

"We Have Tomorrow – Bright Before Us, Like A Flame." *Langston Hughes*



AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN LAWRENCE

We're highlighting affordable housing efforts throughout our community in honor of Affordable Housing Month this May. **Pictured above:** Independence, Inc., uses funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for their Accessible Housing Program, which allows seniors and people with disabilities to make needed accessibility modifications to their home. **Pictured right:** At the end of 2023, The Annex Group completed work on Union at the Loop, a multi-family development with 248 new units of affordable housing and additional on-site amenities for its residents.



May is Affordable Housing Month!

Affordable housing is one of the most prevalent issues facing our community today, which is why it is one of five work areas we're focused on in *A Place for Everyone*, our community plan to end chronic homelessness.

Currently, Lawrence does not have enough housing that is affordable for people who live and work in our community. Housing costs continue to rise for both renters and homeowners, resulting in an increase in evictions and homelessness – and a decrease in homeownership. Meanwhile, wages have not kept pace with the rising cost of rent, utilities, interest rates and home sales prices, which has increased the number of households experiencing housing stress and insecurity. Housing stress is defined as spending more than 30% of the household income on housing costs.

A 'housing wage' is what a household must earn to afford rent at fair market value without spending more than 30% of income in housing expenses. The housing wage in Douglas County for a two-bedroom apartment is \$18.27 an hour – more than double the state minimum wage. This means that even working full time, many community

members cannot afford the cost of housing in our community. Almost half of renters and almost a quarter of homeowners in Douglas County experience housing insecurity, meaning many of these households are one emergency away from homelessness.

The goals of the affordable housing portion of *A Place for Everyone* are focused on increasing the amount of affordable rental and homeownership properties in Lawrence and Douglas County and improving access to the affordable housing that already exists. Ultimately, affordable housing is the solution to homelessness.

ADDRESSING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

At the City of Lawrence, we're working toward our affordable housing goals with the help of our affordable housing advisory board, which administers funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

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OUR MISSION
We create a community where all enjoy life and feel at home.

City information is available at lawrenceks.org and on cable Channel 25.

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING MONTH CONTINUED

We're currently in our sixth year of the affordable housing trust fund. The vote approving the sales tax to fund the project was in 2017, and we began collecting taxes for it April 1, 2019.

In its first five years, the affordable housing trust fund was able to support thousands of residents in acquiring or maintaining affordable housing, including:

- Creating 645 new affordable housing units for renters and homeowners
- Modifying 65 homes to be accessible for residents with disabilities
- Making health and safety improvements on 160 units
- Serving 1,128 residents with housing vouchers or rental assistance so that they can remain housed

In the next five years (through 2028), our Affordable Housing Advisory Board has set a goal to provide 1,200 more units of affordable housing in our community.

The following projects are supported by the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in 2024:

- Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center was awarded \$450,000 for a new permanently affordable supportive housing project. The project will include 24 new one- and

two-bedroom units with integrated support services to provide housing to individuals with chronic and persistent mental illness.

- The Douglas County Housing Stabilization Collaborative was awarded \$509,000 for emergency rental and utilities assistance. The collaborative is a collective impact group of social service agencies and government whose mission is to support housing stability.
- Flint Hills Holdings Group was awarded \$300,000 for the New Hampshire Street Lofts, which is a new affordable rental housing development for people aged 55+. The development will provide an estimated 49 new affordable housing units.
- Floret Hill was awarded \$1,300,000 for new affordable rental housing development. The property will have 12 one-bedroom units, 71 two-bedroom units and 38 three-bedroom units.
- Independence, Inc. was awarded \$75,000 for accessibility modifications. Their accessible housing program assists seniors and people with disabilities who

have low incomes and need to make accessibility modifications to their homes.

- The Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority was awarded \$50,000 to continue their New Horizons Transitional Housing Program. Grants from the program provide 24 months of rental assistance, which is paired with case management to help guests of Lawrence Community Shelter and Family Promise transition to affordable rental housing.
- The Ninth Street Missionary Baptist Church was awarded \$300,000 for the Hope Project, which is new permanently affordable transitional housing. They plan to construct six additional units of supportive housing in the area of their existing units, which are currently used by Family Promise.

To view all projects supported through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, please visit the Affordable Housing Advisory Board projects dashboard on our website: lawrenceks.org/pds/affordable-housing.

You can read the entire *A Place for Everyone* plan on our website at lawrenceks.org/homeless-solutions.

New affordable housing developments in our community



Pictured above: The Penn St. Lofts, which received an Affordable Housing Trust Fund award in 2020, was completed last year. The project created 47 new units of affordable housing in Lawrence.

The developer behind Penn St. Lofts, Flint Hills Holdings Group, is working on their next affordable housing offering in Lawrence: The New Hampshire St. Lofts. This is a mixed-use affordable housing development that will provide 49 income-averaged housing units for seniors. The developer received a \$100,000 award from the affordable housing trust fund in 2023. They anticipate completing construction by the end of 2024.



Pictured above: Tenants to Homeowners completed the first of seven new affordable homes as part of their Harper Seven project. With this project, Tenants to Homeowners is using the the City's affordable housing density bonus to develop seven permanently available homes on a 1.88 acre lot. Six new single family homes will be built (including the recently completed one pictured above with its new owner), and one existing home will be rehabilitated. In 2022, Tenants to Homeowners was awarded \$200,000 from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for the Harper Seven project.