

Westfield

Summary of the Westfield Community Housing Meeting

HAND moderated a conversation on **April 1, 2013**. The original meeting time was postponed due to snow, and participation at the meeting was slim. Further input about the needs assessment, community profile and potential strategies will be sought from numerous sources.

In attendance: Jennifer Miller (City of Westfield), David Gill (Washington Township Trustee), Joanna Bossi (Habitat for Humanity Hamilton County), Blain Crabtree (Volunteer), Nate Lichti (HAND).

Notes from Conversation and Responses to Questionnaire:

1. What most interested you?
 - Nearly half of households in Westfield have a child under 18 living at home
 - The significant challenges commuters face in balancing transportation and housing will be an ongoing issue
 - One-third of people said distance to employment and / or transportation are significant barriers to housing choice.
 - There are 152 households headed by single mothers who live in poverty in Fishers
 - Only 12% of survey respondents said they spend >35% of their income on housing
 - The number of reported experiences of unkempt houses (50% of survey respondents)
 - 30% of survey respondents said they themselves have been unable to make needed repairs to their homes
 - Popularity of the rehabbing vacant/abandoned homes
 - Question about correct Median Income: Is it \$86k or \$92k? (Fact Check)
 - 10% of households live on less than \$25,000 per year
 - The Salvation Army caseload needs further definition. Washington Twp Trustee is very intentional about referring clients to the Salvation Army, so this may influence the numbers. (1)
 - 36% of respondents to survey didn't think multi-family housing was an important issue (1)
 - Only 5% of houses were built before 1950.
 - Challenges in documenting the need for transitional housing in Westfield. It's very difficult to get an accurate count, and without any facilities (shelters or hotels), people are referred to other communities.
 - Crime in multi-family housing is a concern, especially in developments receiving federal subsidy.
2. What would you like to see happen in your community?
 - More Housing Choice in Hamilton County
 - More Mixed Use Development (2)
 - Affordable options for families without kids under 18
3. What strategies do you feel are most important to your community?
 - Financial counseling
 - Senior Housing

- Rehab of homes for both rental and homeownership
- Home repair programs for homeowners
- Support local entrepreneurship ventures – Increase activity in the Façade Grant program

Report on Survey Findings:

Long Form: 18 respondents

Short Form: 189 responses from three zip codes that encompass Westfield

- 46034 77
- 46062 85
- 46074 27
- The other zip codes containing parts of Westfield (ex. 46031, 46032) had few participants, and it's unclear whether those who participated were from Westfield or surrounding jurisdictions. Therefore, the three zip codes above were used to create the following summary.
 - Nearly 90% live in single family homes; a few live in apartment complexes, condos or mobile homes; and half of all responses came from households with children under 18 at home. All characteristics are fairly representative of the community.
 - **Very few respondents indicated they were burdened by their housing costs (12% paid over 35% of their income on housing).**
 - 50% of the people who answered the question about personal experiences said they've had unkempt houses in their neighborhood (73), and **30% said they themselves have been unable to make needed repairs to their homes (43)**. 63 people skipped the question.
 - A number of people made comments ranging from
 - The greatest number of people listed "Basic Shelter" as what housing means to you (15:18). 10 out of 18 also said it was a long-term investment and provided connections to neighbors (long-form only).
 - Most do not plan to make any changes (12:18), but 3 plan to move into larger homes, and 2 plan to downsize (long-form only).
 - 55% listed the high cost of housing as a barrier to housing choice in Hamilton County. **One-third of people said distance to employment and/or transportation are significant barriers.**
 - 57% said "Affordable Housing" is needed in Hamilton County (105), and "Senior Housing" was second at 36% (67). One-third said more single family homes are needed.
 - Over 70% of respondents listed the following issues as having importance in Hamilton County:
 - General Affordability (85%)
 - Addressing Vacant/Abandoned Homes (79%)
 - Housing Quality (74%)
 - Foreclosure Prevention (74%)
 - Housing for Seniors (72%)

- Proximity to Employment Opportunities (70%)
- 36% said a Lack of Multi-Family Housing is not an important issue. 32% did not have an opinion and 26% thought it is important.
- Comments gathered from the survey included
 - These items have been problematic:
 - Speed limit is too high on residential street
 - No nearby gas station
 - Water is terrible and costs too much (2 noted rate increases)
 - Internet providers are poor – service too slow
 - High property taxes
 - Landlord won't make any repairs
 - "lying city officials"
 - Other Barriers to Housing Choice include:
 - Needs a grocery store nearby (mixed-use development)
 - Old and moldy apartments
 - Two respondents talked about housing for those with "Chemical Sensitivity Health Issues", and the difficulty these folks have in finding housing.
 - Transitional Housing - 6 months or less
 - High property tax rates
 - Distance to higher education
 - Transportation – traffic congestion
 - One person said: "I can barely afford to live in the city I work for."
 - Housing recommendations included a range of opinions:
 - Fewer apartments – one specifically said fewer 'Federal Aided' apartments, but one also said we needed more apartments that take Section 8.
 - More Habitat for Humanity housing opportunities
 - Affordable Housing for College Students, Young Couples and Empty Nesters
 - Transitional housing for those with criminal backgrounds or in need of temporary housing
 - Larger lot sizes with easy access to things
 - Smaller, more unique housing (less track houses)
 - Accessible housing for aging population
 - Housing for those with "Chemical Sensitivities".