



Southwood Villas FAQs

Here are the answers to some frequently asked questions about HAND's planned Southwood Villas development and an upcoming Tipton Board of Zoning Appeals hearing.

Have others that aren't addressed here? Please contact Interim Executive Director Andrea Davis at 317-674-8108 or andrea@handincorporated.org.

Q: Who will be living at Southwood Villas?

A: Only seniors age 55 and older who earn less than 60 percent of Tipton's area median income—\$28,850 for an individual or \$33,000 for a couple—will be allowed to live at Southwood Villas. All residents must pass criminal background and credit checks, and they must have their household income verified every year.

Q: So you're bringing poor people into our community?

A: No. Since HAND does not actively market its affordable senior apartments, tenants typically are already residents of the community where the property is located. The overwhelming majority of HAND applicants are simply looking for a less expensive housing option near where they already live.

Q: Are you sure Tipton has low-income seniors who need housing?

A: Absolutely positive. According to the United Way of Indiana's 2018 ALICE report, about 35 percent of Tipton County's senior households struggle to afford basic needs, including housing. In late February 2020, TWG Development had a 78-person waiting list for 49 affordable senior units it is building in Tipton.

Q: But it's low-income housing: Won't that hurt surrounding property values?

A: Actually, research has shown that attractively designed, well-maintained affordable properties have had positive impacts on neighborhoods. A 2016 study found that residential properties adjacent to HAND's Hamilton County communities actually gained assessed value.

Q: How is that possible?

A: As a Community Housing Development Organization, HAND is able to access grants and low-interest loans that fund the bulk of construction, allowing contractors to use high-quality building materials such as fiber cement siding. In exchange for the construction funding, HAND agrees to keep rents below federal limits for a period of time, usually 15-30 years.

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Q: How much will you invest in Southwood Villas?

A: HAND has received a commitment for \$2 million in funding from the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority to build nine units on five lots on Southwood Drive. A bank is providing the balance of about \$100,000.

Q: Why did you choose Southwood Drive? Aren't there better locations for affordable housing?

A: Actually, Southwood Drive is an ideal location for the kind of infill development that HAND does. The property had been on the market for years without selling, perhaps because of its odd shape or maybe because of the location next to a high school football field. But it also is within walking distance of a public park, health care providers including an IU Health hospital, and the county fairgrounds—amenities that strengthened HAND's application for funding because of the proximity. And it is close to the library, restaurants and shops that bring Tipton's wonderful downtown to life.

Q: Your fact sheet says the Southwood Drive land is already zoned for multifamily use. So why are you asking for zoning variances?

A: We are seeking variances to three development standards included in Tipton's zoning ordinance: a requirement that we construct a fence between our property and our single-family neighbors, a requirement that each rental unit have two parking spaces, and a requirement that each dwelling unit be located on a lot that is at least 8,000 square feet. Here's why:

- One of our neighbors already has a fence along the length of our shared property line on one side, and a utility easement runs through the property on the other side.
- We know from experience that seniors who live in affordable housing typically do not own two vehicles, and we don't want to pave over green space to build parking that will not be used.
- Of the 20 other single-family parcels on Southwood Drive—all of which are already developed—only four meet the 8,000-square-foot-per-dwelling-unit standard. At the east end of the street, the two quadplexes that launched Southwood Drive development in the early 1990s are located on lots that average 5,053 square feet per dwelling unit—only about 500 square feet per unit larger than what HAND is proposing.

Q: How long will construction take if the variances are approved?

A: If everything goes as planned, we could finish construction and start moving tenants in by mid-2021.

Q: How can someone who is interested in living at Southwood Villas apply?

A: HAND will open its waiting list for Southwood Village a few months before construction is complete to allow time for property managers to vet applicants and complete the income verification process.

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