

Statement to Metro Council on Funding the Louisville Affordable Housing Trust Fund (LAHTF)

by Dawn Cooley, First Unitarian, on behalf of CLOUT (Citizens of Louisville Organized & United Together)

Thursday, March 10, 2016

My name is Rev. Dawn Cooley, and I am the minister of First Unitarian Church, located in Councilman Tandy's district. I am a constituent of Councilman Owen. First Unitarian Church is a member of CLOUT.

For the past four months, not one Metro Council meeting has gone by where you haven't heard stories from the victims of Louisville's Affordable Housing crisis: young adults, senior citizens, parents, clergy.

Here is a story you didn't hear. A mother whose 47-year-old son still lives with her because despite his full-time job, he can't afford to find his own home. She worries every night about what will happen to him when he can no longer live with her.

You also didn't hear stories of teachers in our public schools who recognize the signs when their students become homeless—they don't turn in homework because they don't have a desk or a kitchen table to do homework at; they come to school tired, they come to school late, and sometimes, they stop coming all together.

Now let me be clear: these are a small fraction of the thousands of stories of people in need of affordable housing across the city, and in every Metro Council district.

We are disappointed and angry that another year has passed without our proposed ordinance being introduced to provide **dedicated** revenue to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

We understand that the choice not to spend money and political capital on housing is a choice to spend money and political capital elsewhere — on luxury hotels, downtown development, grass-cutting, paving streets.

But we also understand that when we provide housing to those in need, less money gets spent in other areas of the budget because affordable housing provides jobs, economic stability, and greater health to residents. It increases employee retention, increases school performance, and saves money by reducing demand for other government services. Providing affordable housing frees up money by taking care of the residents of this compassionate city.

We are here tonight to move forward — because we will not give up on fully funding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. A budget is a moral document. It is a statement of priorities, and we ask you to prioritize affordable housing and all its benefits. As a first step, we ask all of you to strongly advocate for \$5 million for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in the upcoming budget.