

*Bringing Washington Home*  
Washington State Housing Finance Commission  
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What is the true need for affordable housing in Washington state? Who needs that housing? How does the need differ across the state? These are the questions the Washington State Housing Finance Commission sought to answer with the Affordable Housing Report.

For years, Washington legislators had asked the Commission for hard numbers relating to affordable housing need. There was plenty of information available about how the different factors that lead to affordable housing need affected Washington residents, but that information was not centrally located and didn't allow for an apples-to-apples comparison across the state. No publication had yet been developed that broke need into a few key indicators- a "dashboard" of affordable housing need.

In 2007, the Commission began working with the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance to prepare such a dashboard. The goal of the report was to allow policy makers and the general public to gain an understanding of the situation in their own region. The report would highlight the need for affordable homeownership opportunities; the gap between what was available on the market and what people could afford to rent; and the difficulty faced by vulnerable people, like senior citizens and disabled veterans, in finding an apartment they could afford.

The first Affordable Housing Report, issued in 2007, was greeted warmly by legislators. "Even after the legislative session ended, we received calls from house and senate staffers wanting to get a look at that report," says Rachael Myers, Executive Director of the Housing Alliance. After the release of the 2008 report, Housing Alliance staff were asked to present the Affordable Housing Report to a working session of the House of Representatives Housing Committee.

News of the usefulness of the report has traveled through word of mouth. Requests for copies come from unexpected places, including from instructors at universities across the state.

Upheaval in the mortgage market in 2008 called for an expanded focus for the 2009 Affordable Housing Report. The Commission saw it necessary to create a

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special section focusing on foreclosure, examining early indicators of the impact of foreclosures on the need for affordable housing. Instead of just providing regional poverty statistics, the 2009 report included a deeper inquiry into current unemployment trends as well.

As the Commission begins work on the fourth edition of the report, policy makers and the public in Washington are beginning to see the trends in housing need, and the impact of affordable housing development in the lives of Washington residents.