the property, funding was not made available to address the significant capital needs that exist at Orchard Park.

Since our acquisition in July, we have restored 21 units offline due to a fire caused by a resident that the previous owner was unable to rebuild. Additionally, we've been able to make modest investments into the property to address deferred maintenance and improve resident living conditions. However, major capital items such as roofs, siding, and windows must be replaced in the near term to ensure the vulnerable residents who call Orchard Park home have a safe and decent place to call home. Without this funding, we will be unable to address the significant capital needs facing the property.

The Salem Housing Authority has endeavored to secure the future of Orchard Park through its initial acquisition and continued stewardship. However, to uphold our commitment to long-term affordability and to execute the necessary renovations, we seek the legislature's partnership through this funding.

The support we request will enable us to:

- Address immediate capital needs, ensuring the safety and well-being of our residents.
- Prevent the displacement of current residents by maintaining affordability thresholds.
- Secure the longevity of Orchard Park as a haven for current and future generations.

We have laid a foundation for preservation and community resilience through our public-private partnerships and proactive measures. However, the gap in funding represents a significant barrier to our goals.

Your support would not only reaffirm the state's commitment to its citizens in need but would also serve as a testament to effective governance and community care. Together, we can ensure that Orchard Park remains a beacon of hope and stability for the economically vulnerable members of our city. We are at a pivotal juncture, and your affirmative action can make a definitive difference.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and stand ready to provide any further information you may require. Thank you for your dedicated service to the people of Oregon and for your attention to this urgent matter.

I urge you support in recommending \$5,000,000 in funding to Salem Housing Authority for Capital Improvements to Orchard Park Apartments. Your commitment will ensure that no family at Orchard Park is left behind.

Sincerely,

Jessica Blakely

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Development Director
Salem Housing Authority