

Northfield Affordable Housing Task Force

MINUTES, January 3, 2017 Meeting

Attending: Dayna Norvold, Northfield HRA and Rice County Habitat for Humanity

Janine Atchison, City of Northfield

Sandi Gerdes, Laura Baker Services

Jim Blaha, Northfield Community Action Center

Carol Gengenbach, Northfield Community Action Center

Dave Berglund, Edina Realty

Richard Schulte, Northfield Planning Commission

Jonathan Davis, St. John's Lutheran Church

Kyle Nordine, Northfield Retirement Community

Chris Heineman, City of Northfield

Scott Tempel, City of Northfield

Don Sahling, St. John's Lutheran Church

Jayne Hager Dee, Northfield HRA and Northfield Community Action Center

Thank you to Laura Baker Services for hosting the meeting.

Dayna Norvold shared a graphic with a housing continuum.

As members of this group advocate for those needing affordable housing, there is a realization that only 25% of the needs of that group are currently being met in the U.S. Whose responsibility is it to share this information? Will the community believe it? The community likely cares, they just don't know. There is affordable housing available, just not enough. Then there are the needs of a sub-group: seniors, those with special needs, the homeless, etc. Also, as workers remain employed, wages have not kept up with the escalating costs of housing.

Just who needs housing in Northfield? What are the numbers? Currently, Community Action Center has one unit leased at the Manger Inn at the cost of \$690/month; two units at Northfield Extended Stay are leased for a two week maximum stay at \$880/month/unit. Last year 99 individuals needed CAC's assistance with emergency housing. It is estimated that there are 40 youth in Northfield that are couch-hopping or needing emergency housing with friends (i.e. no longer living in family home). If CAC were to provide more emergency housing units, more staff would be needed to provide support services. That cost would be difficult for the organization to absorb. CAC estimates that about \$350,000 in capital is needed to add three emergency/stabilization units in Northfield that current staff could support with services. More units would require more staff and the cost increase would be exponential.

Telling the story, without making it appear to be overwhelming is a huge task. There are ebbs and flows with the numbers. The economic recovery has outpaced wages. Affordable scenario #1: a person with a \$24,000/year income can only afford \$600/month for housing if 30% of wages are dedicated for housing (the income guideline). Scenario #2: a person whose only income is a minimum Social Security payment (\$767/month) can only afford \$200/month for housing, using that 30% guideline. Where can they find acceptable housing for that price? People who are over the 30% housing guideline cannot progress with education or opportunity; consider the debt load of some people (i.e. student loans, bad credit, etc.) – as a result these people have complicating layers. No wonder young people are still living at home with Mom and Dad! A typical "starter home" costs under-\$200,000. Those options are not available in Northfield, unless the home needs significant work.

Educating the community would require at least a year's study. Various events at varying times with different audiences would require a systemic, deliberate effort, including perhaps reading/discussions with Northfield Reads, projects by students at Carleton and St. Olaf Colleges, a strong effort from Northfield's faith community and buy-in from mainstream community organizations.

Current options in the community that might be considered:

- The St. Dominic's Church convent was suggested as an option for emergency housing. The nun residing there would need to be relocated. The parish could be affected by Rice County property taxes but City of Northfield representatives said that they could remedy that situation between local governments.
- The Florella property has been reduced to an \$850,000 asking price. Redevelopment of the property would be over \$1 million plus the cost of relocation of current residents.
- There is a 3-plex available on Plum Street, just south of St. John's Church. Asking price is \$319,000. This building was built in 1973 and is in good shape.
- What are the options for a multi-purpose development?

Next meeting will be held on February 7, 2017 (first Tuesday) at Laura Baker Services at 4:00 pm.

Submitted by: *Jayne Hager Dee*