

October 23, 2013

## Opportunity Council honored as Friend of Housing

SEATTLE—In recognition of its role in the successful passage of the Bellingham Home Fund, the Opportunity Council has been honored as a Friend of Housing by the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.

“As the nomination for this exceptional agency said, the Opportunity Council truly changed the conversation on homelessness from hopelessness to action,” said Karen Miller, chair of the Housing Finance Commission. “This honor is richly deserved.”

Friend of Housing awards are presented each year to individuals or organizations who have made exceptional contributions to creating or supporting affordable housing. Helping to solve housing problems, creating innovative financing mechanisms, or drafting legislation or policy that addresses the state’s housing needs are examples.

The Opportunity Council was one of five Friend of Housing awards presented October 8 in a ceremony at the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Housing Washington conference in Spokane.

A community action agency as well as provider of housing services throughout Whatcom, Island and San Juan counties, the Opportunity Council led the 2012 campaign to approve a property-tax levy in Bellingham that would raise \$21 million for local housing over the next seven years. The levy was approved by 56 percent of voters in Bellingham—only the second city in Washington to do so.

The Bellingham Home Fund thus established will assist those in need for years to come and is an example other communities can learn from and replicate.

In accepting the award, Greg Winter, director of the Whatcom Homeless Service Center and co-chair of the Bellingham Home Fund Campaign, thanked his partners in the effort and pledged the Opportunity Council’s support for other communities considering a similar campaign.

### About Opportunity Council

The Opportunity Council ([www.oppco.org](http://www.oppco.org)) is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency serving homeless and low-income families and individuals in Whatcom, Island and San Juan counties. The Opportunity Council manages Whatcom County’s coordinated entry system for all homeless populations, operates integrated homeless housing and employment programs, and manages rental housing, as well as providing home rehabilitation and weatherization services to low-income homeowners. In addition, the agency offers energy assistance, early learning programs and a community resource and referral center. The Opportunity Council is one of 1,000 Community Action Agencies nationwide.

For more information on Housing Washington and the Friend of Housing Awards, see [www.wshfc.org/conf](http://www.wshfc.org/conf).

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Celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> year in 2013, the [Washington State Housing Finance Commission](http://www.wshfc.org) is a publicly accountable, self-supporting team that works with lenders, investors, developers, nonprofit organizations and more to bring private investment dollars to benefit families and achieve public goals throughout Washington. The Commission has created and preserved more than 275,000 affordable homes across the state, while contributing more than \$42.5 billion and 240,000 jobs to the economy.



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Greg Winter, director of the Whatcom Homeless Service Center and co-chair of the Bellingham Home Fund Campaign, accepts the Friend of Housing award from Commissioner Dan McConnon on behalf of Opportunity Council.