Local Funding Source for Housing advancing towards November Ballot
By Nancy DeVaux, Yes for Homes Coalition of San Juan County

YES for Homes Coalition of San Juan County is a campaign committee recently formed to promote the passage of a ballot measure for a local funding source for affordable housing. The measure is expected to be placed on the November 2018 ballot by the San Juan County Council. Thankfully, this funding source is not a property tax.

San Juan County needs enough housing so that hard working families and residents on fixed incomes can have a decent place to call home. The fund will generate about $15.2 million for the entire county over a 12-year period, with an additional 4-6 dollars leveraged for each dollar from the REET, for specific projects.

Creating a local funding source was the top priority of the San Juan County Affordable Housing Workgroup Strategic Plan, adopted by the County Council in March 2017. WA State law allows a .5% Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) - fee of $500 for every $100,000 of the contracted sale price, primarily paid by buyers. The REET was chosen because it is the most flexible and is the only tax that can be used to assist households with moderate income as well as low and very low-income households. It is also a one-time fee and NOT a property tax.

The funding source will greatly enhance the ability of nonprofits and private developers to create affordable housing, including both rentals and homeownership. A Draft SJC Administrative and Finance Plan is under review that describes how the fund will be used. Nonprofits and developers will apply for grants for housing production or preservation in a process similar to the State Housing Trust Fund.

San Juan County’s quality of life, social well-being, and economic vitality are interconnected. We are in a unique position among all the counties in Washington because the RCW that authorizes the collection of a REET for housing requires that the voters have already implemented the 1% REET for a Land Bank. The Housing REET can only be placed on the ballot because we do already have the Land Bank.

A campaign committee of housing advocates from Orcas, San Juan and Lopez Islands has formed to work on passing the REET for Housing and YOUR help is needed!
The Steering Committee members are: Nancy DeVaux, Steve Ulvi, Lorraine Littlewood (San Juan) Sandy Bishop, Rhea Miller, Anne Hall (Lopez) Tim Fuller, Anne Marie Shanks, and Judith Scott (Orcas). Mallory Hagel is the Campaign Manager.

**How You Can Help the YES for Homes Coalition of San Juan County**

1. **Show up** and speak in favor of the proposal at the public hearing before the County Council, scheduled for May 22nd at 9:15am. You can also **write** to the County Council expressing your support for their decision to place it on the ballot. Email them at council@sanjuanco.com. Please send your comments in early (by 5/17) so they can be included in the Council’s agenda packet.

2. Share your housing story! Have you or someone you know had difficulty finding a place to live? Are you an employer that has had difficulty hiring employees because of the housing shortage? Please write your story down and email it to us at info@yesforhomes.net, specifying that we have permission to use your story, and whether or not we can use your name. We hope to use real stories throughout the campaign on social media and other campaign materials.

3. Support the YES for Homes campaign with a monetary donation. The committee has registered with the PDC and is now accepting contributions. Please make your check out to YES for Homes, and mail it to PO Box 1011, Friday Harbor WA. The PDC requires your name, address and occupation.

4. Let us use your name in a signature ad, later this fall. Please email the YES for Homes Coalition at info@yesforhomes.net with a note saying we have your permission to use your name.

**Earth Day Weekend**

Homeowners got together April 21 and 22 to re-do the pathways at the Home Trust’s Salal neighborhood. Faim and Alan Melic cleared the old paths in preparation, and Lawson Construction supplied 12 yards of gravel at 50% off. A large group of neighbors, including five kids 7 and under, helped lay down fabric and spread the gravel. Another day is planned to finish the circular paths in front of each house cluster. **Before and After:**
To be removed from our list please send an email to unsubscribe@hometrust.org with "remove" in the subject line or body. Many Thanks.

San Juan Community Home Trust
PO Box 2603
Friday Harbor, WA 98250
(360)378-5541 - info @ hometrust.org
EIN 91-2150712 - 501(c)(3)