May 31, 2018
City Councilors & City Manager
City of Olympia
PO Box 1967
Olympia WA 98507-1967

Dear Council Members and Mr. Hall,

Since 1990, the mission of Homes First has been to provide safe, healthy, and affordable rental homes for those who need them most. In accomplishing this mission, we recognize the Missing Middle proposal for the City of Olympia to be a step in the right direction to address overall housing issues.

Trudy Soucoup, our CEO, served on the work group that informed the recommendations being put forward by the City. We believe this proposal will help Olympia address housing affordability by helping median income people stay housed. By allowing more diverse housing options, households with different income levels will have access to housing in neighborhoods.

This type of scattered site neighborhood-based housing is one of our core values. Of most importance to us is the knowledge that when a household lives in their own permanent home, regardless of whether it is owned or rented, they become a part OF our community, rather than apart FROM it. Without stable neighborhood-based housing, people are forced to move further from their place of employment, which adds additional transportation costs to their budget. It’s an unsustainable cycle that does not build community.

One aspect of the proposal that supports our work is the removal of the owner occupancy requirement for accessory dwelling units. Since Homes First cannot fulfill that requirement, we are unable to provide additional lower-cost units at the 14 homes that we currently own in the City. If this requirement is removed, we could expand our portfolio to include these smaller units to accommodate singles or couples. That is a direct benefit for those who are most challenged to find and retain affordable housing.

We encourage the City to move forward with this proposal.

Best regards,

Russ Carstensen,
Board President & Chair