

34th District Democrats

Resolution Passed February 9, 2011
(this is not the final resolution text)

A Resolution responding to plans by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) for redevelopment of the 561-unit Yesler Terrace Public Housing Project (February 2011)

Whereas, according to the County's Housing Benchmarks report, in Seattle there are 39,500 households with incomes at or below 40% of median but only 13,500 privately owned rental units offered at rents affordable to this income group, and

Whereas, two thirds or 30,000 of those 39,500 households have incomes at or below 30% of area median (about \$23,150 for 3 person household) yet there are only 310 unsubsidized rentals in all of King County offered at rents affordable to these very low income families

Whereas, redevelopment and gentrification in our communities continues to cause an accelerated loss of this dwindling stock of very low income housing units due to demolition, speculative sale, conversion, and increased rents, and

Whereas, nearly all that is left of Seattle's housing stock serving those with incomes at or below 30% of area median are subsidized "public housing units" owned and managed by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) including the 28 acre 561-unit Yesler Terrace Garden Community, and

Whereas, Yesler Terrace is an irreplaceable resource that has served generations of extremely low income families, those with disabilities, the elderly, first generation immigrants, and households of color - especially families from the black community - since its establishment over 70 years ago as the first fully integrated low density public housing project in the Country, and

Whereas, Yesler Terrace and the housing, services, and sense of community it provides is needed now more than ever to address a resurgence of poverty and homelessness in our city, and

Whereas, the Seattle Housing Authority now is seeking permits from the City of Seattle to demolish Yesler Terrace and replace it with as many as 5000 units (most offered as expensive rentals and condominiums), expensive retail space, and over a half million square feet of offices.

Therefore, be it resolved that the 34th District Democrats goes on record calling on SHA to make the following commitments:

- 1) SHA shall commit to 100 percent replacement on site of all 561 public housing units (serving those at or below 30 percent of median income) they are removing and to the extent it's economically feasible, SHA shall increase the number of public housing units on site above 561 so that public housing makes up a significantly higher percent than only 10 percent of the 5000 units now planned for the site.
- 2) SHA will ensure that all units located in the surrounding community that the agency has acquired and vacated in anticipation of relocating Yesler Terrace residents to those sites –

that all such units will either be reopened as low income units or replaced by SHA at their expense and offered at comparable prices. Such removal further contributes to a loss of very low income units in our city.

3) SHA shall pledge to use only new sources of revenue, including substantial income generated from the more intense retail and office uses planned for the site, to build their replacement public housing units and further SHA shall pledge that no existing finite source of revenue such as city housing levy dollars, state tax credits, or state trust fund dollars, needed to expand our city's low income stock, shall be tapped for construction of any on or off-site replacement units, and

4) SHA will guarantee that the public housing located in the redeveloped site will not be segregated and moved away from views, parks, play areas, trees, and other amenities offered to higher income groups, and that such amenities including the availability of larger ground related and view units shall be distributed equally among all income groups and be equally accessible to all income groups, especially those living in the public housing units, and

Be it further resolved that the 34th District Democrats will forward this position to our Mayor and City Councilmembers, and also call on them to exercise their clear authority over SHA's plans and to require SHA to comply with the commitments identified in the above four subparagraphs by attaching them as binding conditions to the alley vacations, upzones, and other land use changes SHA has requested and which are needed for their redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, all of which is needed in order to ensure that SHA continues to fulfill its historic mission and what it was created to do – serve the poorest of the poor in our city.

Sponsored by John V. Fox, Coordinator of the Seattle Displacement Coalition (and longstanding 43rd District Dem)