

Topeka Housing Study Implementation Plan

Committee Meeting #1

Monday August 24, 2020

1:00 PM – Zoom meeting

Present: Michael Bell, Linda Briden, Janice Watkins, Katrina Ringler, Marsha Pope, Jeanette Spurgin, Lloyd Rainge, Teresa Baker, Steve Schiffelbein, Charlene Robuck, Margo Rangel, Tawny Stottlemire, Ivan Weichert, Kathy Smith, Chris Palmer, Steve Vogel, Trey George, Nicki Ramirez-Jennings, Bill Fiander, Dan Warner, Corrie Wright, Brent Trout, Karen Hiller, Spencer Duncan, Christina Valdivia-Alcala

Meeting #1 Objective: Consensus on scope, first year tactics (Tier A, Tier B, etc.), and metric types

1. Welcome and Intro

- *Mr. Fiander* – task of this committee is to develop a one-year implementation plan for the Topeka Housing Study in roughly 60 days. The committee builds upon the work of the Housing Study's steering committee.

2. Housing Study Overview

- *Mr. Warner provided an overview of the Topeka Housing Study.* Takeaways include -
- 30 percent of Topeka households are cost burdened showing a need for quality affordable housing. There has been a lack of reinvestment in core neighborhoods, specifically, in the existing housing stock.
- Topeka has a high rate of homelessness and evictions for a city of its size.
- In target areas analyzed, minority households have a higher instance of being cost burdened (paying greater than 30 percent of income on rent and utilities).
- The Housing Study outlines the future demand of affordable housing (4,000 units), work force (3,650 units), market rate (4,700 units) and senior housing (2,250 units).
- Some tactics covered in the Housing Study are to improve the quality of existing housing stock, address abandoned and vacant properties, expand resources and encourage housing stability, support development of a diverse mix of housing types, and expand the production of affordable housing.
- The four priority recommendations include – fund the affordable housing trust fund, establish a strategic land bank, expand community development ecosystem, and expand key programs (weatherization and rehabilitation). These different programs require an incremental approach with goals requiring partners to help seed funding and implement the plan.

3. Scope of Work

- Mr. Fiander – The draft scope was developed following a motion from the Governing Body to draft starting implementation in 120 days (July). Based upon this motion this committee needs to develop an action plan for the year 2021 by November 17th. The three main questions outlined in the scope focus on what short term tactics should be activated in the next 12 months (Tier A)? , which short term tactics should we be planning for activation in the next 12 months (Tier B)? , and how should we track and evaluate the progress of the action plan? Secondly, we should consider who will provide oversight of this action plan? And how often should it be updated?
 - Councilwoman Hiller – We need to define how many units we need and how fast will we create/preserve housing units. The Consolidated Plan’s adoption has been delayed to coincide with the adoption of the Housing Study Action Plan. Specifically, for the implementation plan we need to set measures and what data we collect first, with a goal to improve our quality affordable housing.
 - Mr. Fiander – Would you propose changing the scope?
 - Councilwoman Hiller – Defers to Mr. Fiander on the changing of the scope, but clarifies that if the volume of units created should dictate the necessity of something such as a Community Development Corporation (CDC). Additionally, we should define the populations we want to serve and how this plan will serve them. Raises the question is there any focus within this implementation plan that address quality of life?
 - Mr. Fiander clarifies that while the primary focus of the Housing Study Implementation Plan is affordable housing, it is okay to consider more if the group wants.
 - Mr. Vogel suggests that recommendations in the Implementation Plan should be very specific and detail who will lead each tactic, who the partners for implementation are and how we address barriers to implementation.
 - Ms. Briden – The discussions started from the Housing Study have opened up communication between housing entities but seconds the question of what barriers are there to implementation.
 - Ms. Ringler – Suggests assessment of the implementation matrix to identify projects that don’t require significant work and can be addressed with solutions like a policy change. Recomends a focus on the items which can be “easy wins” while continuously working on the larger issues that will require more time and effort.
 - Mr. Schiffelbein – Has Coronavirus limited what is accomplishable in this time frame?
4. Year One Tactics – Top 4 priorities (Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Weatherization expansion, CDC Development and Establishing a Land Bank)
- 4A. Weatherization

- Mr. Bell – Regarding Weatherization, Community Action already has a weatherization program. Will this program work together with the study's recommendation?
- Ms. Stottlemire clarifies the program run through Community Action is part of a federal grant program and focus on whole home weatherization.
- Ms. Wright confirms the expanded weatherization program would address smaller projects and compliment the City's Rehab programs as an additional tool they could offer.

4B. Establish Strategic Land Bank

- Ms. Watkins believes this should be the strongest priority of the group. A strategic land bank can address vacant properties and allow for properties to be acquired before they reach a demolition state.
- Ms. Briden seconds that and states that other markets, specifically, Wyandotte County have utilized this tool to address previously dilapidated areas. Momentum 2022 had a working group that covered parts of this topic and she is willing to share that information with the group.

4C. CDC establishment

- Councilwoman Hiller – Before pursuing the development of a CDC we need to evaluate how many units we want to produce. If the unit goal is too low this may not be a necessary program.

4D. Are any of these other tactics worth activating?

- Ms. Baker – A second chance tenancy program may help those who do not qualify for decent housing due to credit score or rental history. Believes this program would be good to activate earlier.
- Mr. Vogel – The burden of risk falls on landlords. Would charitable groups be willing to cosign for tenants?
- Mr. Palmer states that this seems similar to a program run by Catholic Charities and Capital Federal in other areas.
- Overall support to move second chance tenancy to Tier A.

4E. Aging in Place

- Ms. Watkins – Habitat for Humanity is probably the only group working on this in the community but is limited to low and moderate income households above the age of 55. Views this as the most sought after program besides their new builds.
- Mr. Bell – Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging should be included as a partner in this.
- Ms. Briden – Because we do not know of all of the programs that exist and resources that are in place we should not try to recreate the wheel for programs that already exist.

4F. Rehab Assistance and Technical Assistance

- Ms. Ringler - Can we come up with a single place where all of the resources are listed?
- Mr. Schiffelbein – Stated that CRC has a good resource directory.

4G. Other Tactics for consideration

- Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala – living wage and percent of household that are cost burdened need to be considered.
- Councilwoman Hiller – Many households get cited and do not know how to get the work done to correct these deficiencies.
- Ms. Watkins – Habitat for Humanity will be opening a classroom that teaches homeowners how to do their own home repair.

5. Metrics and Measurements

- Mr. George- likes the baseline metrics but believes the affordable housing trust fund goal should be \$1,000,000 instead of \$500,000.
- Mr. Fiander – Generally metrics will be measured by overall investment, new units created, units preserved, households served, percent of households pay more than 30 percent of their income, investment/units by neighborhood health and unity typology mix. Are any other metrics needed to measure success?
- Mr. Weichert – clarifies that in the last few years the development process with the city has not been a barrier to new development. What he sees as the biggest issues is the cost of building materials, and that may be addressed with an affordable housing trust fund.
- Councilwoman Hiller recommends measuring first time home buyers and elderly helped.

6. Moving Forward – How to engage the public

- Councilwoman Hiller recommends a meeting with the Citizens Advisory Committee.

- Mr. Bell recommends communicating about the plan with Topeka Capitol Journal to reach more people and have personal stories tied to our outcomes.
- Mr. Cushinberry offered to help reach out to Topeka Capitol Journal as he sits on their advisory board.