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City of Ashland, Wisconsin

601 Main Street West — Ashland, WI 54806 — www.coawi.org

City Of Ashland Strategic Housing Plan



ADOPTED: August, 2018

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BACKGROUND

One of the four Strategic Priorities for the City of Ashland for the five year period 2016-2020 is Housing Infrastructure Improvements. For the past two years, numerous conversations and shared ideas have identified current needs related to housing in Ashland and proposed solutions to the needs. These discussions have taken place, among other places, in the City of Ashland Housing Committee, at City Council meetings, as well as Ashland's SOARs Forum, held in September 2015; at a Homelessness forum and at Landlord forums.

There is consensus that Ashland's housing needs are an economic development issue and that solving them will require long-term planning and commitment by the City in order to facilitate population growth. What is needed from city leaders in order to move forward effectively is financial, staff, and political support.

HOUSING PRINCIPLES CONTAINED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Strengthening the Housing Market is a prominent priority contained in the Authentic Ashland Comprehensive Plan approved by the Ashland City Council in 2017. The narrative on page 13 of the Plan states: **“Make Ashland a city where neighborhood pride is widely evident, where housing options are broad and appealing, and where residential investment is focused around the city’s historic core.”**

Ashland's peak population was more than a century ago, yet the majority of the residential structures that served that population remain. The resulting combination of falling demand, too much supply, job losses, and demographic changes all make for a weaker housing market. The loss of 1,916 people or roughly 700 families since 1960 means excess units need to be absorbed into the housing market. It means current owners need encouragement to re-invest. And it means existing homes need to be creatively marketed to first-time buyers. (p.12)

Six goals in the Section of the Comp. Plan related to How to Strengthen the Housing Market are laid out on page 27:

“Ashland should pursue actions that positively and strategically influence the housing market so its neighborhoods become marketable, brand-enhancing assets instead of the liabilities they are otherwise destined to be. Successful interventions must simultaneously do the following:

GOAL 1: Diversify existing stocks through creative in-fill development at the intersections of weak and middle strength blocks and within middle strength blocks.

GOAL 2: Rebalance supply and demand by thinning excess supply through locationally-precise demolition and establish a conservation buffer.

GOAL 3: Pursue strategic demolition to remove excess housing supply and relieve downward pressure on property values.

GOAL 4: Impose intensive standard-setting code enforcement on middle market and weaker blocks.

GOAL 5: Encourage owner reinvestment on blocks of middle market and strong market strength.

GOAL 6: Develop disposition strategies for large land holdings (Roffers and Timeless Timber, etc.) that reinforce other strategies in this plan.

“Successful interventions must consciously prioritize the retention of strong households on middle strength blocks, as well as definitively marketing home ownership opportunities to new graduates of Northland and new employees of Memorial Medical and other employers.” –*Authentic Ashland, 2035*

Recognizing that much work needs to be done to fully meet the above goals, summarized below are prominent identified housing needs.

City of Ashland Strategic Priorities 2016 – 2020

Goal 1: Facility Improvements to City Hall, Police, and Vaughn Public Library

Goal 2: Housing Infrastructure Improvements

Goal 3: Development of a Sustainable Infrastructure Improvement Plan

Goal 4: Economic Development and Marketing Strategic Plan Development and Implementation

	COMPLETED	
COMPLETED ACTION	COMP PLAN GOAL(S)	COMPLETION DATE
City implemented Landlord Registration Program <u>Purpose:</u> Require all landlords to register rental properties within city limits so that landlords can be contacted when legitimate complaints are received regarding sub-standard rental housing.	4 and 5	2016
City sponsored symposium bringing together all local entities to discuss housing insecurity and homelessness	1	2016
Complete a comprehensive housing study to identify current needs and opportunities for new development.	1, 4, 5, 6	2017
Explore and compile information about other communities that have implemented voluntary inspection programs.	4	2018
Identify the organizations in our area that are already working on providing transitional and supportive housing and determine how City can assist and support.	1	March 2018

STRATEGIES & ACTION STEPS BY NEED	COMP PLAN GOAL(S)	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	COMPLETION DATE
NEED: IMPROVE SAFETY AND QUALITY OF HOUSING STOCK			
Rentals			
A. Ongoing updates to the rental registration list to ensure all rentals are registered	4, 5	Planning Department	Annual Updates (January)
B. Establish Voluntary Rental Property Inspection Program <u>Purpose:</u> Encourage inspection of all rental properties in city limits to ensure compliance with minimal code requirements and to reward landlords who voluntarily comply with greater visibility and promotion.	4, 5	Housing Committee, City Council	2020
1. Develop clear guidelines including what would be inspected to start a pilot program with a small number of landlords to determine an appropriate, effective inspection process	4, 5	Ginger Nuutinen & Megan McBride	September 30, 2018
2. Create a list of code requirements/city ordinances for each type of rental category	4, 5	Megan McBride	September 30, 2018
3. Review existing research that analyzes top priorities people have when choosing a rental	4, 5	Aidan Johan and Megan McBride	September 30, 2018
4. Establish a rating system for assessing properties and assign point value to each item	4, 5	Planning Department	September 30, 2018
C. Review and recommend changes to the zoning ordinance in residential areas to allow duplexes, carriage, or tiny house construction enabling responsible property owners to supplement their mortgage with rental housing available on their property	1	Planning Department, Housing Committee	Long term/Ongoing
D. Continue efforts to engage landlords	4, 5	Planning Department	Long term/Ongoing

1. Get email contacts for easier communication	4	Planning Department	January 2019 (part of annual update)
2. Compile a list of information needs (can be a combination of expressed needs and what the City would like property owners to know)	NA	Planning Department, Online resource hub, Landlord Forums	November 2019
a. Substance use and behavioral health (basics, how to recognize an emerging crisis, who to call)	NA	Planning Department, Online resource hub, Landlord Forums	November 2019
b. Resources (funds for rehab, resources for tenants)	5	Planning Department, Online resource hub, Landlord Forums	November 2019
c. Support for posting rentals online	NA	Planning Department, Online resource hub, Landlord Forums	2020
Non-Rental Residential			
A. Continue public investment in rehab	5	Multiple agencies	Ongoing
1. HIP program	5	Planning Department	Ongoing
2. CDBG Loans	5	NWRPC	Ongoing
a. ID projects	5	NWRPC	Ongoing
b. Promote program	5	NWRPC, Planning Department	Ongoing

B. Pursue partnership with public health because of the role of public health in performing inspections to ensure safe/sanitary housing conditions and the overall link between health and housing	4	Planning Department, Housing Committee	Ongoing
C. ID partners to develop a community land trust/shared equity (with a rehab component)	1	Councilor Tochterman	2020
D. Develop a plan and funding mechanisms for strategic demolition of dilapidated, vacant homes	2, 3	Housing Committee, Planning Department	Winter 2018
1. Inventory houses that are in severe disrepair and not likely to be restored to get a sense for the overall number and associated cost (utilize 2016 property survey ratings completed for the Comp Plan to assist)	2, 3	Planning Department, Housing Committee	Spring 2019
2. Research procedures and funding sources for strategic demolition	2, 3	Planning Department	Winter 2018
3. Evaluate feasibility and need for the City to allocate funds for strategic demolition	2, 3	City Council, Planning Department	Summer 2019
NEED: INCREASE AFFORDABILITY AND EXPAND AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS FOR ALL INCOME GROUPS			
A. Compile and market an inventory of available city "in-fill" sites (those located within the City center rather than outskirts of City) and provide tax incentives for new housing development.	1, 6	Planning Department	2019
B. Promote rehabilitation of historic existing buildings for housing purposes	1	Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Department	Ongoing

1. Have Historic Preservation Commission submit a listing of historic buildings that could be renovated into housing	1	Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Department	October 2019
C. Promote rehabilitation of blighted downtown building(s) for re-use as housing	1, 4, 5	Mayor, Plan Commission, City Council, Planning Department	Ongoing
D. Collaborate with other regional municipalities to maximize available tax incentives for affordable housing projects	1	Planning Department City Council	As needed
E. Partner with affordable housing developers	1, 6	Planning Department, Plan Commission, City Council	Ongoing
1. ID city owned lots and actively market	1, 6	Planning Department	2019
2. Offer supports tied to commitments for affordable units	1, 6	City of Ashland, WHEDA, State of WI	Ongoing as available
3. Hold public listening sessions to gauge housing interest and needs of various populations	1, 6	Housing Committee, Planning Department	Ongoing (As projects arise)
F. Identify community partners who can collaborate and assist in efforts to provide additional affordable housing options	1	Housing Committee, Planning Department, Mayor	Ongoing
1. Involve local PHAs and providers in strategic planning	1	Planning Department, Housing Committee	2020
2. ID partners interested in pursuing a co-op housing project	1	Councilor Tochterman	2020

NEED: ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS/INADEQUATE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING OPTIONS

A. Advocate for Supportive Housing Development and Scatter-Site Housing Services	1	Housing Committee, Mayor	Ongoing
B. Collaborate with Ashland Housing Authority, Ashland County, WHEDA, AADC, and other non-profits to develop safe and affordable housing <u>Needs identified include:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe/sober - Transitional - Permanent supportive 	1, 5	City of Ashland, Housing Committee, City Council	Ongoing
C. Seek funding for research to determine need by obtaining real numbers from information that has already been gathered and through programs that are working with homeless individuals as well as people in need of transitional and supportive housing (ie hospitals, school districts, the Brick, criminal justice, Northland Counseling)	NA	Center for Rural Communities or UW-Extension	Ongoing
D. Create an online hub of information and resources for providers and other people working in fields related to homeless services	NA	Planning Department	January 2020
1. Publicize funding streams and obtain clear criteria for each funding source	NA	Website Hub of Resources and Information	2020
E. Participate in meetings and processes related to addressing homelessness, and facilitate collaboration between individuals working on issues related to housing	1	Mayor, Planning Department	Ongoing
1. Invite providers to public listening sessions for all perspective housing developments	1	Planning Department	Ongoing (As projects arise)