

REGULAR MEETING

**Housing Taskforce
December 21, 2022 - 3:15 PM
Community Room
933 Michigan Ave
Stevens Point, WI 54481**

Via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84950829542?pwd=blpwaG9ydTNUQ3BucWk4WXBhWktYdz09>

**Meeting ID: 849 5082 9542
Passcode: 346319**

AGENDA

Discussion and Possible Action on:

1. Roll Call
2. Review Meeting Minutes of October 26, 2022
3. Recap and finalize Goal 2 – Diversify and Expand the City’s Housing Stock for All Residents
4. Recap and finalize Goal 3 – Increase Home Ownership Through Social Equity
5. Discussion only: Update on Definition of Family
6. Adjournment

Meeting Rider

Any person who has special needs while attending this meeting or needing agenda materials for this meeting should contact the City Clerk as soon as possible to ensure a reasonable accommodation can be made. The City Clerk can be reached by telephone at (715) 346-1569, TDD # 346-1556 or by mail at 1515 Strongs Ave., Stevens Point, WI 54481.

Copies of ordinances, resolutions, reports and minutes of the committee meetings are on file at the office of the City Clerk for inspection during normal business hours from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00p.m.

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please take notice that a quorum of the Common Council, City Boards/Commissions may attend this

meeting.

Minutes of the Housing Taskforce

October 26, 2022

3:15 pm

Meeting Video:

https://stevenspoint.granicus.com/player/clip/2410?view_id=8&redirect=true&h=cbd991c60fc4f9cd61228a5fd3487b93

Chairperson Dalton called the meeting to order at 3:15 pm on October 26, 2022.

1. Roll Call – Members Eschenbauch, Haines, Amann, J. Johnson, Klesmith, Dalton, M. Johnson, Krueger, Peterson, and Odedosu.

Also present: Nancy Roppe, Bob Gifford, Greg Hansel, Director Kernosky, City Attorney Beveridge, and Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator Kordus

2. Introduce, define, and quantify housing insecurity in Stevens Point.

A presentation by Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator Kordus and Neighborhood Planner/Economic Development Specialist Klesmith on housing insecurity in Stevens Point was provided.

3. Revisit the modifications to the definition of “Family.”

A presentation by Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator Kordus on the definition of family was provided.

Ald. Johnson asked questions pertaining to those states that have outlawed the definition of family. And questioned whether or not the City could do something similar to the Village of Plover and basing family on the square footage of the property. NIC Kordus and NP/EDS Klesmith provided a response.

Rev. Johnson stated that the City has no right to define what a family is, especially when the City wants to own the logo People are the Point. People are coming to her with housing needs and she is no longer able to provide assistance. Rev. Johnson stated that winter is coming and that people need housing. The City’s affordable housing like Point Motel and Edgewater are no longer options. Rev. Johnson stated that she is in support of the square footage of the property determining how many individuals can reside in one property. Rev. Johnson read a statement from Tory Bradley supporting changes to the definition.

Bobbi Joy Amann had questions on the how the square footage calculations would be applied to various situations. NIC Kordus provided an answer based on Ch. 21 of the City’s code. Amann

stated that the irony of the 70's sitcom "Golden Girls" would not be able to reside in Stevens Point.

Rev. Johnson stated that she has experienced welfare and those who are single parents herself. The only ability for individuals to get out of the system need 'human leverage'.

Ald. Johnson stated she has also experienced being a single parent who relied on assistance. She also stated that one medical illness could jeopardize housing security, regardless of their own security.

Nancy Roppe, 925 Smith Street, stated that you have to live in an area that's predominately rooming houses to fully understand the situation of the neighborhood. Ms. Roppe disagreed that this would help address the homelessness and that student rental 'slum lords' do not care about their properties and that the proposal is contrary to the City's existing policies of wanting owner-occupied housing. Ms. Roppe also expressed concerns about the lack of online reporting that's been under construction for several months.

Robert Gifford, who also is a member of the Portage County Board, expressed concern about the lack of action at the County level to address affordable housing. Northern Counties are losing population and the workforce is aging out and joining the younger demographic in being housing insecure. Mr. Gifford stated that he has been pushing the County to make these differences.

Greg Hansel, 525 Clayton Avenue, stated that once a person has housing they are more likely to become part of the workforce. Mr. Hansel has a son who is homeless and would like to see the definition changed.

Noah Eschenbauch stated that the committee has been working on this for quite some time and that the trends are changing with student housing. The long-term trends indicate that rooming houses will deflate in value and that they will convert back.

Director Kernosky stated that the HTF is a policy recommendation group. Any changes will need to go through the Plan Commission before going to the common council. Director Kernosky stated that he is not an expert in homelessness or the unsheltered and expressed his concerns about changing the definition of family by completely removing the definition all together. The City has made changes to address housing by incentivizing housing and allowing ADU's.

Noah Eschenbauch asked if the HTF could provide a scaled recommendation as opposed to a firm recommendation.

Travis Haines stated that this is more than just a 'student housing' problem, but rather the non-student housing like three teachers or IT employees can't live together. That was the larger concern by Mr. Haines. Mr. Haines was not worried about the total number of individuals in his units as he charges per unit, not per person.

Ald. Johnson stated that parking should not be a concern because she's experienced four cars of all related individuals in her own home, and that this is happening already regardless of the definition of family.

Rev. Johnson stated that she has clear-heartedness and appreciated the long-term considerations Director Kernosky has, but there is a crisis that must be addressed by the City to make these changes.

NP/EDS Klesmith stated that staff has provided a scaled option as part of a review. Based it upon the square footage requirements, expanding the definition to allow up to 4 unrelated individuals.

Attorney Beveridge expressed some concerns about the language that included 'emergency' and reiterated publication requirements for any zoning code change to the Plan Commission. Attorney Beveridge also expressed concerns about sunset clauses on the definition of family would be appropriate.

Director Kernosky stated that a request to the Chair of the Plan Commission for a special meeting could occur.

Ald. Dalton recommended that the body recommend to the Plan Commission for a special meeting for only the definition of family.

Rev. Johnson then moved to recommend to the Plan Commission to increase the definition of family to be up to four unrelated individuals, seconded by Ald. Johnson.

Ald. Johnson offered an amendment to also recommend dissolving the definition of family and basing occupancy based upon the square footage. The amendment passed unanimously.

The original motion as amended was passed unanimously.

4. Introduction and Discussion on expanding the scope of Goal #1 to Decrease Housing Insecurity.

NP/EDS Klesmith provided an overview of this topic.

5. Introduction and Discussion of Goal #4: Tracking Implementation and Success of Program Initiatives

NP/EDS Klesmith provided an overview of this topic.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 pm.

Recommendation: Develop a preventative program that proactively reduces the number of evictions. This program may include mediation services, legal counsel, and financial compensation to landlords for past-due rent and damages. The simplest solution is going upstream and keeping them from falling into the river – striving to proactively keep people in housing, rather than trying to rehouse them after an eviction.

Idea: Services in [eviction diversion and prevention programs](#) range from full legal counsel to tenant education and tenant-landlord mediation. There are currently 47 eviction prevention programs in the United States, the closest being the Tenant Resource Center in Dane County, WI.⁶

Goal #2 - Diversify and Expand the City's Housing Stock for All Residents

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to expanding the style, type, density, and location of housing within the City of Stevens Point. There are, however, opportunities to reduce policy barriers to expand different types of housing within the City to achieve this generalized goal, including finding ways to increase missing middle housing, embracing form-based zoning, formalizing Tax Increment Finance policies, and better engaging the community when new housing developments are proposed.

Housing quality is one of the most referenced desires in Stevens Point. In 2022, 29 of the 11,495 housing units (0.25%) were rated by the Assessor's Office as Poor or Very Poor, indicating that housing quality may be better than perceived. Of these 29 properties, 27 are owner-occupied.

Zoning Opportunities

- 1) Explore ways to increase "[Missing Middle Housing](#)" through Zoning Code amendments.

Realization: Development patterns post WWII have presented the inability to build and expand "missing middle housing". This causes the City to have limited availability for diverse housing needs within the existing community. Often, missing middle housing become part of the fabric of the neighborhoods in which they reside, mainly because their footprints and scale are not too dissimilar to the surrounding homes within the immediate neighborhood.

Recommendation: Although we could use the Planned Development Zoning (PDD), a specific zoning code change to allow via permitted use the construction of missing middle housing (up to sixteen units) with reduced street setbacks and parking minimums could address the desire to diversify

⁶ Treskon, M. et al (April 2021). *Eviction Prevention and Diversion Programs*. Urban Institute. Retrieved October 13, 2022, from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/104148/eviction-prevention-and-diversion-programs-early-lessons-from-the-pandemic.pdf>

our housing stock. A change to the zoning code permitting by right two or more principal structures on the same lot should also be considered.

Idea: <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/> offers zoning code amendment ideas and concepts for communities to consider when working on missing middle housing. Please note that there are excellent examples of this throughout the City already, especially in our more historic neighborhoods.

- 2) Reduce setbacks, consider the surrounding built environment, and reduce parking requirements for residential development to better fit within established neighborhoods. Consider physical attributes of the development in addition to the use of the development.

Realization: [Form-based zoning](#) should be the driving factor as the City rewrites the City's 1979 zoning code. This will allow the neighborhood to focus more on the physical development of the property as opposed to the use of the property. Form-based zoning will also allow flexibility in older neighborhoods for owners to fully utilize their property for growth and other changes.

Recommendation: Consider a zoning code rewrite that is Form-Based to better establish and retain the unique neighborhoods within Stevens Point. Until a form-based code rewrite is completed, the [Lean Code Tool](#) can be used to reform the current zoning code in the following ways:

- Reduce setback requirements for residential development to better fit within established neighborhoods.
- Reduce parking requirements for residential development.
- Reduce lot size requirements for certain types of residential development.
- Decrease minimum size requirements for principal structures.
- Consider lot coverage requirements.

Idea: <https://formbasedcodes.org/> and [Lean Code Tool](#) as resources.

- 3) Small Home Cluster Development

Realization: Single-family detached housing still reigns supreme in new home construction, but is there a way to allow SFD housing while encouraging higher density and communal living? Additionally, look at ways to address homelessness in the community by providing 'tiny-home' cluster development similar to [Occupy Madison](#).

Recommendation: Although the City could use the Planned Development Zoning (PDD), a specific zoning code to allow cottage-court/small home cluster

development should be adopted. This will allow a higher-density single-family unit development and communal living.

Idea: <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/types/cottage-court#overview> is a great place to start with a possible zoning change.

4) Allow multifamily housing construction to be performed by right.

Realization: Developers often are disincentivized from performing work when required to navigate a conditional use approval process because it threatens the likelihood they can proceed.

Recommendation: Amend the zoning code to allow construction of multifamily developments of 16 units or less to be completed by right. Developments larger than 16 units will still undergo the conditional use approval process.

Economic Development Opportunities

1) Adopt a formal Tax Increment Finance (TIF) policy for housing development.

Realization: The City has encouraged new high-density housing development, especially in the downtown area, with the use of Tax Increment Finance incentives. However, no formal policy exists to establish type of incentive (i.e. upfront, pay-go, hybrid) and how much incentive each project would receive. Each housing project that receives some type of TIF assistance is different. Providing some type of guidance with favorability (read: higher ratio) towards **infill**, affordable, IDD, or under-developed housing will help address our future needs. Additionally, some type of review of development should occur after the development is completed to better understand if the City objectives were achieved through the development.

Recommendation: Adoption of a formal Tax Increment Finance Policy that outlines incentive ratios and standards for housing redevelopment projects, greenfield projects, IDD, underdeveloped housing, among others. Consider pay go incentive with higher rate for large projects, and upfront incentive for smaller neighborhood projects. Formalize a TIF application for consistency in reviewing TIF requests.

Idea: [Sheboygan, WI TIF Policy](#), [Oshkosh, WI TIF Policy and Application](#)

2) Extend life of successful TIFs for the Affordable Housing Extension option.

Realization: Since 2009, the State of Wisconsin has allowed municipalities to extend the life of TIF districts that have successfully paid off other TIF project costs. Between 2028 and 2033, the City will close five of the nine currently active TIF districts. This provides an opportunity to extend the life of those TIF districts and further fund the City's existing Housing Trust Fund (HTF) to expand existing programs for providing affordable housing and for housing rehabilitation.

Goal #3 – Increase Home Ownership Through Social Equity

Home ownership is one route to build wealth in our economy. Home ownership rates have dropped significantly in the state of Wisconsin between 2000 and 2020, from 68.4% to 58.9%. While we cannot retrieve data for 2000 for Stevens Point, home ownership in Stevens Point has dropped from 52% in 2010 to 50.2% in 2020.⁷ While home ownership in Stevens Point may not be decreasing as significantly as in the rest of the state, there are opportunities to increase the local rate of home ownership.

Economic Development Opportunities

- 1) Adopt a formal Tax Increment Finance (TIF) policy for housing development.

Realization: With the same realization as Goal #2, Economic Development Opportunity #1, TIF policies can be leveraged to generate types of housing that prioritize homeownership rather than rental property construction.

Recommendation: Prioritize incentives for developments that result in condominium or other lower-cost owner-occupied housing models in the TIF policy recommended in Goal #2, Economic Development Opportunity #1.

Idea: [Sheboygan, WI TIF Policy](#), [Oshkosh, WI TIF Policy and Application](#)

- 2) Review City grant programs for their effectiveness and redirect unused funds.

Realization: The City administers several grant programs that are intended to support LMI homeowners and reinvestment into residential property. These funds are not wholly utilized and may be redirected to ownership programs. Furthermore, stringent requirements on existing down payment assistance programs may be barring residents from utilizing them.

Recommendations: Review and update down payment assistance programs and city-administered grant programs. Study and replicate a Housing Trust or Housing Trust Fund model that generates and maintains affordable, owner-occupied housing stock.

Idea: Programs such as the [Door County Housing Trust](#) create ownership opportunities that allow residents to retain a limited amount of equity upon the sale of a trust-managed home.

Community Engagement Opportunities

⁷ United States Census Bureau (2020). *ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles*. Retrieved October 14, 2022, from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=DP04&g=1600000US5577200&tid=ACSDP5Y2010_DP04

- 1) Launch a City-wide effort to educate the public on alternative forms of home ownership and existing support systems to build equity.

Realization: The public has a significant amount of power to create their own forms of housing ownership, including condominiums and housing cooperatives. Additionally, there are institutional resources that support the creation of these ownership models.

Recommendation: Generate public programming in partnership with young professionals and early retirees that increases awareness of other ownership models and institutions such as the [UW Center for Cooperatives](#) and the [USDA](#) that support these ownership models.

Idea: Cooperative ownership and condominiums may allow community members to enter ownership with less startup capital. The [UW Center for Cooperatives](#) and [USDA](#) can both provide direct education on the matter. [Limited equity housing cooperatives have been shown to be accessible to low- to moderate-income populations.](#)⁸

Goal #4 – Tracking Implementation and Success of Program Initiatives

The recommended actions in this white paper will have varying speeds and degrees of impact on the price, availability, quality, variety, and accessibility of housing stock for the residents of Stevens Point. However, to verify success or acknowledge that other changes are necessary, both the status of action items and housing data need to be monitored.

Community Engagement Opportunities

- 1) Format approved action items into a tracking sheet and publish it on the City website.

Realization: To acknowledge success or reevaluate actions taken from this document, action steps taken must be tracked.

Recommended Action: Create a tracking sheet for all action items referenced in this document. All departments who make progress towards completing these actions shall have editing access to the tracking sheet. It will be the responsibility of the Community and Economic Development Department to monitor and advance implementation progress.

- 2) Annually measure housing data and publish it on the City website.

Realization: Many of the community concerns regarding housing insecurity, affordability, and housing quality are valid and are supported by a variety of data sources. In order to accurately describe the housing trends and direct

⁸ Fenton, M (March 23, 2022). *Comparative Study of 4 Affordable Home Ownership Models and Market-Rate Ownership and Renting Shows Strength of Housing Cooperatives for Low- to Moderate-Income Citizens*. National Association of Housing Cooperatives. Retrieved October 13, 2022, from <https://coophousing.org/comparative-study-of-4-affordable-home-ownership-models-and-market-rate-ownership-and-renting-shows-strength-of-housing-cooperatives-for-low-to-moderate-income-citizens/>