

City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Notice

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee will be held on **Wednesday November 18th, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/388272021>. You can also dial in using your phone at United States (Toll Free): [1 877 568 4106](tel:18775684106) or United States: [+1 \(571\) 317-3129](tel:+15713173129) using Access Code: 388-272-021.

Agenda

- 1) Consent Agenda
- 2) Approval of minutes from the October 21, 2020 Housing Committee meeting
- 3) Citizen Comments
- 4) Old Business
 - a) Update on progress with CDBG, HIP and property maintenance
 - b) Review and revision of City Housing Strategic Plan: Improve Safety and Quality of Housing Stock
- 5) New business
 - a) Discussion of possible education strategies around housing types (affordable, workforce, market rate, etc.) and community needs
- 6) Announcements
 - a) Update on WHEDA pilot housing project
 - b) Update on development process for Timeless Timber residential development
- 7) Adjournment

It is possible that members of and a possible quorum of members of other governmental bodies of the municipality may be in attendance at the above stated meeting to gather information or speak about a subject, over which they have decision-making responsibility. Any governmental body at the above stated meeting will take no action other than the governmental body specifically referred to above in this notice.

The City of Ashland does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or provision of services, programs or activities.

NOTE: Upon reasonable notice, the City of Ashland will accommodate the needs of disabled individuals through auxiliary aids or services. For additional information or to request this service, contact Megan McBride at (715) 682-7041.

City of Ashland – DRAFT Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, October 21, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meeting.**

Committee Members Present: Sam Ray, Ana Tochtermann, Kaas Baichtal, Kathy Beeksma, Liz Franek, and Megan McBride

Committee Members Absent: Eric Lindell

Staff Present: Chris Luebben, Mayor Lewis, Lucas Phillips

Visitors Present: Henry Houden, Millie Rounselle

Mayor Lewis opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

Agenda

1) Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Sam Ray. Seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

2) Approve minutes from the September 16, 2020 Housing Committee meeting

Motion to approve minutes from September 16, 2020 Housing Committee meeting by Sam Ray, seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

3) Citizen Comments

No comments.

4) Old business

- a) Updates on property maintenance, HIP and CDBG
Megan McBride updated that one more CDBG loan has been repaid.

Chris Luebben provided updates on property maintenance and HIP. She has been contacting contractors to see if there was interest in working on HIP programs. She stated that the contractors have all said that they are extremely busy, so she will try reaching out in spring to see if they can work on HIP projects.

Chris Luebben also said that the County has a lead-safe paint removal program and that several people have reached out with interest for that, so that will help with having additional painters available in the City who have this certification.

Chris also stated that due to the snow, property maintenance is likely going to stop enforcing painting on houses and garages, but will be reaching out to existing projects to extend their deadlines into the spring and will ensure that the projects conclude once it is warm enough to do so. She is continuing to enforce issues regarding trash, and is generally achieving compliance within a few days of sending out the letters. Megan McBride also highlighted a large house on 6th Street that had ongoing property

maintenance and structural issues, which is currently in progress to have a new roof installed, deteriorated boards replaced and the exterior painted. This has been a longstanding project, and McBride emphasized that this is a huge improvement for the property owner, neighborhood, and community overall.

Motion to send to next approval process. Motion made by Eric Lindell, seconded by Kathy Beeksma. Passed unanimously.

Vote for approval of RFP. Passed unanimously.

5) **New business**

- a) Review Request for Proposal (RFP) submissions for residential redevelopment of the City-owned Timeless Timber site and provide recommendation to City Council

Megan McBride reviewed the residential development goals stated in the Request For Proposals (RFP) before giving an overview of the submission received for this RFP. The proposal was received from Commonwealth Companies out of Middleton, WI.

Henry Houden from Commonwealth gave an overview of the proposed 50-unit, cottage-style development. He stated that all of their projects in Wisconsin are Wisconsin Green Building certified, and their staff has extensive experience in working to make developments as environmentally friendly as possible. Commonwealth is the largest affordable housing developer in the state. This proposal features 50 units, but has the potential to expand to more units, should there be a need, on the remaining 8 acres in the east-central portion of the site.

Liz Franek asked if any single-family homes would be for sale as part of this development. Henry Houden explained that Commonwealth does not specialize in single-family housing development, but it is possible that Commonwealth would sell a portion of the remaining undeveloped site for single-family housing construction in the future. Since their affordable housing model centers on assisting individuals and families to become financially stable enough to transition to homeownership, partnering with a single-family housing developer for the remainder of the site may be a good fit in the future.

Kaas Baichtal said that there is a high demand for one and two bedroom apartments, and there is often a single-family home occupied by just a few people, so this development will help create more opportunities for homeownership within the community as well.

Kathy Beeksma asked about the possibility of including garages for these properties due to its proximity to the lake and concerns around snow. Henry Houden explained that in order to qualify for the WHEDA low income housing tax credits, there is a total cost cap. He said that he can speak with his architects to see if they could be creative, but most likely including garages would cause the project to exceed these levels and disqualify their LIHTC application.

Kaas Baichtal asked if snow plowing would be included at this property, and Henry Houden said that their current budget does include snow plowing, and the site was designed to be easy to plow.

Mayor Lewis asked how the property will be managed after it is built. Henry Houden explained that one of Commonwealth's founders has his own property management company, so a member of their staff who is familiar with the project will be involved with managing the property after construction.

Kathy Beeksma pointed out the office space included in the proposed Clubhouse, and expressed support for this type of accessibility of the property manager.

Kaas Baichtal asked if Commonwealth has experience in towns like Ashland where the quantity of renters is high, but the qualifications as tenants can be lower.

Henry Houden explained that they make their tenant qualifications flexible to fit the community's needs, but they do have an on-site vetting process that will address the needs of the tenant profiles in the specific community. They also have experience in other rural communities which are even smaller than Ashland (with populations around 2,000), all the way up to Madison, Milwaukee and the Minneapolis area. Therefore, they are well equipped to adapt to identify and adapt to the specificities of the communities they serve.

Mayor Lewis explained that the City was connected with Commonwealth through a strong recommendation from Senator Janet Bewley, and stated that she is grateful for their proposal.

Motion to recommend approval of the proposed residential proposal for the Timeless Timber site by The Commonwealth Companies to City Council by Ana Tochtermann, seconded by Liz Franek. Passed unanimously.

b) Review and vote on City acquisition of a residential property for strategic demolition program

Megan McBride discussed a property near Ellis Park that had a fire, and extensive water damage, which has become a serious health and safety threat to the surrounding neighborhood. The City has tried to work with the property owner, but has had no success. She stated that the property owners mailed the County the keys, but now the County can legally acquire the property via tax deed. If the County acquires it in this way, they can sell it to the City for just the cost of the back taxes, which is \$667. This property also has a roughly \$20,000 CDBG loan on it as well. Due to the health and safety hazard presented by this property, the City had identified it as a potential strategic demolition property using CDBG funds. The City has a current offer on this property for \$5,000, from a relatively new developer who has worked with other properties with extensive damage and has rehabilitated those properties up to code. Megan McBride provided before and after photos of two (2) recent renovation projects completed by the property owner, with an average investment of \$20,000- 25,000 in each property. Megan McBride asked for feedback from committee members to determine if the city should continue to pursue purchasing the property and sell/donate

it to a nonprofit, or if the City should consider selling the property to the developer, who would privately fix it up.

Ana Tochtermann asked Millie Rounselle if they would be ready and willing to take on a property like this, if the City continued with demolition. Millie explained that they have limited resources to take on an extremely damaged property like the one in question, and a lot of their residents are elderly. Millie Rounselle said that they would be able to build new, however, but likely in 2021 due to timelines involved in obtaining state funding.

c) Discuss updates to Housing Strategic Plan

The committee will begin review and updating of the City's Housing Strategic Plan at their November, 2020 meeting.

6) Announcements

Mayor Lewis announced that the Chequamegon Bay region has been selected as one of the three (3) communities for the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WEHDA) rural affordable workforce housing initiative. She will continue to provide further updates as this progresses.

7) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Sam Ray. Passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:13 am. Minutes by Chris Luebben and Megan McBride.

Find yourself next to the water.



City of Ashland, Wisconsin

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

City Of Ashland Strategic Housing Plan



ADOPTED: August, 2018
Updated: ____, 2020

HOUSING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kathy Beeksma

Liz Franek

Betty Harnisch

Mark Hoglund

Joel Langholz

Jenny Lucius

Bob Miller

Ginger Nuutinen

Sam Ray

Ana Tochterman

Tom Waby

CITY OF ASHLAND STAFF

Mayor Deb Lewis, City of Ashland

April Kroner, City of Ashland Planning & Development Director

Megan McBride, City of Ashland Assistant Planner

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
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	2019
Research procedures and funding sources for strategic demolition	2, 3	2019-2020
Evaluate feasibility and need for the City to allocate funds for strategic demolition	2, 3	Budgeted funds in 2019 and 2020. May utilize CDBG RLF funds in 2021.

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	March 2020
Continue public investment in the HIP program	5	2019: \$5,000 budgeted 2020: \$5,000 budgeted
Have Historic Preservation Commission submit a listing of historic buildings that could be renovated into housing	1	February 2020
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	Ongoing as needed, initiated in 2019
Resources (funds for rehab, resources for tenants)	5	November 2019: Landlord/Tenant Resource Page of City website; Periodic emails to landlord emails on resources
A. Continue public investment in rehab	5	Ongoing
1. HIP program	5	Ongoing
2. CDBG Loans	5	Ongoing
a. ID projects	5	Ongoing
b. Promote program	5	Ongoing
B. Collaborate with other regional municipalities to maximize available tax incentives for affordable housing projects	1	Regional affordable housing study in 2020
1. Get email contacts for easier communication	4	Ongoing: Send out periodic emails about resources for both landlords and tenants

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		
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		
2. Create a list of code requirements/city ordinances for each type of rental category	4, 5		
3. Review existing research that analyzes top priorities people have when choosing a rental	4, 5		
4. Establish a rating system for assessing properties and assign point value to each item	4, 5		
C. Continue efforts to engage landlords	4, 5	Planning Department	Long term/Ongoing
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	

a. Substance use and behavioral health (basics, how to recognize an emerging crisis, who to call)	NA	Planning Department, Online resource hub, Landlord Forums	
b. Support for posting rentals online	NA	Planning Department, Online resource hub, Landlord Forums	
Non-Rental Residential			
A. Continue public investment in rehab	5	Multiple agencies	Ongoing
3. HIP program	5	Planning Department	Ongoing
4. CDBG Loans	5	NWRPC	Ongoing
c. ID projects	5	NWRPC	Ongoing
d. 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 Tochtermann	
D. Implement Strategic Demolition Program	2, 3	Housing Committee, Planning Department	2021

1. Inventory potential candidates for strategic demolition. Contacts could be made through direct outreach to these property owners, and/or advertising that City is willing to take on properties for strategic demo	2, 3	Planning Department	March 2021
2. Utilize CDBG RLF funds for strategic acquisition and demolition of dilapidated structures	2, 3	Planning Department, Housing Committee, NWRPC	2021? Ongoing?
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	Ongoing
C. Promote rehabilitation of historic existing buildings for housing purposes	1	Planning Commission, WEDC	2022
1. Complete a downtown housing study with Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation as one of the City's free technical assistance projects	1	Main Street Board, WEDC	2022
2. Explore potential funding sources for a Downtown Building Improvement RLF or Grant Program to support buildout of new residential units in downtown buildings	1	Main Street Manager, Planning Department, City Administrator	2023
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	Completed: Timeless Timber Site (if proposal selected) Future: Beaser Avenue site, Oredock Upland sites
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	
2. ID partners interested in pursuing a co-op housing project	1	Councilor Tochtermann	
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> - 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	
1. Publicize funding streams and obtain clear criteria for each funding source	NA	Website Hub of Resources and Information	
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)