

**Support SB 949**  
**Mixed Use Affordable Housing in Portland Metropolitan Area**

February 13, 2025

*Re: Support for Mixed Used Housing in Portland Metro Area (SB 949)*

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Senate Committee On Housing and Development

On behalf of Scott Edwards Architecture and AIA Oregon's Housing Advocacy Committee, I am submitting testimony in support of SB 949, which directs the Housing and Community Services Department to establish a project to develop affordable housing that integrates residential units with community spaces and services in the Portland metropolitan area.

I am an Associate Principal at Scott Edwards Architecture (SEA). SEA has worked with 200+ local non-profits and public organizations to reduce inequality and improve the quality of life for all. At SEA, we believe that everyone deserves good design and that spaces should be responsive to community and place, and create opportunities to strengthen communities by celebrating cultures and traditions. My focus on creating affordable communities with SEA has provided me with the opportunity to connect design professionals across the state who are focused on this work as AIAO's Housing Advocacy Committee Chair. Our objective is to bridge the gaps between the affordable housing policy and the practice of architecture by supporting legislature that increases the production of affordable housing and is mission aligned with the goals of the state.

### **Background**

Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) was founded in 1981 and has been providing excellent services to marginalized youth and families in the Portland Metropolitan Area for 44 years. In 2021 SEI partnered with Community Development Partners (CDP) to initiate our [Alberta Alive Affordable Housing Project](#). This project now includes three finished buildings that provide 115 units of affordable housing to children and families in the N/NE Portland community. A fourth building that will provide 75 additional units of affordable housing as a part of this project is currently under construction. In delving into the world of affordable housing development, SEI quickly saw the impact that limited funding has on the overall livability for current and future residents. And SEI desires to change this reality. It is the goal of SEI to provide much more than "sticks and bricks." SEI is seeking to develop optimal living experiences for families while working together to build real community in every space that it develops. This prospective funding is a means to supplement existing funds so that SEI can create the optimal living experiences that this community deserves.

### **Impact**

SEI sees the need for mixed use affordable housing developments in our community and is seeking to meet that need so that marginalized and displaced children and families can enjoy the desirable benefits of living in proximity to practical functions that enhance their living experiences. These are the desirable benefits that current residents in the gentrified neighborhoods of Albina, on Mississippi and Williams avenues, enjoy. Creating affordable housing units in the heart of N/NE Portland that also include community services and commercial spaces will enhance livability, increase residential retention, and create a sense of community and belonging for families that once called this area home. Current tax credit and funding options are not sufficient to develop the type of optimal living experiences that this community deserves. And I support this effort to place real value on the lives of marginalized and displaced community members who will benefit from enhancing current affordable housing models.

AIAO's Housing Advocacy Committee recognizes the financial challenges of maintaining quality affordable housing with a mixed-use component and believe this bill will give SEI the support needed to continue to support the statewide mission of increasing affordable housing production. SEA has had the pleasure of working with SEI to bring Affordable Home Ownership online and has been working with them on preliminary studies for a project that would directly benefit from this bill. Based on our studies, this bill will allow them to double the housing capacity of their proposed project on NE Garfield St in Portland, OR and will feature a daycare on the ground floor.

This bill and this funding is a necessary investment into the lives of the prospective families who will live in this project, and others like it. This bill and this funding says to our marginalized community members that, "you deserve the very best, and not just what is minimally good enough." This bill and this funding is a step in the right direction that acknowledges that "[homelessness is a housing problem](#)", and that by creating opportunities to develop housing that is both optimal *and* affordable, we are taking real steps to address the housing problem that we see everyday.

For the above reasons, we urge you to support this request for funding to develop mixed use housing in partnership with Self Enhancement, Inc. by passing SB 949. Our most vulnerable and displaced families deserve the safety and well-being that these funds afford. Organizations like SEI that are working to create optimal living experiences cannot continue to deliver this reality without your support. Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Dave Mojica

Associate Principal, Scott Edwards Architecture  
Committee Chair, AIA OR Housing Advocacy