

Housing Next: Update on Progress

February 2020

Two and a half years ago, eight organizations came together to begin to implement solutions to our local housing affordability challenges that were coming out of the broad stakeholder discussions being convened by the Greater Ottawa County United Way. We made a conscious choice to work together because of the magnitude of the challenge and the reality that all sectors have a role to play if we are going to meaningfully address housing affordability.

We could write pages and pages about this topic. We encourage you to visit the [Housing Next Blog](#) for more information and conversation on those topics.

For today, we want to do a little reflection on the progress that has been made over the last few years so that we can celebrate those who are making decisions day in and day out to advance our community's efforts to make housing more affordable for all.

- Since Housing Next was formally established, four of our most populated communities (City of Holland, City of Grand Haven, Grand Haven Charter Township and the City of Hudsonville) have each undertaken major overhauls of their local zoning codes. Several other communities are in the process of evaluating specific standards which limit housing supply and considering changes. This is critical work necessary before any new building at cost-effective scale can be done.
- Good Samaritan Ministries has started a nonprofit property management arm for affordable rental units, filling a significant "housing ecosystem" gap.
- In early 2019, we released a county-wide *Housing Needs Assessment* which identified the overall need for housing at all price points across Ottawa County. The availability of market data has been immeasurably helpful when working to attract new developers to the County and seek out opportunity development sites with local communities.
- In 2019, the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners chose to re-establish the County Housing Commission and appointed a new five-member board.
- Since 2018, Housing Next has worked to support nearly a dozen individual development projects which will create up to 2,000 new housing units at a range of price points across the County when completed. These projects are in various stages of planning and/or construction and include town homes, condominiums and apartment buildings.
- Finally, Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity and Jubilee Ministries have combined their efforts on several projects across the Holland/Zeeland area in a way that demonstrates extraordinary creativity and innovation. Both organizations are trying new models and scaling up the number of units they are producing each year. The leadership at Habitat and

Jubilee should be commended for their steadfast commitment to the mission and their adaptability to a changing marketplace.

This is an amazing amount of progress in just a few short years! It is important to pause to celebrate these many significant steps forward as these steps did not come easily. At the same time, we can't and won't stop here. Many of our friends, coworkers and neighbors continue to struggle to make ends meet and we must continue to work to make more progress a reality for our community. We are energized and grateful for the many voices championing this cause and for those taking actions, big and small, to help make housing more affordable for all. Together, let's stay committed to making the list of accomplishments twice as long in the years to come.

For more information, read our full **2019 Summary Report** at www.housingnext.org/about

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