

Topeka Housing Study Implementation Plan

Committee Meeting #2

September 28, 2020

In Attendance: Dan Warner, Bill Fiander, Corrie Wright, Ivan Weichert, Rick Kready, Teresa Baker, Tim Vincent, Michael Bell, Kathy Smith, Marsha Pope, James Prout, Karen Hiller, Trey George, Steve Vogel, Chris Palmer, Haley Hishmeh, Steve Schiffelbein, Kris Wagers, Bryson Risley, Spencer Duncan, Lloyd Rainge, Susan McClacherty, and Heh2037.

Scope Review:

Mr. Fiander: About 30 more days for Housing Action Plan. Scope is development of Action Plan for year 2021. Primary focus affordable housing but market rate tactics included as well. Citizens Advisory Committee included for neighborhood input. Review of tactics that will be implemented.

Tactics:

1. Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Mr. Fiander states the Trust Fund ordinance language will need to be amended as it refers to Department of Neighborhood Relations, as well as any additional programmatic changes recommended in the action plan. City may be able to transfer some of its funds for infill and weatherization aside for AHTF. Committee would need to convene to establish metrics. As the oversight group of the program the Review Committee should have a role in metrics. There is a need to engage with GTP to confirm champion(s) of the program. The champion will be responsible for engaging donors and capitalizing the fund with need for \$200,000 - \$700,000 in private funds needed. When fund is established RFP can be prepared or application process can be opened.

Mr. Vogel asks about the infill and weatherization funds

Mr. Fiander clarifies these funds have been accumulating with funds remaining. The funds would have to be spent in the NRP area for infill, which was agreed upon by all taxing entities. This funding may be used for leveraging the AHTF.

C.W. Hiller: Clarifies concern from council that study was a market study and not an Implementation Plan. This group will ensure a master plan is in place for proper implementation. Also, that the infill money was used as gap funding for other HUD or City infill projects.

Mr. Fiander states that the study found our existing programs seem to work, the issue is the amount of funding and the need to provide any additional programs that could work

in conjunction with existing programs. These groups are designed to address the programs that we do not currently understand how they will function.

C.W. Hiller shares that working within the neighborhoods has informed her that neighborhoods want to be more involved in housing programs.

Mr. Vogel states this has been going on for 4-5 years and that the Holliday Inn West will be creating 100+ new units and this has made big headlines, but the smaller projects don't make headlines. He believes the goal should be to encourage private investment in Topeka.

2. *Weatherization*

Ms. Wright states the steps/actions outlined assumed AHTF was funded to some extent. (1) Devote some HUD funds to weatherization and use to leverage non-HUD funds into AHTF. (2) Create and implement a DIY Weatherization 101 class for recipients of funding. (3) Provide DIY kits to low income households who take the class. (4) Agree to MOU to track who receives weatherization from what entity. (5) Provide emergency repair assistance and non-restricted funding to expand local weatherization programs. This would help in the cases where HUD funds cannot be used do to environmental factors. (6) Create and implement a certified energy efficient rental unit program.

Mr. Prout asks about certification. To what extent can a unit get certified?

Ms. Wright says that landlords that apply can get certified, but more discussion may be needed.

Mr. Prout asks about the energy audits. Where you can identify a certain number of things that need repair, and receive a loan to get small repairs done. Do we have anything like that with Evergy, City, or other sponsor?

Ms. Wright says that several years ago there was a program like that through Black Hills.

C.W. Hiller says the group she was a part of recommend energy audits being available. With SORT this is too big of a project and doesn't let home-owners focus on just one or two rooms. Potential to look at donated materials that are available to tenants/landlords to receive materials.

Ms. Wright clarifies this was the intent for the DIY kits and would simplify the access to materials.

3. *2nd Chance Tenancy*

Ms. Baker: purpose is to make it easier for tenants with previous issues to have access to affordable quality rental housing. She suggests the name change to Take 2 Tenancy. (1) Develop training needs assessment – Get stakeholder input; ID the need and best delivery method for training. (2) Develop second chance certification process with required classes to demonstrate the capacity of the program. This would act as a pilot

program. (3) Establish a landlord incentives to accept Second Chance Certified pilot graduates. Something such as last month rent paid for in advance or AHTF to cover any costs related to damages. (4) Recruit up to 5 area landlords to accept tenants who have completed Second Chance Certification. (5) Recruit up to 10 households for SCC pilot launch, targeting certification graduation by October 2021. (6) Successfully house certified graduates. Following implementation follow up with both landlords and households to evaluate the success of the program.

Mr. Vogel: Working with the mindset of Why? Second Chance Certification is very difficult and a large lift for all parties involved. Generally, landlords do extensive screening on potential tenants and “good” landlords are not interested in renting to this segment of the population. A training packet of this extent may provide enough evidence to a landlord and shows the tenant is truly interested in taking the right steps. He acknowledges that even with this program in place there will be landlords who will not be interested, but they are not the landlords you are likely to attract for this.

Mr. Bell says he is encouraged by the program design. While there are tenants who have created issues for landlords, there are tenants whose next step is homelessness.

C.W. Hiller In thinking about the Housing Trust Fund, can we think of organizations who may put up own personal family foundations for this fund?

Ms. Pope says there are some IRS issues, but there are certainly other ways that interested parties could contribute too.

Mr. Palmer: Would individuals with personal funds act as the guarantor on a lease?

Ms. Pope clarifies some sort of fund could potentially be set up.

Mr. Vincent states that SENT is interested in becoming an area landlord for the program.

4. Aging in Place

Ms. Wright: Similar to weatherization these would generally rely on funding of the AHTF. (1) Implement AARP Home Maintenance Class for seniors. (2) Complete resource database and make it virtual specifically for seniors. (3) Create virtual presentation on long term planning for seniors. (4) Create income-based maintenance free senior housing (AHTF). (5) Expand Habitat Homeowner Rehab for seniors (AHTF).

Mr. Fiander clarifies the intent of the AHTF is not to be the primary funding source for new development but act as a gap funding mechanism.

5. Rehab Assistance (Self Help)

Ms. Wright: (1) Activate Community Maintenance Classroom (hands on). Habitat is working on this currently and it will be activated regardless of its advancement in the action plan. (2) Increase participation in maintenance classes. (3) Activate Brush with Kindness to increase accessibility to interior/exterior paint. Habitat is currently working

on this at a smaller scale, but more funds could provide a more robust program. (4)
Develop DIY maintenance video.

C.W. Hiller wants to know what other materials beyond paint could be included.

Ms. Wright says the Habitat ReStore is in place and the Habitat Tool Bus could be used in conjunction.

C.W. Hiller said volunteers could ensure the work is actually done, and that hardware stores have held classes in the past. Things like bulk purchasing may help neighborhoods work together and maximize the program. Reactivation of the Neighborhood Repair Program to make connections in the neighborhood.

Mr. Fiander said no talk of expanding or restarting the program, and much of the conversation would revolve around funding. HUD use in the past has required audits of the funds.

Mr. Bell states that from a macro standpoint the Neighborhood Repair program was a success and that it brought a sense of community.

C.W. Hiller says that even a resource bank of YouTube videos related to home repair could be helpful.

Tier B Tactics (New or Expanded)

1. Land bank

Mr. Warner: Possible to activate this at the end of the year if all goes well. (1) Research models; including funding mechanism and applicability to local conditions. (2) Review Topeka draft ordinance vs other cities. (3) Identify/confirm partnerships. (4) Draft goals and program details; align with partners. (5) Community Outreach and transparency. (6) Draft Ordinance/Resolution/Adoption.

Mr. Vogel: is the overall goal to reduce blight or produce housing? And if it is to provide housing how much effort will provide how much housing? How efficient is it?

C.W. Duncan programs like this serve both. It will reduce blight, but it will reengage these areas instead of pushing new projects to the fringes. It will keep the assets in the neighborhoods that need it.

Mr. Palmer: It will also address land with issues and the land will come out "clean". Will remove deed issues or address properties with tax issues.

Mr. Vogel: are these generally properties developers will not touch?

Mr. Warner: No, some are fairly simple issues this just makes access easier.

Mr. Bell: This allows neighborhoods to have some control of what happens with the neighborhoods. 1200 block in Tennessee Town had homes build by Habitat and partnerships with other orgs allowed the whole block to turn.

Mr. Fiander: Correct, this was used to ensure the property was going to be affordable and guaranteed that for the life of the property, HHs would meet income limitations.

C.W. Hiller we have to make sure we build capacity otherwise the city will own it and mow it. What was the real estate situation in that city? If we can find out that clearing titles is the biggest issue this would address it. The small example in Tennessee Town was not truly public.

Mr. Palmer: Yes, we talked about ensuring this does not become just a dumping ground.

Mr. Bell: A plan should be in place prior to land banking being used.

2. Downtown Housing

Mr. Fiander: Of the 7 tactics talked about this was the only one that addresses market rate housing that could potentially be ready. (1) Activate new downtown marketing webpage. Develop housing page (“Open for Living”). (2) Start JEDO discussion to determine if housing should be included as part of eco devo incentives. Hopefully, late 2020 or early 2021. (3) Adopt Downtown Master Plan; set 10-year target of 1000 units. (4) Form “work group” to guide action plan; create developer list. (5) Create package of pitch-ready properties and incentive info (Pitch to potential developers). TIF and NRP are two examples that can help with this. (6) Seek RFP authority to advertise new catalytic housing/mixed use construction site.

Mr. Vogel isn't there a big demand for Downtown units? And the existing stock fills up very quickly?

Mr. Fiander: You are correct, on a smaller scale these projects all fill up before projects are even complete.

Mr. Vogel: Why are we talking about incentives? And why is the private industry not doing the work?

Mr. Palmer: Didn't a lot of those projects receive incentives?

Mr. Fiander: Yes, LIHTC, Historic Credits, and NRP have been used. One of our issues is that we are affordable, and the rents that would be demanded for new investment are not high enough to demand new build units. The incentives are a necessary gap filler.

C.W. Hiller: How are we defining Downtown? Does it include NOTO or just Kansas Avenue?

Mr. Fiander states the defined boundary found in the Downtown Master Plan documents. Topeka Blvd to the BNSF Tracks to 12th Street up to NOTO.

C.W. Hiller states with her experience with JEDO is that rehab for single family has been included in the past. Our neighborhoods are interested in cutting loose from the

ability to do extensive rehabilitation every 15 years. And if we are banking land around the city do we want to limit the funding to just Downtown.

Mr. Fiander: This boundary is not 100% defined it is a general boundary and funds would not be limited to just downtown but may spill into surrounding neighborhoods.

C.W. Hiller: Maybe the two will drive each other, and maybe this gets people excited to build the fund (AHTF).

Mr. Bell: is encouraged that we are looking in the neighborhoods around downtown as well. But if we want the LMI housing that comes with it we need to look at how the developer(s) will allocate LMI housing in the project.

C.W. Hiller: neighborhoods are interested in activating the neighborhood retail throughout the city.

Mr. Fiander: Even looking at the Downtown Master plan not all blocks will be impacted, actually it will be relatively few blocks that are directly impacted. We just do not have the demand at this time to revitalize everything. And the concentrated impact will hopefully have a ripple effect.

Metrics:

Mr. Fiander: a lot of the groups began to define what the metrics would look like, but there were some metrics defined in the housing study. The Housing Study Findings to Measure are things we need to define further.

- Satisfying Housing Demand (Affordable/Workforce/Market/Senior)
- Cost Burdened Households
- Core Neighborhood Investment
- Transitional Housing/Homeless Prevention
- Living Wage and Access to Major Employers
- Upscale Housing
- Housing Choices/Typology
- Capacity (Organization and Household)

Personal Housing Stories:

Mr. Bell has submitted some ideas for stories. Has not had a chance to follow up yet.

Mr. Fiander thinks this will be a good idea to build a campaign for affordable housing.

Next Steps:

Mr. Fiander: Meet with and inform the CAC.