

June 1, 2015

Dear City Commissioners:

*In preparation for your June 9, 2015 study session the Lawrence Affordable Housing Coalition is forwarding a letter of housing recommendations first sent to the Horizon 20/20 Steering Committee on January 5, 2015. We hope these recommendations will be considered during your study of affordable housing.*

The results of a community survey of 3,300 households, conducted by ETC for Douglas County and the City of Lawrence, in conjunction with a Horizon 20/20 update, found one of the three most frequently referenced needs was “quality housing for all income levels.”

Formed in April 2014, the Lawrence Affordable Housing Coalition has met monthly to advocate for affordable housing solutions to be added to a revised & updated version of Horizon 2020, our community plan for Lawrence and Douglas County. Members of the Coalition have one overriding concern: safe, well maintained, and affordable housing for Lawrence residents.

Our coalition members have considerable professional housing experience in advocating for different areas of safe and affordable housing. These members have identified four distinct but broad based affordable housing needs:

- affordable housing for extremely low income (ELI) households (including transitional housing for residents currently without homes)
- a variety of community-based affordable housing options for seniors
- affordable workforce housing for those who do not earn a living wage and/or those who cannot afford the average cost of traditional rental or owner-occupied housing with stagnant “middle class” incomes.
- preservation of affordable housing particularly in low to moderate income neighborhoods.

***These four concerns are exacerbated by upscale development in lower income, working class neighborhoods.***

Our coalition would like to point the Horizon 20/20 Steering Committee members to an affordable housing task force that met in 2005 and 2006. This “Housing Needs Task Force” was charged with how to fund affordable housing solutions, and their report and recommendations were published in 2007. The present-day Lawrence Affordable Housing Coalition is formally requesting the Horizon 2020 Steering Committee to take another look at the 2007 report, as we endorse the following recommendations:

- Alternative building: consider affordability & regulatory barriers associated with modular homes (In 2014, please add tiny homes & co-op housing; microunit only with zoning & parking caveats).
- Inclusionary zoning: requiring a certain percentage of development to be affordable development and/or density increases in exchange for developers adding affordable

housing to new developments; developers could also donate the cost of an affordable unit(s) into a fund in lieu of building affordable homes; each community determines criteria; mandatory preferred

- Establishing a Housing Trust Fund with a stable funding source: many communities have such Funds, usually managed and allocated by an independent third party Trust Fund Committee.
  - Trust Funds often rely on Land or Housing Trusts, Co-ops or other proven nonprofit affordable housing developers to manage subsidized housing, to build housing and to lock in subsidies for an extended period of time, as private developers interest in affordable housing is usually limited to tax credit property development.
- Land Acquisition: incentives for individuals, businesses or communities to donate land.
- Supportive transitional housing for extremely low income populations: often homeless including those at risk of being homeless (ex. medical hardship, disability or domestic violence) or those sleeping in cars or tents who don't met the government definition of homelessness.
- Housing Co-ops or Housing/Land Trusts: providing both ownership and rental opportunities at below market prices and, within reason, with higher but managed density
- Meeting the needs of 80 to 100% of median income households when threatened with homelessness: due to lack of funds for utilities, property taxes or maintenance.
- More affordable possibilities for in-fill development (due to current shortage or acquisition expense). This was accomplished as scattered site housing by LDCHA in the 60's & 70's.
- A variety of affordable senior housing options: including property tax relief, the Community Village concept, developing affordable senior housing communities, etc.

The Coalition also embraces the 2007 Task Force recommendations already implemented:

- Energy Efficiency (built into much affordable housing) & Removing Regulatory Barriers (see relaxed code of mid 2000's)

Thank you for your continued work in updating our comprehensive plan, and please let us know if you have further questions or concerns.

Robert Baker

Chair of the Lawrence Affordable Housing Coalition

