



NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE

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Graduate Housing Campaign: *Increasing Impact by Expanding Housing*

SUMMARY

In January 2017, North Cascades Institute began a \$580,000 capital project to increase resiliency, build community and sustain the planned growth of our graduate program. Over the next two years, we plan to build one five-bedroom accessory dwelling unit (ADU) next to the Blue House that we already own in Marblemount and purchase and renovate another house, thus gaining housing for 10 people.

Securing reliable housing and expanding our graduate program supports key elements of our 2017-2019 strategic plan to pursue new programs and partnerships, engage more people in lifelong learning and achieve stability in operations.

While we have been planning a housing expansion for several years, the loss of Seattle City Light rental houses in 2017 makes this an urgent need. This capital project will allow us to sustain the last two years of growth in our graduate program, continue our current level of programming and grow into the future.

NEED

A 2016 analysis on how the Institute can expand our current program capacity, we selected growth of the graduate program since these students are integral to all areas of the Institute. In 2014 we discovered that there is greater demand for our residency program than we had realized. We have nearly doubled the size of our graduate student cohort since then but lack reliable housing to support this growth. **We cannot pursue program expansion or deepen our impact without sustainable growth in our graduate program**, and this growth is dependent on adequate housing for graduate students.

Most of our graduate students and staff live in three facilities—the Environmental Learning Center within North Cascades National Park, Seattle City Light rental housing Diablo, and rental houses in Marblemount. These are filled to capacity. Seattle City Light recently announced plans to demolish houses in Diablo that we are renting. We cannot build additional housing at the Learning Center at this time and **find ourselves facing a critical housing shortage**.

Rental housing is expensive and unreliable. Rentals in Marblemount (the closest community to the Learning Center) are limited and highly inflated due to the housing demands of North Cascades National Park’s seasonal workforce and restrictions on new construction.



Top: We purchased the “Blue House” in Marblemount in 2014

Middle: Conceptual drawing of five-bedroom Accessory Dwelling Unit to be built next to the Blue House

Bottom: “Gray House/Property” in Marblemount (purchased summer 2017; remodel planned in 2018)

Acquiring housing will make the Institute more resilient and increase our capacity to provide quality environmental education experiences for over 12,000 people annually. Owning houses mitigates risks associated with an unpredictable rental market, increases our financial stability, and frees up time currently used to address housing issues so we can connect more young people, families, adults and school groups to nature.

BENEFIT AND IMPACT

Graduate students challenge us to grow and evolve in the content we teach, methods we use, audiences we reach and partnerships we develop. **Sustaining and growing the graduate program is critical to achieving all of the goals in our [new strategic plan](#)***. Graduate students have a deep and broad impact by:



- Interacting directly with school groups through curriculum development and hundreds of hours of teaching Mountain School (ncascades.org/school);
- Facilitating Institute programs such as Youth Leadership Adventures, Mt. Baker SnowSchool, Family Getaways, Base Camp, and more;
- Assisting partner organizations (National Park Service, US Forest Service and other non-profit organizations) with projects that fulfill community needs through summer Leadership Tracks and work-study positions.

In 2014 we invested in our own off-site housing by purchasing the Blue House in Marblemount. In addition to providing housing, this site has proven to be beneficial in other ways, such as:

- **Resiliency to disturbances.** In 2015 the Goodell Creek wildfire forced us to evacuate the Learning Center. After evacuation, staff and students gathered at the Blue House and made contingency plans for off-site programming. This experience highlighted the key role that our off-campus property plays in shielding us from the vulnerability we experience due to wildfire, road closures and government shutdowns (chattermarks.ncascades.org/odds-and-ends/a-call-to-education-toward-resilience).
- **“Confluence Garden.”** In 2015 we broke ground on a large garden that has been a creative outlet for our graduate students, staff and participants to imagine and experience environmental education in a new setting. Last summer we hosted five different groups at the garden to learn about soil cycles, sustainable systems and where their food comes from. (chattermarks.ncascades.org/life-at-the-learning-center/blue-house-farm)
- **Additional adult programming.** Last year we used the Blue House river access to launch a two-day canoe trip down the Skagit River to share the natural and cultural history of the watershed, our first of many programs to come at the Blue House.



*strategic plan link: ncascades.org/mission-strategic-plan

PROJECT MANAGEMENT & TIMELINE

Learning Center Director Kristofer Gilje will oversee all aspects of the project and can draw upon 20 years' experience as a facilities manager and building contractor. Architect David Hall designed the award winning, LEED Silver-Certified North Cascades Environmental Learning Center in 2005 and is contributing in-kind design of the ADU.

Phase I ADU Construction: Spring 2017-Design, engineering and permitting for the ADU; late fall 2017-Site preparation, ADU construction, and landscaping

Phase II House Purchase: Summer 2017- Purchased an existing 3 bedroom house; 2018 - Remodel so the building can house five people comfortably

BUDGET

The total three-year project expense budget for this project is \$580,000. This includes \$265,000 for the construction of the ADU and \$315,000 for the purchase and renovation of an additional house.

It is with the support of generous donors and a \$191,500 grant from the [M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust](#) that we are able to embark on this important housing expansion project, which will increase resiliency, build community and sustain the planned growth of our graduate program. **Please contact us find out more about this project or to see how you can help:** give@ncascades.org or (360) 854-2599.