

Building a Veterans Community

A proposal prepared by Habitat for Humanity Seattle-King County



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To address the critical need for affordable homeownership for low-income military veterans and reservists, and engage the skills and leadership of former military in meaningful, ongoing service, Habitat for Humanity Seattle-King County (Habitat SKC) is breaking ground on a 9-unit veterans-focused community, adding to ongoing Veterans Build site engagement opportunities. We welcome your participation in these momentous initiatives.

Background & Need

King County is home to more than 127,000 current and former members of the U.S. military, 17,000 of whom live below 200% of the federal poverty level. There are many veterans with disabilities, and thousands more who experience poverty and/or homelessness without a disability.¹ An estimated 22% of veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),² which introduces unique needs in many areas, including the home environment, and can lead to social isolation for both veterans and their partners.³ While many excellent nonprofits and government agencies serve veterans' housing and other needs, often these fixes are temporary. As one veteran interviewed by Habitat SKC put it, "[we] need a place to go after we graduate from those programs."

Veterans returning to live in King County face enhanced challenges, owing to the current severity of the local housing market. While the US market has improved, King County's vacancy rates remain 54% lower⁴ and rents 60% higher than the rest of the country.⁵ With a median home price of \$500,000 (\$211,000 more expensive than the nation as a whole), local homeownership for any but those in the highest income brackets is becoming increasingly out of reach.⁶ As such, reliable housing was identified by King County as among the top three priorities for improving local veterans' stability and self-sufficiency.⁷



Marine Corps Veteran and 2013 Habitat AmeriCorps member Chris Rodriguez raises a flag on-site.

¹ Hoskins, Jon. "Status of Veterans and Veterans Services in King County." King County Department of Community and Human Services: February, 2013, 1.

² Ibid, 17.

³ Ruiz, Susan L. A. "Qualitative Analysis of Social Isolation in Partners of Veterans with Combat-Related PTSD." Walden Univ., 2014.

⁴ <http://www.zillow.com/research/falling-rental-vacancy-9086/>; <http://www.housingconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/King-County-House.jpg>

⁵ <http://www.zillow.com/home-values/> - as of October 2015 (average all homes: \$1,382 US; \$2210 King County)

⁶ <http://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/news/2015/07/13/king-county-median-home-price-jumps-to-500-000-in.html>; <https://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/series/MSPNHSUS>. Values for June, 2015.

⁷ Hoskins, 36.

Veterans Build: *engaging troops in rebuilding communities*



Veterans groups build community and join Senator Murray for Veterans Build at a Habitat jobsite in Renton, WA.

Our former servicewomen and men are highly trained, disciplined, and oriented to service. Upon returning home, our communities' appreciation for their sacrifices often takes the form of not wanting to burden them further, yet in working with veterans on Habitat jobsites, we hear that opportunities to continue to be of service in structured and meaningful ways is one of the things they miss most in their transitions back home.

On Veterans Day 2015, Habitat SKC launched a year-round Veterans Build program, together with Sen. Patty Murray; Team Rubicon; The Mission Continues; and Team Red, White and Blue. Habitat sites in King County will now host monthly builds for veterans and select supporters, giving them the opportunity to network, build relationships, hone their skills, and continue to give back to their communities through the meaningful act of building and repairing homes for others.

From its inception, the Veteran's Build program has been a marked success. Attended by over 35 current and former members of the armed forces, coverage of the kickoff aired at least 20 times on radio & TV, reaching a Nielsen- & Arbitron-estimated audience of 397,000. More important, however, are the relationships formed and the work accomplished. Habitat site managers, who currently supervise over 40,000 community volunteer hours per year, consistently praise the work ethic, productivity, and inspiration that comes from veterans' groups serving together.

Through partnerships built around the Veterans Build program, seeds of an even bigger dream have been planted. Drawing on input from the King County Veterans Program; WA Veterans Homes; WA and US Departments of Veterans Affairs; African American PTSD; American Legion; Veterans of Foreign Wars; Delta Air Lines; Outerwall; 50+ local veterans and active military; and many other partners, Habitat for Humanity SKC is now embarking on the construction of a Veterans-focused community.

Proposal: A Veterans-Focused Community

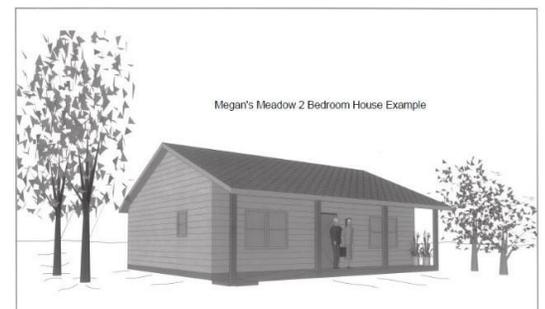
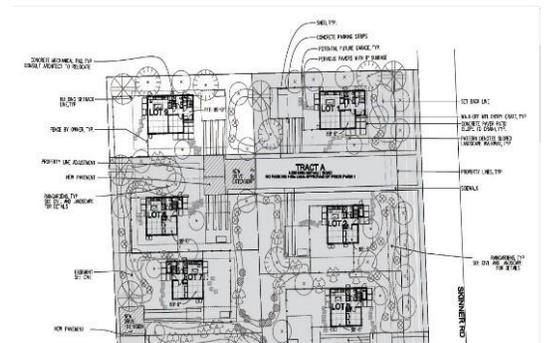
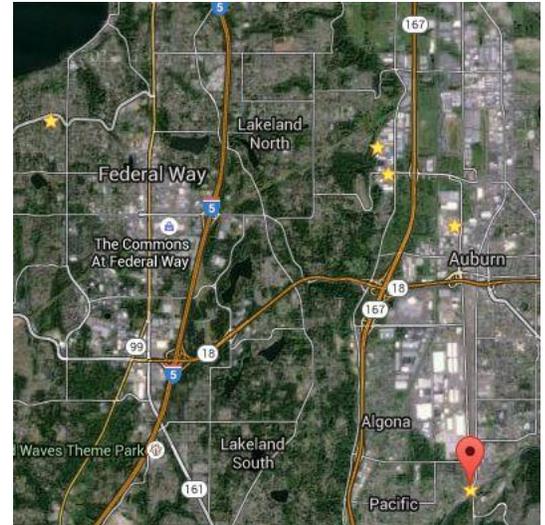
For over 30 years, in King County and much of the U.S., Habitat for Humanity has been the leading (or sole) housing provider concentrating on homeownership as a path to economic stability for low-income families. Habitat is uniquely positioned to plan and carry out a project that low-income veterans on the path to self-sufficiency can “graduate to,” providing long-term stability, reintegration to community, and improved outcomes for their children through the proven model of homeownership.

Nineteen miles south of SeaTac Airport, in the small town of Pacific, WA, a parcel of land will soon house a small community of single-family homes specifically for vets. Shovel-ready, and with all utilities already installed, the property currently known as “Megan’s Meadow” will soon break ground, giving up to nine veteran families a place of their own, with private yards and community space as desired, located near a commuter rail line and within walking distance of services and retail.

As planned, the project will consist of single-family homes, from 860 to 1,250 square feet with 2-4 bedrooms each. The homes will have at least one roll-in entrance, and at least one bedroom and bathroom on the ground floor that are wheelchair accessible. We expect 40 to 55 adults and children to live in the community when completed.

Veterans will be targeted exclusively for initial outreach and priority recruitment for these homes. Keeping with Habitat’s commitment to offer homes for sale at prices low-income families can afford, Megan’s Meadow homes will be offered to families at 0% mortgages for an estimated \$180,000 to \$250,000. Together with donated materials and a team of sponsors, selected families will help keep the cost of homes down by investing 500 hours of their own “sweat equity” into the community’s construction.

The city of Pacific currently has only five 3-bedroom homes for sale under \$350,000; this project will add much-needed affordable housing stock to the south part of King county, where most veterans currently live.⁸ The homes slated for this community will be some of the only new, permanent, single-family housing solutions suitable and affordable for low-income and disabled veterans in King County.



Site location and plans for the 9-unit single-family development focused on serving veteran families in Pacific, WA.

⁸ Hoskins, 9.

Funding & Partnership

Anticipated to span 2.5 years, construction of the veterans-focused community in Pacific, WA will cost a total of \$2.2M. Habitat is actively seeking partners interested in committing to one or more units, to proceed on schedule with a planned groundbreaking in May of 2016.

The total construction cost for a single Pacific unit will be \$246,727. This breaks down as follows:

LAND ACQUISITION	\$ 51,555
DEVELOPMENT (ARCHITECT/GEO/TOPO/ENVIRO)	\$ 5,700
CONSTRUCTION (INFRASTRUCTURE/MATERIALS/LABOR)	\$ 148,468
HOMEOWNER SERVICES, OVERHEAD, & CONTINGENCY	\$ 17,743
OTHER (TAX/FEES/PERMITS/INSURANCE)	\$ 23,261
PER-UNIT TOTAL	\$ 246,727

Sponsorship opportunities can be reserved now for 2017-2018. Full-home sponsors contributing \$250,000 per home will receive an extensive package of benefits for each unit sponsored, including:

- Thorough promotion of your support to **local media outlets**, including **media day opportunities** on request, in concert with your PR & Marketing teams.
- **Video and photo opportunities** through every stage of the build. (*Using Habitat footage, [one partner produced a spot that aired during the 2016 NFL playoffs.](#)*)
- **Logo placement on-site through the 2.5-year build**, at the specific home lot(s), on our website, in the Puget Sound Business Journal & other publications, in social media, and in other sponsor recognition efforts, as approved by you.
- **Premium engagement opportunities for your employees and partners**, including:
 - Up to **30 build-day volunteer opportunities**, for up to 20 employees each day.
 - **Construction and hospitality staff dedicated** to your company throughout the build, providing customized construction experiences, morning coffee and lunches, community speakers, informative Habitat chats each day, and more.
 - **Private Kickoff and Dedication ceremonies** for your company for each home sponsored, with homeowners, elected officials, and community leaders invited to participate.
- **Invitations for your senior leaders** to exclusive Habitat events throughout the year.
- Recognition in our annual report, e-newsletters, and more.

Additional benefits are available for partners making multi-home commitments, and customized sponsorships can also be tailored to your organization's needs. We welcome your inquiries and are happy to arrange a tour of the Pacific site to discuss partnership possibilities.

Summary

We are excited to partner with veterans and engage their exemplary discipline and leadership in serving our communities together. By designating a Habitat site to address the pressing needs of many veterans today, we look forward to offering thousands of community volunteers the tangible opportunity to give back to our servicemen and women in a lasting way. We offer this proposal as an opportunity for leading community organizations to be part of this effort, to join forces in building a permanent community where low-income veterans can take part in the American Dream, one they gave so selflessly to protect for us.

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