



***Low-Income and Vulnerable Populations  
Meeting #3 Notes***

August 3, 2015  
10:00 am to 12:00 pm  
City of Grand Rapids Parking Services  
50 Ottawa Avenue, NW

**WORKGROUP MEMBERS PRESENT:** Lauren Baker, Chris Bennett, Marie Cimochoicz, Sue DeVries, Stephanie Gingerich, Julie Kendrick, Latesha Lipscomb, Lynn Locke (Co-Chair), Frank Lynn, Beanka Mushenkye, John Peterson, Joy Pryor, Ryan Schmidt, Ann Thomas, Hattie Tinney, and Betty Zylstra (Co-Chair)

**STAFF PRESENT:** Erin Banchoff, Connie Bohatch, and Johanna Schulte

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:**

Lynn Locke wrote the three themes of “incentives for landlords,” “landlord and tenant education,” and “limited affordable/accessible housing” on the board.

Notes from the July 20, 2015 meeting were reviewed.

Ms. Locke explained Disability Advocates is currently in the process of obtaining accessible housing data. Connie Bohatch said Gustavo Rotondaro is currently working on an inventory and maps related to assisted housing.

**LANDLORD AND TENANT EDUCATION DISCUSSION:**

The group discussed the Kent County Renters Alliance. It was a subsidiary of Steepletown Ministries. Latesha Lipscomb mentioned ICCF has a two day course on renters’ education.

Lauren Baker commented that there are national and state level models on homeownership education but comparable services for renters are lacking.

Julie Kendrick explained that in Kalamazoo, if a tenant landlord dispute went to court, all the parties involved were required to attend classes.

Ms. Lipscomb commented that with the rise of mixed-income development, a program that helps tenants and promotes good neighborliness is especially important. The program would have to cover both the rights and responsibilities of tenants.

The group discussed Fair Housing programs that were previously in place to help tenants.

**DATA COLLECTION:**

John Peterson explained the assessment the Corporation for Supportive Housing is working on to identify services that are needed to assist the homeless population. The report will not be out

until October. He brought some preliminary data on homelessness in the community. He made some disclaimers that the numbers are not yet an official part of the report. The numbers come from the HMIS system. There may be adjustments made moving forward. The homeless population is a higher number than is reflected in the numbers because the majority of households who are homeless will find resources to get to permanent housing on their own.

Mr. Peterson explained the types of approaches to homelessness. He stated that rapid-rehousing utilizes existing multi-family housing stock. The stock of affordable housing is utilized in the predominate approaches to address homelessness. He explained that permanent supportive housing also utilizes existing affordable units and provides more long-term services. He went over the five-year need for unit creation. He explained the numbers are based on what the demand is, in addition to the stock we already have. The chart covers the entire Grand Rapids metro area.

#### **INCENTIVES FOR LANDLORDS:**

Mr. Peterson distributed a proposed PILOT schedule. The schedule addresses housing for low-income households, disabled persons, the elderly, and the homeless population. Mr. Peterson explained the PILOT program only applies to newly produced units backed by state or federal funding. He described how the transition and preservation of existing affordable units could be incentivized by the PILOT program (or a similarly structured program).

Erin Banchoff explained that restricting the PILOT program might restrict the number of affordable units. Mr. Peterson clarified that he was proposing an additional program to ensure the preservation of existing affordable housing and to potentially incentivize the transition of currently market rate units to affordable units.

Mr. Peterson questioned whether a policy that would exempt affordable units from property taxes or created a tax credit would be allowable by law. He commented that the program could be based on a given need for affordable units geographically. He described the program would be based on fair market rents. The program could be run through the rental certification process. He commented the program could reduce the concentration of affordable housing by requiring that no more than 25 percent of the units in a development are assisted.

Connie Bohatch commented the City will figure out the legality of any proposed policies through the recommendation process.

Chris Bennett stated the income restrictions may be too low if they stop at 50 percent AMI. Mr. Peterson commented he is focusing on vulnerable populations. The group discussed which populations their workgroup considered vulnerable.

The ordinance that classified source of income as a protected class was discussed. The group acknowledged it may not eliminate *de facto* discrimination in all cases.

Mr. Bennett commented that the education programs the group has discussed have not addressed landlords. The group discussed whether a program could address perceptions of low-income and vulnerable renters. Joy Pryor commented neighborhood associations might be

able to provide positive advocacy and support for tenants. Ms. Bohatch commented the priorities and activities of the neighborhood associations are different but they could be better coordinated.

Sue DeVries discussed incentivizing more landlords to be involved with the RPOA and receive education. Ms. Bohatch mentioned the RPOA has a big event every year which does not require attendees to be members and the City supports that event. The group discussed highlighting the benefits to landlords of participating in a program.

The group discussed addressing specific housing needs for each group. Ms. Banchoff explained the data that Gustavo Rotandaro is working on. The group discussed a lack of rent burden data in Grand Rapids.

The importance of having benchmark data was discussed.

The group discussed being prepared for the aging population to need accessible and affordable housing units. The group identified they would like to increase resources for retrofitting or modifying existing units. Ms. Bohatch mentioned that the City’s program and Home Repair Services offer resources for these projects but that more resources would allow for a broader scope.

**ON THE BOARD:**

<b>Limited Accessible and Affordable Housing:</b>	<b>Landlord and Tenant Education:</b>	<b>Developer and Landlord Incentives:</b>
Benchmarking number of units	Renters Alliance, Good Neighbor Program, rights and responsibilities	Property tax or income credit incentives to help preserve and create existing units
Creating accessible housing	Perception of low-income and vulnerable renters	
Increasing resources for modifications to existing programs	Neighborhood associations, utilized to advocate and educate and inform homeowners and renters about existing services	
Partner with local agencies to promote aging in place	Educate landlords on roles and responsibilities as landlords to create partnerships, RPOA, promote stable renters	

The displacement of low-income residents due to gentrification and rent stabilization were discussed as additions to the list after the meeting.

**NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting will be on August 17, 2015 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.