

AFFORDABLE HOUSING



AFFORDABLE HOUSING 101

The mission of the Nashville Civic Design Center is to elevate the quality of Nashville's built environment and to promote public participation in the creation of a more beautiful and functional city for all. Towards this end, the Nashville Civic Design Center:

PROMOTES the Ten Principles of *The Plan of Nashville*, a vision for growth and development, created and endorsed by the citizens of Nashville;

EDUCATES the public about civic design through lectures by prominent speakers and workshops;

PROVIDES professional staff and highly-qualified design interns to consult on civic and other community development projects;

FACILITATES public dialogue about civic design and its impact through the Urban Design Forum. The Forum meets monthly at the Civic Design Center, provides events, lectures and an open forum for the debate of ideas and issues of interest to its members;

RESEARCHES and **PUBLISHES** reports on various civic design issues.

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civicedesigncenter.org
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Mural on the side of an affordable apartment building at 26th Avenue N & Clarksville Pike in North Nashville by Urban Housing Solutions

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INTRODUCTION

Nashville is experiencing a period of unprecedented growth that creates both challenges and opportunities for the city and its residents. In spite of the economic development across many sectors, the benefits are not equitably distributed to all members of the community. Many different factors can make neighborhoods attractive to new development, often increasing housing costs. This shift can force existing residents to move, prompting the question: is development without displacement possible? How do we ensure equitable development in our city, in order to create inclusive communities where current and future residents can afford to live?

The answers to these questions begin with understanding what affordable housing is and how it works. This guide is designed to prepare community members for conversations about housing in their neighborhood. You will learn key terms related to affordability and housing development, the history of housing programs and development efforts, the major types of housing subsidies, and the current state of Nashville's affordable housing crisis.

There is no silver bullet or one-size-fits-all solution, but with the appropriate combination of resources and strategies, Nashville can create an environment that supports equitable practices in building a more beautiful, functional, and affordable city for all.

IS HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AN ISSUE IN NASHVILLE?

Housing costs are an issue in nearly every American city and town today, and Nashville is no exception. Although the city has seen much economic development and growth, many families and individuals have not benefited from the changes happening around them.

The Housing Nashville report, released in 2017 by the Mayor's Office, estimated that by 2025 Nashville would be facing a deficit of 31,000 affordable apartments. That's 31,000 families and individuals that won't be able to afford to live in Nashville and contribute to this community. This shortage is creating a housing crisis that has significant economic impacts. It was estimated that in 2017, \$345 million would be recirculated into Nashville's local economy if families were not housing cost-burdened.¹

The construction of new, quality affordable housing, as well as the preservation of existing apartments, needs to be a priority for each neighborhood and the city as a whole. Just building housing, however, is not enough. In order to be most effective, affordable housing should be located in areas that are connected to other resources and opportunities — along transit lines, near employment centers, or paired with community anchors such as grocery stores, childcare centers, libraries, and neighborhood retail.

Public policy and community support both play key roles in the development of affordable housing. Advocating for equitable development policies in your community can help stem **gentrification** and displacement that can threaten naturally affordable areas. The first step in advocacy is education, so read on to learn more about what affordable housing is and how it works.

Note: Terms highlighted in **blue** are defined in the glossary at the end of this document.

18,000

THE NUMBER OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS LOST SINCE 2001 IN NASHVILLE

31,000

THE NUMBER OF AFFORDABLE UNITS THAT NASHVILLE WILL BE MISSING BY 2025

\$345M

WOULD BE RECIRCULATED INTO THE LOCAL ECONOMY IF FAMILIES WERE NOT HOUSING COST-BURDENED¹

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "AFFORDABLE" ANYWAY?

In the context of planning and real estate development, "affordable" has very specific definitions. Housing costs are considered to be "affordable" for a family if it accounts for less than 30% of their household income. This goes back to the old saying "a week's wages for a month's rent" and the idea that if a family is paying more than that, there won't be enough left for other critical expenses.²

Housing costs include more than just rent or mortgage payments — it also includes things like utilities, insurance, property taxes, and homeowner association fees. Whether you make \$20,000 or \$200,000 a year, you shouldn't be spending more than 30% of that on housing costs.

People who spend more than 30% of their income on housing are considered to be **cost-burdened**. People who spend more than 50% of their income on housing are **extremely cost-burdened**.

In Nashville in 2017, 44% of renter households were considered cost-burdened.¹



IS MY HOME AFFORDABLE?

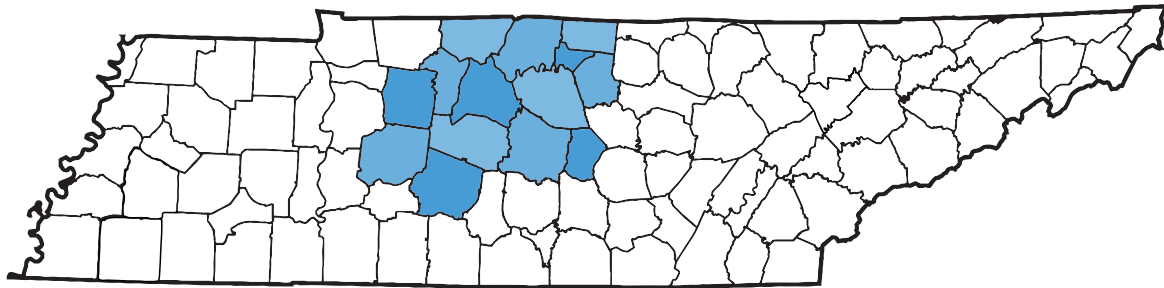
Let's test this 30% threshold for a typical family of five in Nashville. With two working parents and a child with a part-time job, their housing allowance would be \$1500 a month for rent, utilities, and insurance. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Nashville in February 2019 was about \$1597.³



WHO QUALIFIES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

When the government talks about "affordable housing" it refers to housing that is affordable for families at the middle or lower end of the income scale. The **area median income**, or AMI, is set each year by the **US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** and takes into account household size and geographic location. In Nashville, the AMI is actually based on the **Nashville—Davidson—Murfreesboro—Franklin MSA**, which is the 14-county metropolitan statistical area shown below. Table 1 shows the AMI limits for this MSA in 2018.

Different funding sources have different eligibility requirements related to the AMI. For example, our family of 5 from the previous example would qualify for an apartment built using grants from the **Barnes Housing Trust Fund** because their income — \$60,000 — is below 80% of AMI. This family would not qualify, however, for a project that uses **Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)** because they are above 60% of AMI. See pages 14-16 for more about how these different funding sources work.



Map of Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin MSA, which includes the following counties: Cannon, Cheatham, Davidson, Dickson, Hickman, Macon, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson, and Wilson.

FY2018 AREA MEDIAN INCOME LIMITS			PERSONS IN FAMILY							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON-MURFREESBORO-FRANKLIN MSA	EXTREMELY LOW INCOME	up to 30%	\$15,750	\$18,000	\$20,780	\$25,100	\$29,420	\$33,740	\$38,060	\$42,380
	VERY LOW INCOME	up to 50%	\$26,250	\$30,000	\$33,750	\$37,450	\$40,450	\$43,450	\$46,450	\$49,450
	60% LIMIT	up to 60%	\$31,500	\$36,000	\$41,560	\$50,200	\$58,840	\$67,480	\$76,120	\$84,760
MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME \$74,900	LOW INCOME	up to 80%	\$41,950	\$47,950	\$53,950	\$59,900	\$64,700	\$69,500	\$74,300	\$79,100
	100% AMI	up to 100%	\$52,500	\$60,000	\$67,500	\$74,900	\$80,900	\$86,900	\$92,900	\$98,900
	MODERATE INCOME	up to 120%	\$62,925	\$71,925	\$80,925	\$89,850	\$97,050	\$104,250	\$111,450	\$118,650

Table 1: 2018 Nashville Income Limits for Barnes Housing Trust Fund

WHAT ABOUT "WORKFORCE" HOUSING?

Affordable housing is workforce housing. When developers talk about "**workforce housing**" they are generally referring to housing that is "affordable" for people between 60%-120% of the AMI. This term can be misleading, however, because many people who fall below this 60% threshold are still in the workforce. Housing cost increases have far outpaced wage growth for the past several years⁴, leaving many hardworking citizens facing financial hardship.

The income range up to 120% of AMI includes all the occupations that keep Nashville running, including teachers, police officers, mail carriers, hospitality workers, construction laborers, childcare workers, bus drivers, restaurant workers, and public servants. In fact, nearly 90% of households that receive housing assistance work full- or part-time, are in training programs, or are elderly or disabled.⁵

**% of AREA
MEDIAN INCOME**

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

**AFFORDABLE
MONTHLY RENT**

OCCUPATION

WHO BENEFITS FROM AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME RESIDENTS

People who live in affordable housing see the most direct financial benefit of more manageable housing costs. Paying less in rent means more income is available for other critical expenses, like food, clothing, transportation, medicine, and education. For example, "severely cost-burdened households spent 41 percent less on food and 74 percent less on healthcare than their counterparts living in housing they could afford."⁶

NEIGHBORHOODS

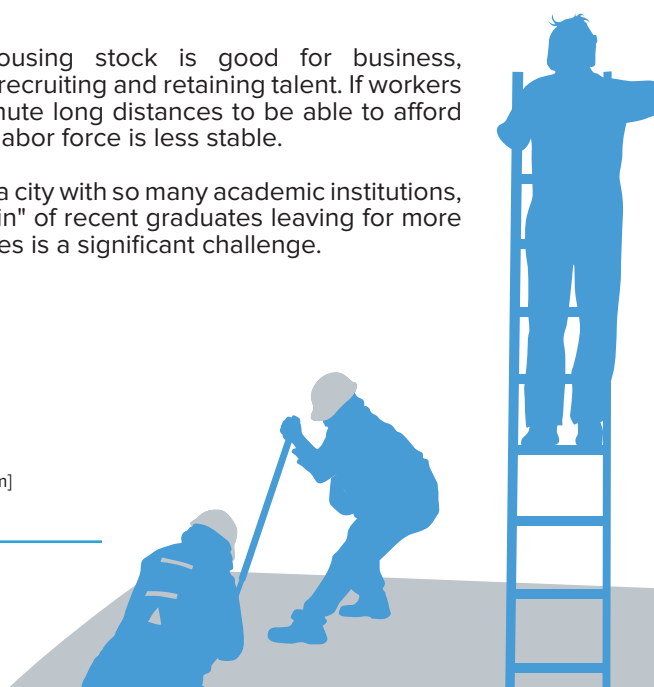
Affordable housing and mixed-income neighborhoods provide opportunities for a diversity of residents, making communities more stable and resilient. When people can afford to live near where they work, learn, and play, it can also reduce traffic congestion.

EMPLOYERS

Affordable housing stock is good for business, especially for recruiting and retaining talent. If workers have to commute long distances to be able to afford housing, the labor force is less stable.

Especially for a city with so many academic institutions, the "brain drain" of recent graduates leaving for more affordable cities is a significant challenge.

SOURCE: Average wage data from Bureau of Labor Statistics [www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_34980.htm]



70% OF NASHVILLIANS FALL INTO “AFFORDABLE” OR “WORKFORCE” INCOME BRACKETS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING (0-60% AMI)

WORKFORCE HOUSING (60-120% AMI)

0-30%
EXTREMELY LOW-INCOME

30-50%
VERY LOW-INCOME

50-80%
LOW-INCOME

80-120%
MODERATE INCOME

\$0-\$16K

\$16K-\$26K

\$26K-\$42K

\$42K-\$63K

\$0-\$320

\$320-\$650

\$650-\$975

\$950-\$1,500

DAY LABORERS,
PART-TIME WORKERS,
RECIPIENTS OF SSI OR
SSDI BENEFITS

HOSPITALITY WORKER,
CHILDCARE WORKER
BARTENDER,
SUBSTITUTE TEACHER,
NURSING ASSISTANT



CONSTRUCTION WORKER,
ELECTRICIAN,
BUS DRIVER,
HAIR STYLIST,
SECURITY GUARD,
PHARMACY TECHNICIAN

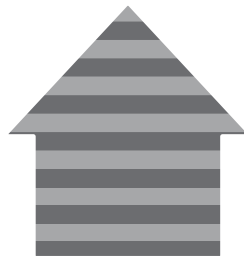
NURSE, TEACHER,
POLICE OFFICER,
POSTAL WORKER,
PLUMBER, CPA,
ARCHITECT,
FULL PROFESSOR



WHAT TYPES OF HOUSING ASSISTANCE ARE THERE?

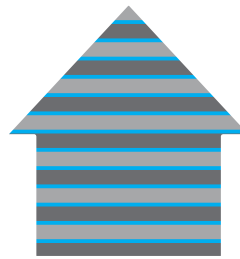
"Affordable housing" tends to be a catch-all term for many different programs and products. Each type of housing assistance serves a unique purpose, and having a diverse mix of housing resources available can help a community meet the unique needs of its residents. **Unfortunately, resources are limited and only one in four eligible households in the United States receives some kind of housing assistance.**

 WHAT THE RESIDENT PAYS EACH MONTH
 WHAT THE GOVERNMENT PAYS



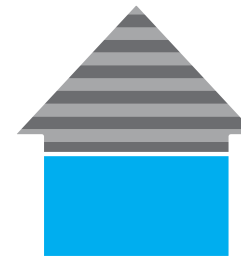
UNSUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Unsubsidized housing is market-rate housing that anyone can rent or buy, making monthly rent or mortgage payments without any public assistance. There isn't a single county in the United States where a full-time minimum-wage employee can afford the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment.



WITH RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Some housing assistance goes from the government directly to families to enable them to afford their rent. 90% of Federal Housing Assistance is in the form of three programs: [Housing Choice Vouchers](#), [Section 8 Project-based Rental Assistance](#), and [Public Housing](#).



AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

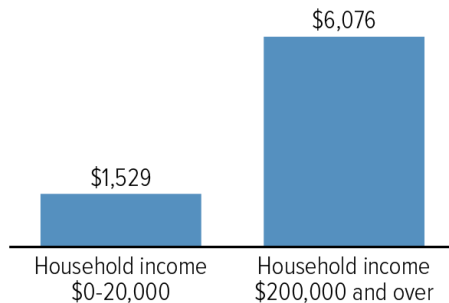
Other housing assistance goes to developers to enable them to charge lower rents. Today, most affordable housing developments use up-front equity investments through grants or tax credits to reduce the debt on the property - meaning property owners can keep rents lower but still pay off the cost of construction. See page 14 for more information.

WHY SHOULD I CARE? I DON'T NEED HOUSING ASSISTANCE.

Actually, chances are that you are already benefiting from some type of housing assistance. The vast majority of housing in the United States is subsidized in some way, and the federal government spends far more on subsidizing housing for high-income homeowners than it does for low-income renters. The mortgage interest deduction and other tax benefits for homeowners account for more than double the federal housing assistance budget for rental assistance, LIHTC, and public housing combined.

High-Income Households Get Four Times More Housing Benefits Than Low-Income Households

Annual federal housing spending per household



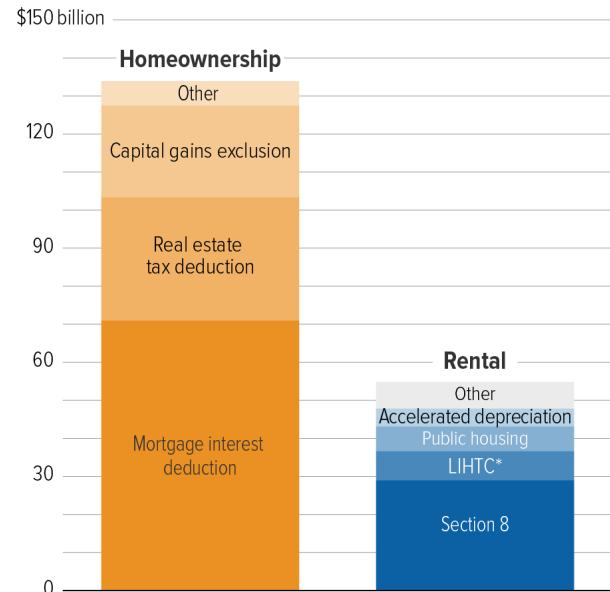
Note: Data are for 2015. Data available for mortgage interest and property tax deductions and Housing Choice Voucher, Section 8 Project-Based, Public Housing, Housing for the Elderly (Section 202), and Housing for People with Disabilities (Section 811) programs. These represent about three-fourths of homeowner and rental spending.

Sources: CBPP analysis of HUD program data, Census data on number of households in each income group, Joint Committee on Taxation tax expenditure estimates, and the Office of Management and Budget public budget database

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

Most Federal Housing Expenditures Benefit Homeowners

Federal housing expenditures in billions, 2015



*Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

Notes: These numbers do not include approximately \$840 million of housing-related spending through the Community Development Block Grant program, of which the majority is for homeownership assistance or rehabilitation of single-family homes. Figures are outlays and tax expenditures for fiscal year 2015. Tax expenditure estimates do not account for interaction effects, such as, for instance, how the use of one tax expenditure affects the use of others.

Sources: Office of Management and Budget public budget database; Joint Committee on Taxation, Estimates of Federal Tax Expenditures for Fiscal Years 2015-2019.

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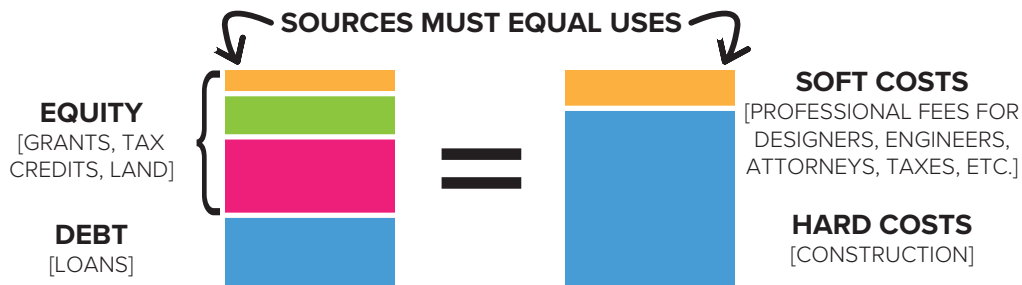
WHO PAYS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT?

Building housing is expensive! Construction costs continue to rise, especially in areas like Nashville where there is a high demand for construction labor, which drives up costs. Because the goal of affordable housing is to keep the rents low, affordable housing developers often need to layer many different sources of funding in a **capital stack** in order to make a project financially feasible. Real estate developers call this "**penciling**" and often use a **proforma** to determine whether a development is financially feasible. These spreadsheets estimate revenue and expenses for many years out to see if the project is sustainable. On average, affordable housing projects have 8-9 different funding sources to make them "pencil," which can make them very complicated, slow, and difficult.

These funding sources fall into two general categories: equity and debt. **Equity** includes funding such as grants that do not need to be paid back. **Debt** is money loaned to a project that must be paid back over time, usually with interest. In order for a project to pencil, the income generated by rent payments must, at a minimum, cover the operating expenses of the building and the repayment of any loans. If a project becomes more expensive, a developer must find a way to "fill the gap" with additional equity.

Funding for these projects typically comes from the federal, state, or local government, and is almost always accompanied by different requirements for income restrictions, rent levels, specific populations, reporting, and compliance periods. Federal funding is typically allocated by HUD but administered by the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA) or the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA).

Several of the existing funding resources for affordable housing are described on the next page. Most of these programs and initiatives are limited and therefore competitive. Many of these funding opportunities are only available once or twice a year, which can make it even more difficult for affordable housing developers to build the necessary capital stack to make a project feasible. It can also make it more difficult to compete with out-of-state investors who are able to access funding more quickly when properties are put on the market.





National Housing Trust Fund: established in 2008, this fund utilizes fees from mortgage transactions to make grants for affordable housing development. The first round of this funding in Tennessee was awarded in 2017. These funds are specifically for extremely low-income households (below 30% of AMI).

Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC): the most commonly-used program to develop affordable housing in the US today. See page 16 for more on this.

HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG): grants administered by the state and local housing authorities. These funds vary from year-to-year based on the federal budget and are increasingly limited.



Tennessee Housing Trust Fund: provides competitive grants for affordable housing, as well as funds for homebuyer education, emergency repairs and home modification. These funds are generally used for rural areas outside of Davidson County, but can also be accessed for development in Nashville.

Community Investment Tax Credit (CITC) Loans: used by banks to make low-interest loans to non-profits for developing affordable housing. This program is unique to Tennessee and is a win-win for developers, who can borrow money at 4% below the prime interest rate, and banks, who fulfill their obligations from the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) and receive a credit towards their taxes.



Barnes Housing Trust Fund: established in 2013 and named in honor of the late Reverend Bill Barnes, this fund provides grants for non-profit organizations to develop affordable rental or for-sale homes. To date the Fund has awarded \$27M, which has been leveraged for another \$127M of federal and private funding to create or preserve 1300 affordable units. However, without a sustainable, dedicated revenue source, the Barnes fund remains tenuous and under-funded.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): allows the cost of development within a designated redevelopment district to be financed through future increases in property taxes generated by the development itself. As private investments add to the tax base, the extra tax revenue is placed in a special fund which is then paid back into the project to offset the development costs.

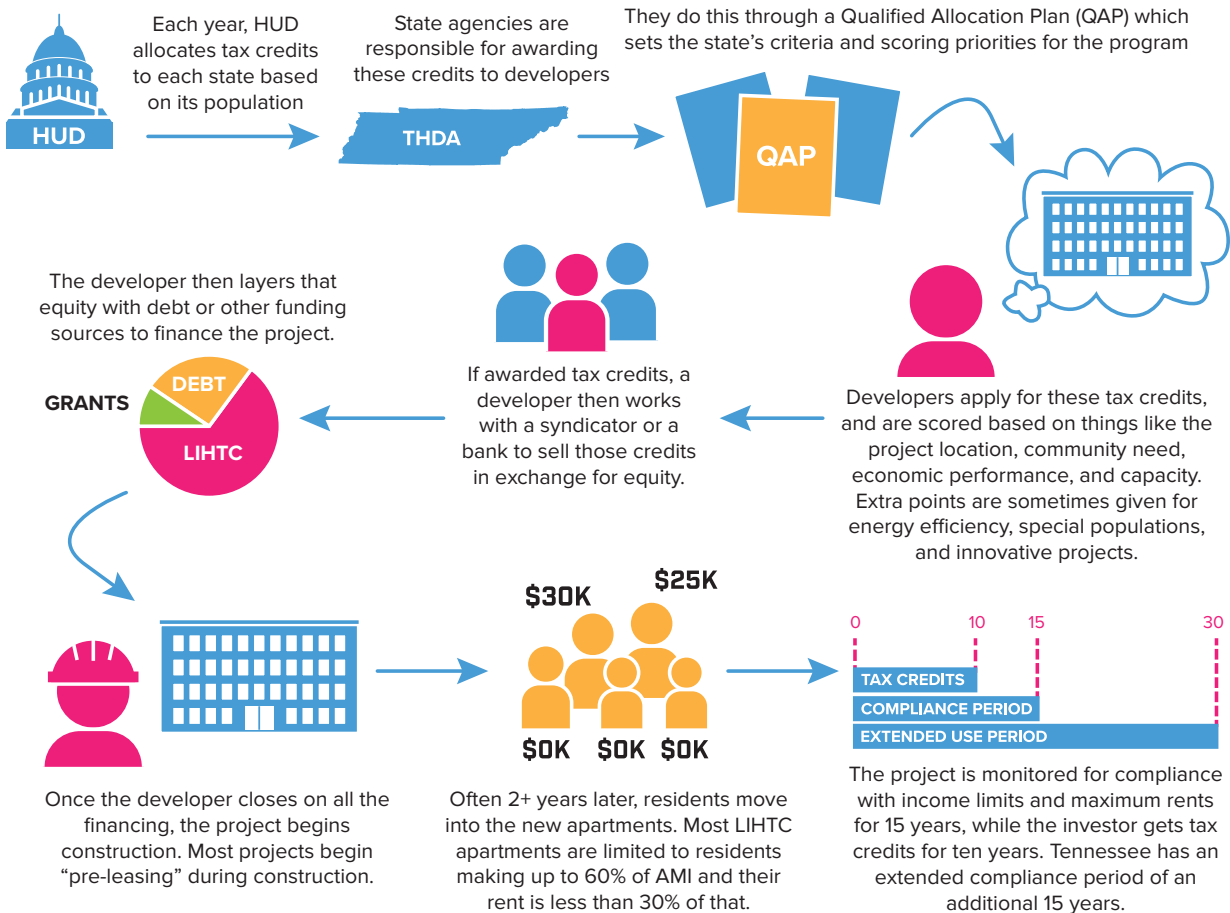
Housing Incentive Pilot Program (HIPP): intended to incentivize for-profit developers to include affordable units in their market-rate developments. HIPP provides grants to developers that cover the difference between what the market rent is and what they charge for an affordable unit.

Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT): provides a property tax abatement for affordable housing projects.

HOW DO THESE LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS WORK?

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) are the most effective tool today for building and preserving affordable housing. The program, which was created in 1986, has helped finance an estimated 2.3 million affordable units.⁷

However, the program is very complicated and can be cumbersome for developers who don't have much experience with the program. Below is a simplified explanation of how the program functions to create housing.

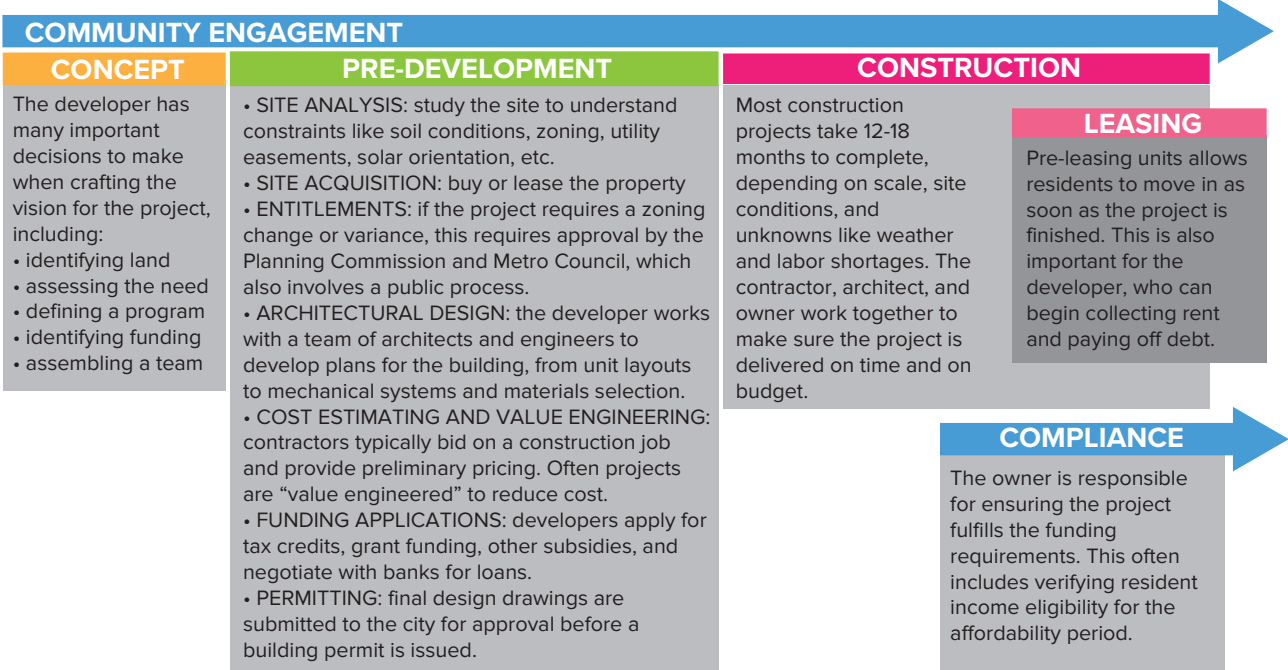


HOW LONG DO THESE PROJECTS TAKE?

Real estate development projects take a long time — often several years — from when a developer has the idea to when residents can move into the home.

Affordable housing projects often take even longer because of the complex process of aligning the necessary funding sources. Tax credits and many grants are only available once a year, so sometimes it takes a project several rounds of applications to secure the right capital stack. Affordable housing projects often have the added barrier of community resistance, which can delay a project for months or years, and sometimes even prevent it from happening altogether.

This "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) attitude is detrimental to housing development and prevents people from accessing and contributing to areas of opportunity. Ideally, the developer works with the community throughout the development process to ensure the project is meeting community needs and expectations. This can be a time-consuming and difficult process, but when true collaboration happens it generally results in a stronger, more sustainable project.



WHAT IS NIMBY, AND WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

NIMBY stands for "Not In My Back Yard" and refers to the attitude that affordable housing (or other development) is fine, but not in certain neighborhoods. NIMBYs frequently cite concerns about traffic, density, and crime. These concerns are often based on misconceptions about what affordable housing looks like and the impact it has on a community. Well-designed and thoughtfully developed housing can be an asset for neighborhoods and serve as both an anchor and a catalyst. Education, empathy, and vision are effective strategies for turning NIMBYs into YIMBYs (Yes In My Back Yard), but the first step should be simply to listen. Taking time to understand where people are coming from and why they respond in certain ways goes a long way in building strong support for a shared vision.

OTHER ATTITUDES YOU MAY ENCOUNTER

MINDY: Maybe In the Neighborhood Down Yonder [*gestures that way*]. MINDYs may be quick to volunteer other neighborhoods in an attempt to distract developers from their own community.

NIMTOF: Not In My Term Of Office. Specific to elected officials. Inviting council members, state representatives, and other decision makers to be part of the process can demonstrate support with constituents.

CAVES: Citizens Against Virtually Everything are some of the most vocal attendees at neighborhood meetings and are rarely supportive of anything.

BANANA: Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything. The most resistant group to development or change of any kind. Don't be a BANANA.

1

EDUCATION

Because affordable housing is a complex issue, it is often misunderstood. Historic examples like Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis and Cabrini Green in Chicago have left people with a negative picture of housing, but affordable housing today can be beautifully designed, high-quality, and well-integrated into communities. Educating the community about the realities of affordable housing and the challenges our neighbors are facing is the first step in building support for new projects.

2

EMPATHY

It is important to build empathy by humanizing housing. While some people respond well to data and facts, telling the story of real people who benefit from affordable housing can be very impactful. Most people know someone who would benefit from affordable housing, whether it's a child who recently graduated with high student loan debt, an aging parent living on a fixed income, or their favorite cashier or bartender.

3

VISION

Working together with neighbors and developers to create a vision for what the community should look like can help create shared ownership and investment in a successful project. Design charrettes and workshops can be useful tools for building this shared vision.

HOUSING MYTHBUSTERS

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON HOUSING

MORE HOUSING WILL CAUSE MORE TRAFFIC.

Increasing traffic is an unfortunate side effect of growth and having more commuters on the road. Building more housing near centers of employment or with access to transit can alleviate these pressures by giving residents more transportation options. Transit-oriented development (TOD) should always include affordable housing where appropriate, since many lower-income residents are more likely to utilize transit.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS UNATTRACTIVE AND POOR QUALITY.

These assumptions are often rooted in images of public housing from decades ago that was poorly designed and poorly maintained. Today, affordable housing is often indistinguishable from market-rate housing. Affordable housing developers and designers tend to drive innovation in the rest of the market by pushing for things like energy efficiency, healthy building materials, and quality common space because these efforts can have an even greater impact on the vulnerable populations that tend to access affordable housing.

AFFORDABLE OR MULTIFAMILY HOUSING WILL DECREASE MY PROPERTY VALUE.

In fact, multiple recent studies have shown that affordable housing does not depress nearby property values — and in some cases it even helped increase property values.^{8,9} Neighbors can help protect their property values by advocating for high-quality of design, construction, and management of the new buildings. Working with developers to advocate for things like high-quality and durable materials can make an affordable housing project a neighborhood asset for the long run. Nationwide, homes located near multifamily projects enjoy a slightly higher appreciation than those in solely single-family areas.¹⁰

AFFORDABLE HOUSING WILL INCREASE CRIME.

Again, multiple studies have debunked the assumption that increasing affordable housing or housing choice vouchers increases crime. A report from the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy concluded that voucher holders tend to settle in areas that already have higher crime rates, often out of last resort because other areas are out of reach. This perpetuates the negative stereotype and creates additional barriers to entry for lower-income individuals and families. When families are able to access affordable housing in areas of higher opportunity, there is no evidence that it results in an increase in crime.

WE SHOULD JUST RAISE WAGES SO PEOPLE CAN PAY MORE IN RENT.

Increasing wages would certainly go a long way to help lower-income families and individuals be able to afford higher housing costs. Unfortunately, Tennessee state legislature will not allow Nashville to mandate a higher minimum wage, so for the time being that decision lies with individual employers. As the cost of living continues to increase, employers may find that it becomes a barrier to retention or recruitment, and will either have to be more competitive with their compensation or perhaps invest in housing as a cost of doing business.

IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO LIVE HERE, YOU SHOULD GO SOMEWHERE ELSE.

Communities benefit from having options for a wide range of residents that fill many different roles, from doctors and lawyers to public servants, cashiers, teachers, and hospitality workers. In addition, it can be very expensive to move, and there are many financial and social barriers to relocation. Often when families relocate, they lose the critical support networks of family, friends, and faith communities.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing development in America has changed a lot over the decades, but understanding how we got here is important for talking about solutions for the future.

1968: the Fair Housing Act is passed to ban discrimination in mortgage lending and leasing, although such practices still persist.

1937: United States Housing Act establishes the first public housing to address inadequate and unsafe housing conditions.

1965: the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 elevates housing to a cabinet position and established the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).



WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?	UNITED STATES HOUSING AUTHORITY	HOUSING AND HOME FINANCE AGENCY (HHFA)
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CONTEXT	GREAT DEPRESSION	WWII	URBAN RENEWAL
	<p>The Great Depression caused extreme economic hardship for millions of Americans, resulting in severely inadequate housing stock and widespread poverty.</p>		<p>Massive "urban renewal" projects such as highway construction and "slum clearance" frequently decimate African American communities and result in racial and socioeconomic segregation.</p>

1974: the Housing and Community Development Act gives more authority to local public housing agencies (PHAs) and lays the foundation for Section 8 rental assistance and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs.

1977: Congress passes the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), designed to encourage banks and financial institutions to lend and invest in the communities where they are located, including low- to moderate-income areas. This was intended to combat redlining, a common practice of denying loans and insurance in predominantly African-American neighborhoods.

1986: Tax Reform Act creates the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, one of the most widely-utilized tools for financing affordable housing construction.

1987: McKinney-Vento Act establishes new programs and services to address homelessness.

1992: the HOPE VI Program is established to provide grants for rehabilitating severely distressed public housing properties.

2008: the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) is established as part of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act (HERA). The first new federal housing resource in a generation, this fund uses mortgage fees to provide housing grants targeted at the lowest income residents. The first allocation of funding to states did not occur until 2016.

SEE TIMELINE INSET

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)



INCREASED HOMELESSNESS

Economic shifts, reduced housing resources, deinstitutionalization of people with mental illness, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic contribute to a dramatic increase in homelessness across the United States.

GREAT RECESSION

Sub-prime mortgages and risky lending practices contributed to the Great Recession, which had swift and severe impacts on the American housing market. While the economy has largely rebounded, many communities are still working to recover from waves of foreclosure. National homeownership levels – especially for millennials and minorities – remain low.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE ABOUT IT?

RECENT HOUSING SOLUTIONS IN NASHVILLE



2010

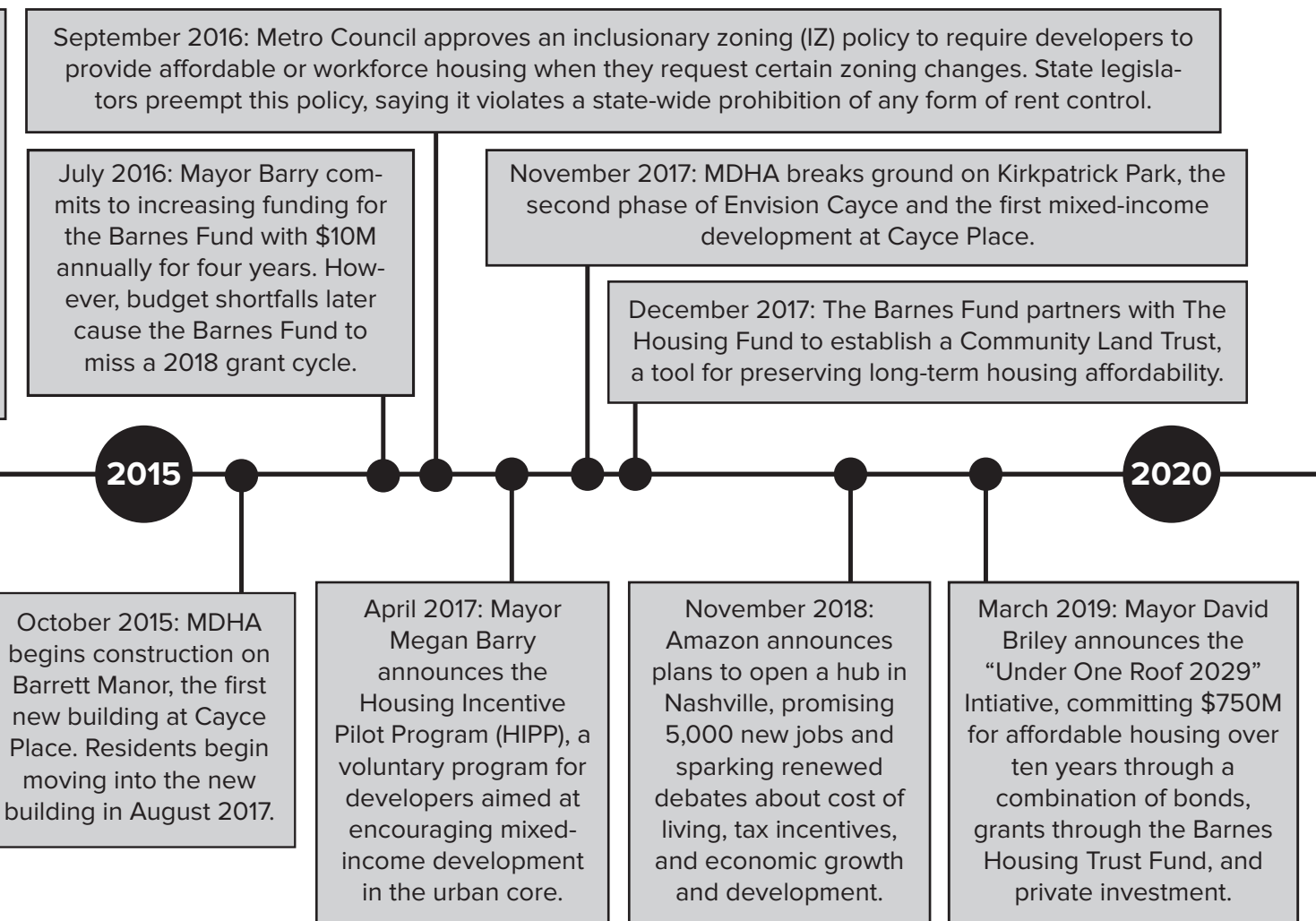
In the 1990s and early 2000s, development focused on the conversion of undeveloped and vacant land for one- and two-family subdivisions. Mortgage interest deduction programs, federal and state policies, zoning, and a lack of environmental concern led to more widespread suburban development and sprawl.

From 2009 to 2013, increases in land value were focused in and near Downtown Nashville, reflecting an increased demand for more urban neighborhoods with walkability, access to transit, employment, and other community amenities.



March 2013: MDHA begins the Envision Cayce planning process for a mixed-income redevelopment of Cayce Place through the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD program). This program transfers ownership of federal public housing to local municipalities to leverage private investment for renovation and redevelopment.

2013: The Barnes Affordable Housing Trust Fund is established in honor of the late Reverend Bill Barnes, a longtime champion for affordable housing and social justice. However, the fund does not have an adequate dedicated revenue source.



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

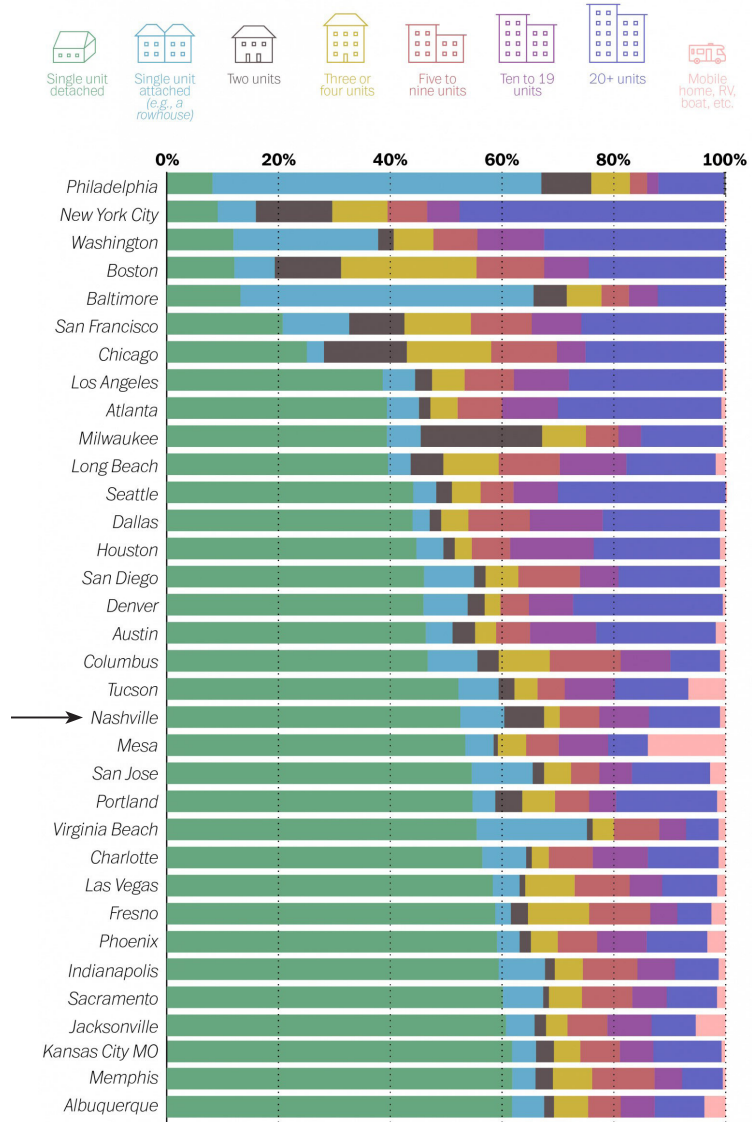
Between 2000 and 2010, the Nashville-Davidson metropolitan area grew by an average of 5,500 people each year — but since 2010 that growth has nearly doubled to 10,700 people per year. Much of this population growth is driven by increased economic opportunity in the city, but not all Nashville residents have access to those economic benefits. At the current rate of growth and housing construction, is it estimated that there will be a shortage of up to 31,000 units of affordable housing by 2025.

The city's vibrant arts culture, music history, and economic opportunity have made the city a desirable place to live, but the increased demand for housing has fueled rising rents and property values — and in turn, property taxes. Neighborhoods that were historically affordable are experiencing increased rates of gentrification and displacement. Longtime residents can easily get burned by development in “hot” corridors.

Housing affordability is, at its roots, an issue of supply and demand. As Nashville grows and more people want to live here, demand for housing increases and housing prices follow. In order to stem this rapid increase, the city needs to build and preserve more housing. The majority of Nashville's housing stock has historically been detached, single-family homes. In order to increase the amount of available housing without sacrificing quality of life to things like cost of living and traffic, we must make smart investments in density and connectivity, while preserving the character of the neighborhoods and people that make Nashville such a great place to live.

The way we live, city by city

Occupied housing units, by building type



WAPO.ST/**WONKBLOG**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Icons by Martin Lebreton and Arthur Shlain, The Noun Project



Signs lamenting the loss of neighborhood homes appeared on construction sites in neighborhoods like Inglewood in protest of redevelopment.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?

POLICY, DESIGN, AND FUNDING SOLUTIONS

1. Maximize the Community Land Trust. Nashville's new **Community Land Trust** is a great tool for preserving affordability in perpetuity. Providing the necessary funding and capacity for this resource will provide a path to affordable homeownership in the long term by effectively separating and stabilizing the cost of land from the value of a home.

2. Educate and incentivize landlords to participate in the Section 8 program. Between 2012 and 2015, the number of landlords accepting Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers dropped by 12%.¹¹ This makes it increasingly difficult for families to find somewhere to use a voucher, if they're lucky enough to get off the waiting list and receive one. The Section 8 process can be burdensome for landlords, requiring additional inspections and paperwork. Streamlining this process, as well as incentivizing participation through grants or no-interest loans for property upgrades or resident services, could help recruit new landlords to the program.

3. Streamline the permitting and plans review process for affordable housing developments. With the construction boom in Nashville, the permitting and plans review process is increasingly long and frustrating. Particularly for projects that are receiving public funding, this presents a challenge because many of these programs have performance and compliance timelines which can be jeopardized by construction delays. Fast-tracking these projects puts the public investment to work sooner, bringing units online as quickly as possible.

4. Encourage investment from major employers and industries who rely on a low- to moderate-income workforce, such as hospitality and healthcare. There are several examples of employers who struggled to retain or attract the workforce they needed and stepped up to build or invest in affordable housing as a forward-thinking business decision.

5. Continue to improve public transportation as a means to connect more affordable areas to opportunities and resources. Nashvillians spend most of their monthly budget on housing, followed by transportation. Owning, maintaining, insuring, and using a private vehicle can be extremely costly — not to mention the time cost of driving and sitting in traffic. Improved public transportation allows residents to save money and travel more efficiently, economizing the link between doors (homes) and desks (jobs and schools).

6. Identify and secure a sustainable, dedicated, and robust revenue stream for the Barnes Housing Trust Fund. Currently, fees from Nashville's Short Term Rental program go to the Barnes Fund. However, this is not a sufficient source of funds. Many housing trust funds in similar cities charge linkage fees or impact fees on market-rate development to fund affordable housing investments. In Seattle, a linkage fee on new hotel construction was used to generate an estimated \$195M over ten years to fund new affordable housing.¹² Such fees could generate significant resources at a small premium on for-profit development — especially in industries that rely on the low- to moderate-income workforce for success.

7. Identify neighborhoods and communities at-risk for gentrification, and work with residents to organize and advocate for themselves to collaborate with developers. Homeowner education is critical in areas where developers are rapidly purchasing and redeveloping aging housing stock. Knowing the value of their land can help homeowners make informed decisions about whether, or when, to sell. Communities that are informed about the design and development process and where public input is possible can negotiate more effectively for things like **community benefit agreements**.

8. Build design capacity for affordable housing developers by connecting them with local designers, architects, and engineers to maximize resources through creative design solutions. Although fees for these services can be expensive, high-quality design can make a significant difference in the community response and effectiveness of affordable housing projects. Good design can also impact energy efficiency, reducing utility bills for residents, and facilitate better health outcomes by promoting physical activity and social cohesion. Increasing access to these design services through initiatives like pro-bono consulting or workshops for organizations receiving Barnes Housing Trust Fund grants could help bridge that gap.

9. Facilitate creative construction techniques, like modular/pre-fabricated, and materials, such as cross-laminated timber. The construction industry has been notoriously slow to evolve, despite significant advances in technology. Stick-frame construction has been used for centuries, yet site-built construction is subject to weather delays, inconsistencies in craftsmanship, and labor shortages. Many contractors are wary of new and seemingly untested building techniques and materials, and increase their cost to cover any associated risk. As the industry and the demographics of its labor force change, engaging in education, training, and incentives for innovative construction strategies can help mainstream new technologies.

10. Utilize a portion of the Barnes fund as a revolving loan guarantee fund, enabling non-profit developers to borrow a higher percentage of the project cost with the security of a guarantor. Many non-profits are able to borrow money, often at lower interest rates — but a bank rarely will lend 100% of a project's cost. Rather than solely giving grants as equity, the Barnes fund could also serve as a loan guarantee fund to enable non-profit developers to access more debt.

11. Create a social impact fund for interested investors to contribute funds for a long-term, low-risk return. There will always be a need for affordable housing, making it a stable investment option for patient investors. Creating a local social impact investment fund or a **real estate investment trust (REIT)** can help leverage multiple smaller investments for greater impact.

12. Invest in workforce training and apprenticeships for construction trades to ease the labor shortage and promote economic mobility. A four-year college degree is not for everyone, yet many construction trades earn a decent living with an apprenticeship or on-the-job training programs. Investing in such programs can help lower the cost of housing while increasing the available workforce and opening up new employment opportunities.

13. Allow for debundled or reduced parking where appropriate to reduce development costs and redirect investment into places for people rather than places for cars. A single parking stall can cost anywhere from \$10,000 (surface parking) to \$60,000 (below grade garage) for 162 sf of vehicle storage. Where appropriate, reductions in parking requirements can allow those funds to go towards square footage for apartments, instead.

15. Facilitate and encourage "missing middle housing" by adopting form based code and upzoning inner ring neighborhoods. The majority of Nashville's housing stock is detached, single-family homes. Missing middle housing includes duplexes and triplexes, accessory dwelling units, cottage courts, and other typologies that are not currently acceptable by many land use policies. Many of these typologies allow for "invisible density" to be added to established neighborhoods without disrupting the community character. Pairing these strategies with transit and reduced off-street parking requirements has been particularly effective in linking low- to moderate-income households to areas of higher opportunity.



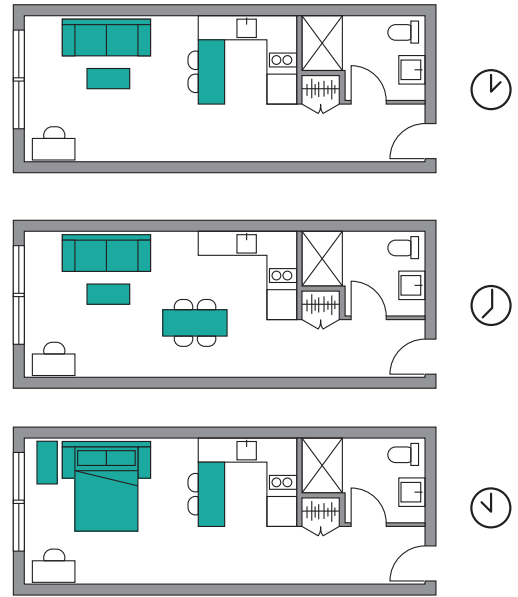
Diagrammatic plan view of an example missing-middle neighborhood, with different housing typologies represented by each color which correspond to descriptions on the following pages.

MICRO-UNITS

These very small apartments — usually around 350 square feet — lease at approximately 20%-30% lower monthly rent than traditional units, yet they retain very high value ratios (rent per square foot). Although equipped with full kitchens and bathrooms, the small spaces call for overlapping uses: sleeping space is combined with living space, and proximity to transit, quality outdoor space, and amenities like grocery stores, restaurants, and nightlife, is key.

The number of one-person households is increasing as people get married later, divorce more frequently, and live longer. This increased demand for individual housing units puts added stress on the housing market, and many areas are shifting towards a greater mix of smaller studio and one-bedroom units within traditional apartment complexes.

This compact, efficient housing type may require residents to make certain lifestyle adjustments. However, it can also allow seniors to live independently, respond to changing household sizes and demographics, reduce sprawl through urban infill, reduce energy consumption, and free up larger units for families.



LIVE-WORK UNITS

Live-work units allow for a mix of uses in a single unit with a single owner. Main Streets across America show the legacy of live-work arrangements, with small retail or commercial uses on the ground floor that contribute to a vibrant street life, with residential uses above or behind. This allows a small business or entrepreneur to combine professional and personal expenses with the added convenience of an extremely short commute.

Loft-style live-work units have started to appear around Nashville, largely to support the growing number of artists, creatives, and makers who contribute to the vibrant creative culture of the city. In these cases, special consideration should be given to the flexibility of these spaces, building in a balance of privacy and visibility for the resident and their clients or customers.

TOWNHOUSES

Townhouses are generally attached single-family homes in a row, each with their own entrance from the street and a fairly small footprint on multiple levels. This typology creates density and walkability, but maintains autonomy and variety as each unit often has a unique aesthetic.

Townhouses are often a widely-accepted moderator between single-family detached homes and higher-density multi-family developments.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU)



These self-contained residential units are located on the same lots as existing single-family homes; depending on their location relative to the primary dwelling unit, ADUs can be classified into three categories: interior, attached, and detached. The accessibility of this housing type and practical size has, in recent years, increased its popularity in a variety of neighborhoods. These accessory dwelling units cannot be subdivided or sold separately from the lot, and one of the units must be owner-occupied. Because ADUs in Nashville must be under 700 square feet, these relatively small residential units may be best suited for individuals, young couples, or elderly residents, and can often be at lower price points. This added rental income can also help offset the housing costs of the principal resident.

1. INTERIOR ADUs

Interior ADUs are located within the primary dwelling, and are typically built through conversion of existing space, such as an attic or basement.

2. ATTACHED ADUs

These are added on to the primary structure, and can be located to the side, rear, or on top of the pre-existing dwelling.

3. DETACHED ADUs (DADUs)

DADUs are separate from the residential structure itself, and may be added to the property after construction.

ALLEY HOUSES

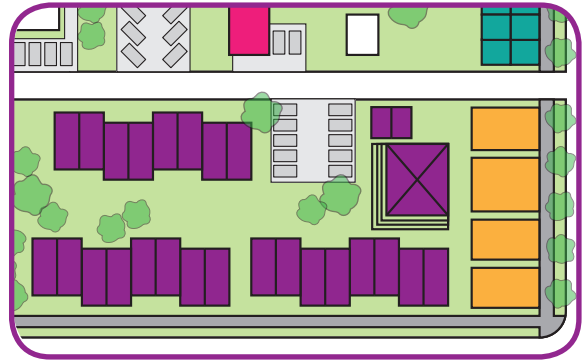
Alley houses or “laneway houses” are a type of detached accessory dwelling unit (DADU) that fronts an alley. Where detached garages or “carriage houses” already exist, these structures can be converted to small residential units at a scale that does not disrupt the existing context.

This model of DADUs could be integrated into Nashville’s older single-family neighborhoods, where many lots already have carriage houses or garages. Historic and neighborhood preservation overlays would need to be considered when designing these units.



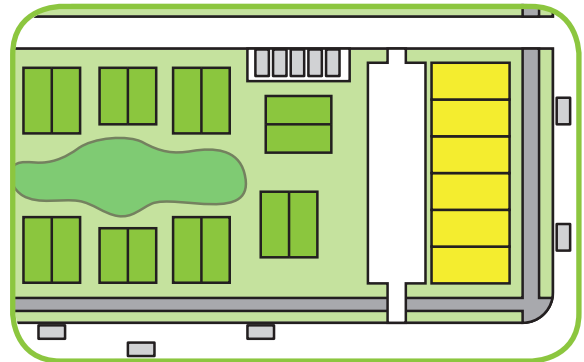
COHOUSING

Cohousing is a type of intentional, collaborative housing in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of their neighborhoods. This community-style living encourages sociability, while retaining privacy with individual living spaces. Cohousing can reduce energy costs and allow for smaller, more efficient dwelling units by incorporating shared facilities, such as the ‘common house’, which may include a large dining room, kitchen, lounge, laundry room, and recreational facilities. A “guest suite” may also be included on site.



COTTAGE COURTS

A cottage court is a collection of several small- to medium-sized homes located around central amenities or gardens. These homes — usually less than 1,000 square feet — make efficient use of expensive land while providing a place for community gathering. Cottages have the same construction expenses as traditional homes (kitchens, bathrooms) with less of the profit from bedrooms, living rooms, and dining rooms that add value to the home but are much less expensive to build. Because of the higher per-square-foot costs, sufficient density of four to twelve units is critical.



DUPLEX/QUADPLEX

Duplexes are two separate housing units that share a common wall, while a quadplex is a building divided into four separate dwelling units. Traditionally, these buildings do not occupy more lot area than an average-sized house, and can be designed to look like a single-family home to integrate into established neighborhoods. In neighborhoods where homes are traditionally larger, dividing an existing home (sometimes referred to as a manor house) into more modest, affordable units can facilitate a mixed-income community.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS THE FOUNDATION OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

When families and individuals are housing cost burdened, they are less likely to have savings and more likely to have difficulties paying for core needs such as food, transportation, health care, and clothing.¹³ Investing in affordable housing is investing in a more sustainable and equitable future for Nashville.

Affordability is just one of the many barriers to housing access. Beyond being able to make rent, families and individuals may face discriminatory lending and rental practices, physical inaccessibility of homes, lack of public transportation, substandard housing, and countless other factors. These road blocks disproportionately affect low-income, minority, and elderly residents. Creating an equitable community for all Nashvillians will require bold steps to dismantle all of these barriers.

The quality of the product — the house, apartment building, or neighborhood — is critical, but so is the quality of the process. We need to work to ensure that those most directly impacted by these issues are at the table when designing solutions. Community members are the experts on their neighborhood and should be recognized and consulted as such. Engagement must go beyond checking a box to fulfill a requirement, and actually integrate community experience with professional expertise.

It's clear that Nashville is facing a significant affordable housing shortage. The scale of this issue demands a comprehensive, coordinated, and cross-disciplinary effort to promote policy, funding, and design solutions that work together to move the needle. The housing challenges in Nashville are not unique to Music City, but the solutions that we design can be. In a city that embraces its creative soul and welcoming spirit, we must all champion creative ways to ensure access to housing for all our neighbors — because we can't afford not to.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KELSEY OESMANN, AIA is a licensed architect and an Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellow jointly hosted by the Nashville Civic Design Center and Urban Housing Solutions — Nashville’s leading nonprofit provider of affordable housing. She is also the creator of “The Game of Rent”, a community teaching tool that leverages local data to build empathy and understanding about affordable housing through play. After earning her Bachelors of Architecture from Virginia Tech and designing mixed-use and multi-family projects in Washington, DC for three years, Kelsey biked across the country with the nonprofit Bike & Build to raise funds and awareness for affordable housing. She currently serves as the chair of the Emerging Professionals Committee for the Middle Tennessee chapter of the American Institute of Architects, is an active member of the Urban Land Institute Housing Action Council, and never leaves home without a good pen.



KEY TERMS

AFFORDABLE

Housing is considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of a household's gross income.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

By federal standards, housing that costs less than 30% of a household's gross income when that household makes 60% or less of the area median income.

AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI)

Area Median Income values are established each year by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and take into account geographic location and household size.

BARNES HOUSING TRUST FUND

Named for the late Reverend Bill Barnes, this fund provides grants to non-profits in Nashville for the development or preservation of housing that is affordable to low-income households.

CAPITAL STACK

The mix of funding (capital) sources used to develop a given project, including things like grants, tax credits, and debt.

COST BURDENED

A household is considered housing cost burdened when they pay more than 30% of their income towards housing costs.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT (CBA)

A contract signed by community groups and a real estate developer to secure specific amenities or mitigations, like improvements to a nearby park, commitments of affordable housing, or local hiring policies.

COMMUNITY LAND TRUST (CLT)

A tool for preserving affordability long-term by effectively separating the value of the land, which is held in trust by a non-profit, and the improvement (the home or apartment building). If a homeowner wants to sell the home, it must be sold to another qualified buyer at an affordable price.

DEBT

Funds loaned to a development that must be repaid over time, usually with interest.

EXTREMELY COST-BURDENED

A household is considered extremely housing cost burdened when they pay more than 50% of their income towards housing costs.

EXTREMELY LOW-INCOME

A person or household is considered extremely low income (ELI) if they make 30% or less of the area median income.

FAIR MARKET RENT (FMR)

Fair Market Rent is the rent, as determined by HUD, that would be required to be paid in the particular housing market area in order to obtain privately owned, decent, safe and sanitary rental housing of modest (non-luxury) nature with suitable amenities. FMR includes utilities, except telephone/internet.

GENTRIFICATION

The process of buying and renovating traditionally low-income areas, thus appealing to middle- and upper-class residents and patrons. The result is an increase in property value of the area that often displaces residents who can no longer afford to pay for housing and other increased costs.

GRANTS

Funds committed to a project that do not need to be repaid. These fall into the equity side of a capital stack.

HOUSEHOLD

All the people that live in a dwelling unit. This may be an individual, couple, family, or unrelated roommates.

HOUSING AUTHORITY

A state or local quasi-governmental agency that manages housing-related activities, including housing assistance programs, public housing, etc. In Nashville, the two governing agencies are THDA (Tennessee Housing Development Agency) and MDHA (Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency).

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS

A form of housing assistance that enables eligible low-income households to pay 1/3 of their income towards rent, with the voucher making up the difference between that amount and the fair market rent.

HOUSING COSTS

Housing costs include rent or mortgage payments, fees, insurance, and utilities. Note that this does not include transportation costs, which are an important factor in a household's spending.

LOW-INCOME

A household with income between 51% and 80% of the area median income.

LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT (LIHTC)

The most prolific tool for developing and preserving affordable housing in the US today, this complex program involves the syndication, or sale, of federal tax credits in exchange for equity to acquire, build, or rehabilitate affordable housing. See page 16 for more information.

MARKET RATE HOUSING

Housing that is not subsidized or income-restricted and is therefore subject to market forces such as supply and demand.

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME (MFI)

The median income for families (all related household members) of a specific size in a given area.

NIMBY

An acronym meaning "Not In My Backyard", referring to people who resist the development of affordable housing in their community.

NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON--MURFREESBORO--FRANKLIN MSA

The 14-county metropolitan statistical area that includes Nashville, used for determining AMI (see map on page 9).

PENCIL OUT

Developers say that a deal "pencils" if the funding available and projected revenue meets or exceeds the cost of the development and operating expenses.

PROFORMA

The spreadsheets used by developers to calculate the funding available, the cost of development, and the long-term operating expenses and income to see if a project is financially feasible, or if it will "pencil out".

SECTION 8 PROJECT-BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE

As with Housing Choice Vouchers, this program enables residents to pay 1/3 of their income towards rent, with the rental assistance making up the difference. Unlike tenant-based vouchers, this benefit is attached to the apartment, so if a household moves out of the apartment they forfeit that benefit.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Housing that is owned and operated by a public housing agency, such as MDHA. Many of these properties were built between the 1940s and 1960s and have not had sufficient funding for maintenance and repairs, earning them poor reputations.

REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUST (REIT)

Similar to a mutual fund for stocks, a REIT is a tool for investors to pool their resources and invest in a larger collection of properties or real estate assets, rather than investing in one specific project.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION (RAD)

A program by which the federal government transfers ownership of public housing to the local municipality for the purposes of leveraging private investment for rehabilitation or redevelopment. In Nashville, this is in the form of MDHA's Envision processes.

US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)

Established in 1965, the US government agency responsible for housing assistance and other development programs.

VERY LOW INCOME

A household with income between 31% and 50% of the area median income.

WORKFORCE HOUSING

Generally refers to housing that is affordable to those making 60-120% of AMI.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HOUSING NASHVILLE

www.nashville.gov/Mayors-Office/Housing

The 2017 Housing Nashville report provides benchmark data to measure success, an annual report, and an action plan for each year. Priorities focus on how Metro Nashville can fund, build, preserve, and retain affordable housing options.

LOCAL HOUSING SOLUTIONS

www.localhousingsolutions.org

This non-partisan site provides resources to help cities, towns, and counties develop comprehensive and balanced local housing strategies that enhance affordability, protect low-income residents from displacement, and foster inclusive neighborhoods.

NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

www.nlihc.org

NLIHC works to preserve existing federally assisted homes and housing resources, expand the supply of low income housing, and establish housing stability as the primary purpose of federal low income housing policy.

ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

www.enterprisecommunity.org

Enterprise is a national non-profit organization working in affordable housing and community development. Their extensive online resource library contains research, reports, toolkits, and webinars about a wide range of housing-related topics.

METRO HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

www.housing101.us

The Nashville Metro Human Relations Commission created a two-part primer on affordable housing, including stories from Nashville residents affected by housing cost challenges.

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

www.missingmiddlehousing.com

Opticos Design founder Daniel Parolek inspired a new movement for housing choice in 2010 when he coined the term “Missing Middle Housing.”

LOCAL HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS:

Affordable Housing Resources

www.ahrhousing.org

Be A Helping Hand Foundation

www.bahelpinghand.org

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Nashville

www.habitatnashville.org

Metropolitan Development & Housing Agency (MDHA)

www.nashville-mdha.org

NOAH (Nashville Organized for Action and Hope)

www.noahtn.org

New Level Community Development Corporation

www.newlevelcdc.org

Open Table Nashville

www.opentablenashville.org

PATHE (People's Alliance for Transit, Housing, and Employment)

www.pathenashville.org

Rebuilding Together Nashville

www.rtnashville.org

Tennessee Affordable Housing Coalition

www.tnahc.org

Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA)

www.thda.org

The Housing Fund

www.thehousingfund.org

Urban Housing Solutions

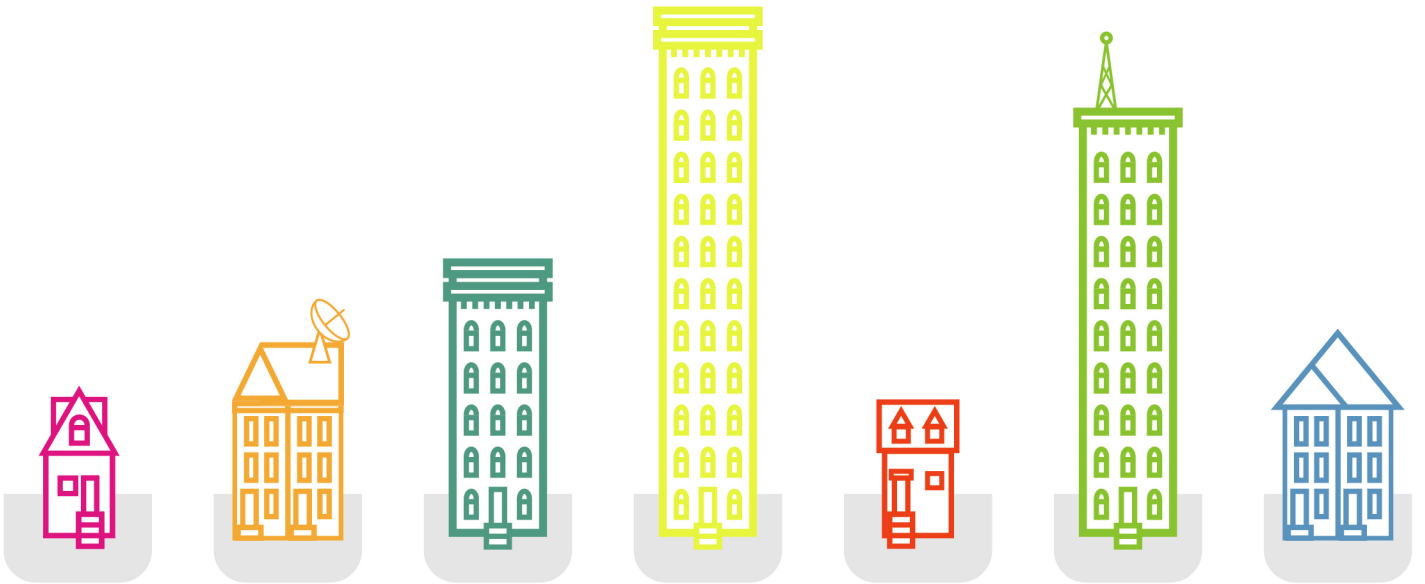
www.urbanhousingsolutions.org

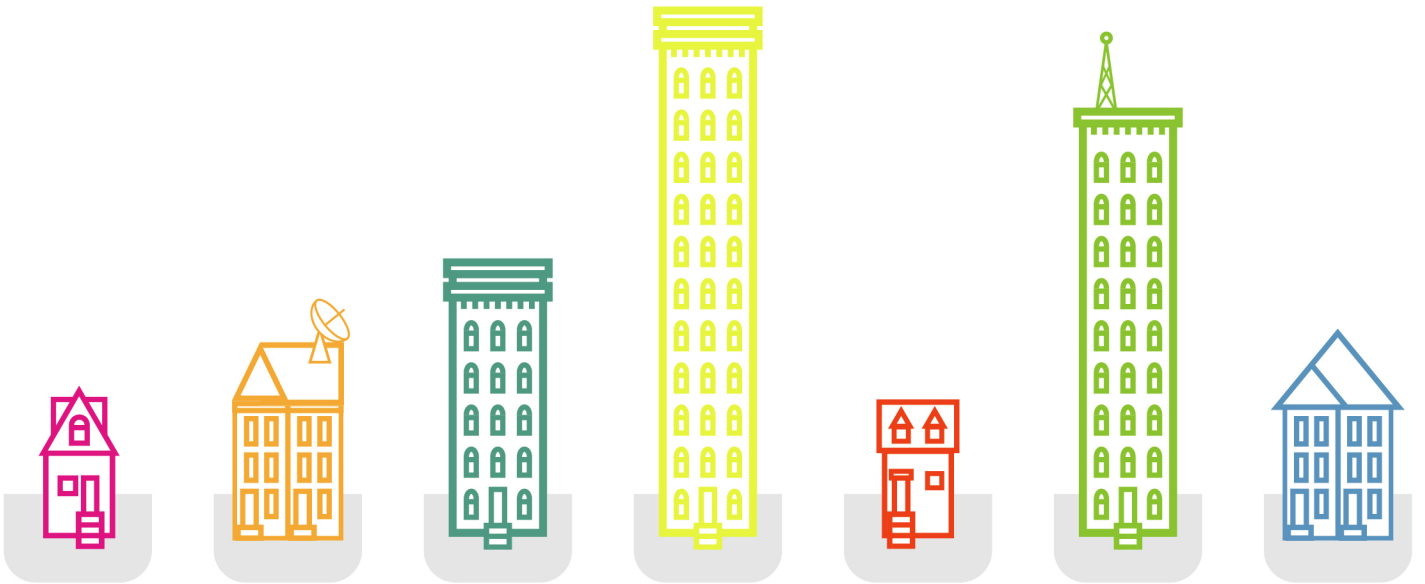
Woodbine Community Organization

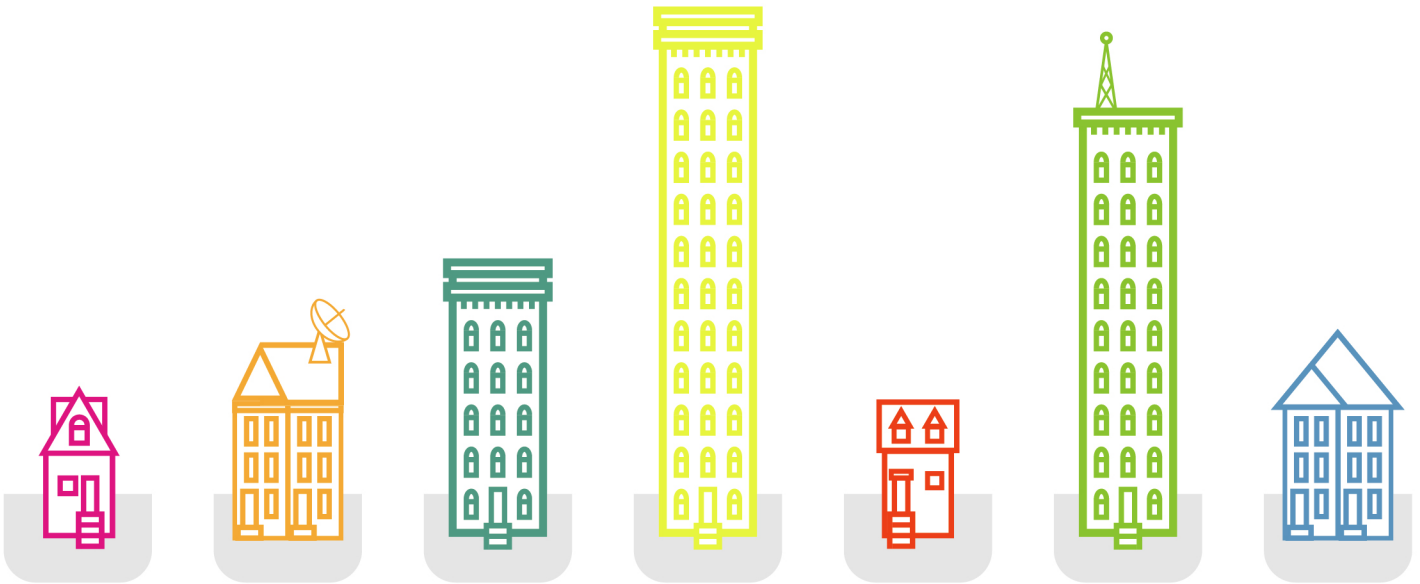
www.woodbinecommunity.org

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THINK DESIGN CREATE SUSTAIN