

Grand Valley Housing Policy and Action Items Framework

Suggestions from Community Stakeholders to the City of Grand Junction

May 13, 2021

Executive Summary

As a precursor to an assessment of housing stock and needs in the community, this document contains recommendations for the City of Grand Junction as the City works to develop a long-range housing strategy. The organizations represented herein, on behalf of a larger network of community partners, respectfully submits initial thoughts for consideration regarding how the City could engage the community to enhance existing synergies, and deliver products and other solutions to the community's significant housing needs.

Background

In Spring 2019, spurred by a gathering of multiple Mesa County and regional housing providers and partner organizations during a meeting hosted by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs/Division of Housing (CDOH), Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) and Housing Colorado (HOCO), leaders of those organizations came together to begin work on creating a structure for ongoing dialog and work to develop and execute a larger vision and plan for meeting myriad housing and supportive services needs in our community. The attached document, "Community Housing Group – Met 10.17.19" represents the initial thinking of the group.

In early 2020, the initial focus of the group was to work with the Mesa County Public Health Department (MCPH) to conduct a valley-wide housing needs assessment, as part of the work of MCPH toward its upcoming Community Health Needs Assessment. At the time, MCPH staff, through their Healthy Mesa County initiative, were providing significant backbone support to the efforts of this working group.

In its February 13, 2020 meeting, the working group gathered to develop the contents of the needs assessment. During that meeting, City of Grand Junction Community Development Director Tamra Allen notified the group that the City was issuing a Request for Proposals to conduct a housing needs assessment and assist the City with developing a housing strategy. At that moment, the working group recognized the tremendous opportunity to partner with the City, and arrangements were made to begin that work.

A month later, the COVID-19 pandemic happened, placing a significant pause on this work. During the interim, several events have occurred that impact these suggestions:

1. The City of Grand Junction, in financial and programmatic partnership with MCPH, the Grand Junction Economic Partnership (GJEP) and Grand Junction Housing Authority (GJHA), selected a consulting firm to conduct the valley-wide needs assessment. That work, with Root, is ongoing, with data and dialog expected in the coming weeks.
2. A significantly broader and community-wide acknowledgement of the shortage of housing, at all economic levels, has created energy and urgency to addressing community housing needs and challenges. Specifically, GJEP and the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) have

developed a joint working committee comprised of staff and board members, with each organization providing a liaison to the broader coalition of partners and stakeholders.

3. The City of Grand Junction has requested suggestions for a framework for policy and project activity, including but not limited to recommendations and collaborative requests for city financial support in certain key areas of need.

Recommendation

The initial recommendations regarding a construct for ongoing dialog and project activity, along with suggestions for focal points of the work, are as follows. Multiple subject-matter experts stand ready to collaborate in this effort.

Ideas for Framework

Structure

There are two primary focal points that have developed in the early part of 2021. First, in a recent meeting of community partners, including the City, Chamber and GJEP, the group agreed that a single framework for dialog and action across the continuum of needs for shelter and housing, provided an avenue for collective efforts while preserving the ability of smaller groups, such as the Chamber/GJEP working group, to develop recommendations. With the MCPH continuing its focus on pandemic response, at the moment the group will not have access to MCPH for backbone support. This issue will need resolved.

Second, one sub-group focused on capacity to meet the needs of the community's homeless populations has been in dialog with the City regarding how the various homeless service providers can speak with one voice and work within the framework discussed herein to make resource allocation requests and recommendations to the City. Because this piece of the work is more time sensitive, we offer the following suggestions:

1. Notwithstanding the larger conversation regarding the substantive areas of the framework, as discussed below, a collective and collaborative approach in partnership with the City of Grand Junction to address homelessness is desired;
2. Develop a Homeless Service Providers Advisory Committee to the Grand Junction City Council, which will, in part, make recommendations to the Council regarding annual resource allocations to meet the needs of those providers and the people they serve. The work of this Committee will require intensive staff supports, the details of which are yet to be determined. A more structured approach in this arena will allow the community to be better informed regarding national, state and local policy initiatives, funding and leveraged-funding opportunities, better organized to prioritize needs over time and provide a single liaison to the City. This group offers itself to meet with City Council and Staff to help develop this Committee.

Substance

The previously-mentioned and attached "Community Housing Group" document suggests work groups that would focus on Homeless Support, Affordable Housing, Home Ownership and Services. During the recent meeting with community partners, the City, Chamber and GJEP, the group concluded these designations were too siloed in their approach. Some members of the group offered an alternative

substantive construct, developed by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and attached herein, as an alternative method to divide the work. While the specific titles and sub-titles will need refined to meet this community's needs, organizing our work around more substantive areas and broader thinking is advisable. This group acknowledges that the work of Root Policy can and should significantly inform and guide the ongoing community work. If the Root Policy strategy recommendations focus specifically on the City of Grand Junction, perhaps the work suggested herein can have broader appeal throughout the Grand Valley. As a starting point the following suggestions are offered:

1. Land – regardless of the type of housing and/or services provided, the availability of land in well-received locations, with proper zoning and at a price that makes development successful, is a challenge.
2. Diversification – with purpose, significantly incentivize and diversify the types of housing being developed, to address multiple needs and interests, including but not limited to:
 - a. More condominiums and townhomes;
 - b. Smaller single-family homes for those interested in such a product;
 - c. More “lock and leave” options for people with active lifestyles, retirees and other people interested in such a product
3. Preservation – for both the existing housing stock and its current residents, the more effort to preserve affordability, enhance and sustain quality and keep households stabilized where they are, the better. This includes understanding opportunities to convert mobile home parks into ownership opportunities for the ground on which the mobile homes sit.
4. Moving Along the Continuum – Work with CHFA, mortgage lenders and other interested groups to develop a much more robust system of education and preparation services, and incentives for households to move from renting to owning their homes

Across this continuum of substantive areas, policy challenges present themselves. Density, challenges with housing discrimination, the highest and best use of public resources and many other considerations will emerge as issues that will need addressed.

Conclusion

Much work remains. This document simply provides an update and launching point for continued work to address the community's housing and supportive services challenges, from homelessness through home ownership. More specific suggestions will be generated as this effort continues. Working together, we can create a strategy and deliver products and services that meet the needs of the community. We look forward to this work.

Respectfully Submitted,

Housing Partners

- Grand Junction Housing Authority
- Grand Valley Catholic Outreach
- HomewardBound of the Grand Valley
- Karis, Inc. (The House)
- Housing Resources of Western Colorado
- Hilltop Community Resources

Community Partners

- Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce
- Grand Junction Economic Partnership
- Mesa County Public Health Department

Community Housing Group

Met 10.17.19

Design a plan to:

- Meet the housing need of our community right now
- Meet the long term housing need of our community
- Be prepared for incoming housing resources in 2022

Ultimate Goal: For all community members have housing that is safe, stable, affordable, accessible, and sustainable.

Values

Inclusion

Use of data

Respect and recognition for each other's
programs/agencies

Honesty and trust

Collaboration

Alignment with existing efforts

**Homeless
Support**

Bev Lampley

**Affordable
Housing**

Jody Kole

**Home
Ownership**

Katie Bowman
Janet Brink

Services

Sarah Robinson

Who needs to be at the table?
What is already being done?
What data are missing?

Initial thoughts on strategies?
What is the low hanging fruit?
What are front burner issues?

Reconvene

Thursday, Dec 5, 2019 11:30 am

Figure 7
LocalHousingSolutions.org
Policy Framework

1

Create and Preserve Dedicated Affordable Housing Units



- a. Establish Incentives or Requirements for Affordable Housing
- b. Generate Revenue for Affordable Housing
- c. Support Affordable Housing through Subsidies
- d. Preserve Existing Affordable Housing
- e. Expand the Availability of Affordable Housing in Resource-Rich Areas
- f. Create Durable Affordable Homeownership Opportunities
- g. Facilitate the Acquisition or Identification of Land for Affordable Housing

2

Reduce Barriers to New Supply



- a. Reduce Development Costs and Barriers
- b. Create Incentives for New Development

3

Help Households Access and Afford Private Market Homes



- a. Provide Tenant-Based Rental Assistance
- b. Promote Mobility for Housing Choice Voucher Holders
- c. Reduce Barriers to Homeownership
- d. Reduce Energy Use and Costs
- e. Combat Housing Discrimination

4

Protect Against Displacement and Poor Housing Conditions



- a. Enhance Renters' Housing Stability
- b. Enhance Homeowners' Housing Stability
- c. Improve Quality of Both New and Existing Housing
- d. Ensure the Ongoing Viability of Unsubsidized Affordable Rental Properties