

Housing – Affordable, Safe, Sufficient

HAS²- It Has to Be Done

I. The Ultimate Goal – *Every person has a safe, adequate, and affordable place to live.*

- a. Solutions exist!
- b. Solutions differ because people differ
 - i. Type of family – some are made up of 1, 2, 3, or more people
 - ii. Age & Stage – some are just starting out in adult life; others are in their twilight years; and others are in between
 - iii. Health – both physical and mental health impact the type of housing one needs
 - iv. Income – some can afford to spend more than others can
- c. The definition of what is “Affordable” depends on a family’s income level.
- d. ***Affordable means*** - Housing for which the household pays no more than 30% of its gross income for housing costs, including utilities.
- e. What is affordable depends on
 - i. Specific reasons for
 - ii. Specific local markets and a
 - iii. Specific local economy
 - iv. Affordability is not just defined by the price of housing but also by where one lives and if one has access to daily needs and opportunities. The effect of other costs such as utilities, taxes, transportation, and healthcare impact affordability.
- f. The solution must be ***quality*** housing.

II. The Benefits of Stable Housing (ULI p9,16,18)

- a. When everyone has access to housing they can afford without sacrificing other necessities like food, clothing, and healthcare, the whole community experiences economic dividends and intangible benefits in the form of
 - i. Improved school performance
 - ii. Diminished health problems for both children and adults
 - iii. Decreased psychological stress
 - iv. More stable neighborhoods

- v. Reduced traffic congestion
- vi. More spending in the local economy
- vii. Improved quality of life for workers
- viii. Increases worker productivity
- ix. More effective employee and talent recruitment and retention
- x. Less public money spent to alleviate the effects of poverty

III. The Major Problems

- a. Individual incomes have not kept up with the costs of housing
- b. Supply of housing has not kept up with demand for housing
 - i. Population growth due to the attraction of new jobs, attractive lifestyle (lake, mountains, arts scene, etc.), and excellent healthcare
 - ii. Housing starts are insufficient for the increased population
- c. There are hidden costs to the community if housing needs are not met appropriately
 - i. Reduced competitiveness
 - ii. Lost potential
 - iii. Increased crime
 - iv. Increased social welfare costs in dollars and effects on peoples' lives
 - v. Neglected, run-down, or blighted properties that affect property values as well as the overall attractiveness of the community and its ability to more desirable and prosper

IV. Overarching Objectives

- a. Preserve existing housing
 - i. every affordable house lost means one more new dwelling is needed to be built
- b. Production of new supply–
 - i. to make up for existing shortage
 - ii. to keep up with future growth

V. Overarching Issues

- a. Money – this affects every aspect of life
- b. Land – there is a limited supply
- c. Labor – more skilled construction workers are needed
- d. Materials – Costs have increased substantially in the last 10 years

VI. There are Many Players Involved

- a. Individuals, businesses, not-for-profit organizations & charitable foundations, and governments at all levels
- b. All are key cogs
- c. Each plays a different role
- d. There must be commitment, communication, and cooperation among all the players
- e. Each must do what they can do
- f. Don't try to take on the role or responsibility of one of the other players
 - i. Individuals have the primary responsibility for their housing outcome but need the help of the other players when there are structural issues to be overcome
 - ii. Care must be taken not to DO FOR someone what they CAN DO for themselves
 - 1. Diminishes their dignity
 - 2. Creates dependency
 - 3. Destroys personal initiative
 - 4. Erodes the person's work ethic
 - 5. Dismantles family structures

VII. Other Considerations

- a. **AT52, U6** – Complete a housing needs assessment to determine the number of housing units needed in the market by tenure (rentals versus for-sale), price point, bedroom type, and market segment (e.g. families, seniors, disabled, young professionals, etc.), both currently and projected for the future.
 - i. This would give community leaders the necessary information to develop a strategic housing plan that aligns resources, ensures a unified strategic direction, and facilitates

partnerships to achieve a shared vision of housing affordability in a cost-effective manner.

ii. A clear strategic plan with shared goals between the public and private sector is critical to attract developers and private partners.

b. **AT37** – Adopt affordable housing goals to guide policy.

c. **A1** – Seek to have developments close to grocery stores, healthcare facilities, access to public transportation, job and commercial centers, quality schools, and parks and greenspace.

d. **AT54, Bp22**– Develop a real-time database of housing –

i. Include what is available, prices, services, resources, and incentives applicable.

ii. Include a way to complete an online application to each housing complex to centralize and simplify that process.

b. **G p22** - The solutions should follow some guiding principles

i. Depend on local resources which are better able to accommodate and adapt to the local market conditions

1. There are strings attached to Federal and State funds that may not allow the best solution for our community to be realized

ii. Be market appropriate to assist those with huge cost burdens while reinforcing property values

iii. Collaboration is key

iv. Not having policies that increase private sector profits but cause problems that the public sector has to foot the bill for

v. Evaluate projects impact on housing by looking towards long-term economic sustainability

vi. Affordable housing should be a high priority in the community because it affects EVERY person

1. Treat it like infrastructure, using public money for essential items like roads, utility installation, and sidewalks

VIII. Proposed Recommendations of Solutions (these overlap and often affect multiple issues)

a. **Broad categories** for recommendations – Many will require bold new ways of thinking and acting. They will require a willingness to ask, “How **can** we do this?” instead of thinking of all the obstacles of “Why we **can’t** do this.”

- i. Land and Regulations – These recommendations deal with reducing the cost of land per dwelling unit by changing structural matters that affect both **Preservation** of existing housing and **Production** of new dwellings through tools such as density (lot size, height), types of dwellings allowed in various zoning districts (duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, other multifamily units), use of land owned by government or various types of not-for-profit entities. Recommendations assigned to one category may contain factors that affect another category but may not be referenced in both places.
- ii. Funding – How will the money needed for the housing needed be provided? There are many approaches to this overarching issue.

b. Specific recommendations

i. Land and Regulations

1. **D - Recommendation 4: Amendment of Zoning District Regulations (and other regulations such as fire codes, etc.) (Also: A11, AT39)**
 - a. Do a complete review of zoning regulations, city codes, and permitting processes to ensure they are streamlined as much as possible to reduce time, complexity, and cost to build housing.
 - b. To allow accessory dwelling units (ADU) in more zoning districts on properties occupied by detached single-family homes similar to that allowed already in other residential zoning districts. This is an efficient use of limited land for additional housing. (San Francisco also has this program including financing, project management, and technical assistance)
 - c. Require a conditional use permit for developments of single-family attached homes (townhomes). This includes review criteria to evaluate these requests to include, “whether the proposed use results in a loss of existing affordable or workforce housing units.” This layer of review would allow the authorities to influence the preservation of existing affordable rental stock.
 - d. **AT47** – Relax regulations on more affordable housing products such as smaller homes, micro-units, tiny houses, that could be used as options for infill or as an ADU.
 - e. **AT53** – Consider building and fire code modifications to allow six stories of wood frame construction.
 - i. Also consider expediting review and approval of emerging building technologies.
2. **D - Recommendation 13: Increase Supply of Affordable Housing Options by Allowing Duplex, Triplex, and Quadplex Construction in Current Single-Family Zoning (Also: A3, AT38)**

- a. XX% of all land in Hall County is zoned single-family, and XX% of residential land use is detached single-family homes and XX% is comprised of multi-family, stacked flats, or townhomes. In order to increase the number of affordable units the City will need to allow for a targeted increase in density in these low-density areas.
 - b. This increased density will facilitate reduced land costs over total developed units, reducing the need for subsidy to achieve affordability targets.
 - c. Set limits on this increased density allowance, perhaps based on lot size or location near high-traffic corridors.
 - d. Further study is also needed to determine if and how to attach affordability requirements or incentives to the development of duplex, triplex, quadplexes.
- 3. D- Recommendation 10: Develop Innovative and Affordable Sources of developable land (Also: A-1, AT33,41, Gp20,21, Bp17,19)**
- a. Especially land owned by the City and not-for-profit entities which is not being utilized currently nor expected to be used in the near-term.
 - i. Bp24 – Include a “Development without Displacement” selection criteria in all appropriate RFP’s for residential development on city owned land. This criteria evaluates the track record of the developer in preventing evictions as well as promotes redevelopment of a site in a way that will benefit local community members.
 - b. Allow appropriate variances for land currently unbuildable due to lot size, frontage, or other reasons to allow them to be used for dwellings
 - c. Underutilized parking lots could be repurposed for mixed-use and residential development that includes affordable or workforce housing units.
 - d. Build on top of existing structures if the construction/engineering feasibility permits this. (This is a complicated option with many challenges around legal, taxation, and finances as well as zoning and building codes).
- 4. A1 – Expedite the redevelopment of blighted, vacant, delinquent, and distressed properties. (Baltimore has a similar program mentioned in the Atlanta report)**
- a. Identify and enforce code violations
 - b. Work with owners to repair and rehabilitate buildings
 - c. Demolish those buildings that are beyond repair
 - d. This allows the land to become useful again, raises surrounding property values, and puts property back on the property tax rolls, thereby increasing local government revenues.
- 1. AT 14 – Undertake Strategic Land Banking**
- a. Hall County and the City of Gainesville have recently created a Land Bank. The ULI recommendation U5 was to use this in conjunction

with a Land Trust to further the availability of lower-cost land for developers to utilize for affordable housing. See next item.

2. **D - Recommendation 11: Establish and fund a Land Trust** (Also: AT4, U5, Greenville and Athens have one)

- a. The community land trust model requires the Trust retain ownership of the underlying land while selling or renting the structure to an income-qualified buyer, with a deed restriction attached to the sale or income limits included in the lease to preserve affordability for 99 years. Deed restrictions will also set limits on the income of next-generation buyers and/or can limit the amount of equity a seller can capture. This is similar to the Georgia Power lots on Lakes Burton and Rabun.
- b. **CH** – Their “Shared Equity Program” addresses the two biggest obstacles to buying a home
 - i. The obstacles are saving for a down payment and the high prices of homes.
 - ii. When a program participant sells their house, it must be through the Trust to another qualified buyer.
 - iii. The seller gets to keep their down payment, cost of any capital improvements, and 25% of the appreciation.
 - iv. The remainder of the appreciation stays in the home to keep it affordable and pay for the operation of the program.

5. **D - Recommendation 15: Innovative Housing Typologies** (Also AT48,49, Bp19,34)

- a. Explore approaches based on alternative living arrangements such as co-living, co-housing, and Cottage Court projects.
 - i. One strategy is to allow these approaches as a limited use or conditional use permit in more zoning districts. This provides more control over them than an unconditional right.
- b. Allow four unrelated persons to occupy a dwelling unit to encourage co-living similar to TV’s “The Golden Girls”. (Also: AT18)
- c. Make a Cottage Court option more financially viable by allowing an increase in density for any Cottage Court development to 17-22 units per acre, or the utilization of a 2-for-1 development density to allow two Cottage homes to be developed on any lot large enough to fit a single family home.
- d. **AT44** – Allow the development of smaller houses on smaller lots.
- e. **AT45** – Create pre-approved standard plans for infill development.
 - i. Utilize community resources (builders, architects, and neighborhood residents) to develop a comprehensive menu of high-quality housing designs that are compatible with a variety of neighborhoods and meet the needs of median-income and entry-level buyers.
 - ii. Such pre-approved plans would reduce costs of permitting, construction, and development.

6. **A12 – Improve the system for administration of affordable housing programs**
 - a. Streamline the permitting process for affordable housing projects including approval of permits, zoning, site development, construction, inspection, and water meter application.
 - b. Since many different parties are likely to be involved in these recommendations, monitor and coordinate the proposed projects containing affordable units to make sure they do not get unnecessarily delayed.

ii. Preserve existing dwelling units (Also: Gp10,20, Bp14-15,24)

1. **A7 – Understand where people are currently being displaced and which neighborhoods are at risk. Prevent displacement. (Also: AT7,11, Gp11, Bp5,23)**
 - a. Having this knowledge helps to focus resources where they are most needed.
 - b. Require community retention plans for at-risk neighborhoods so that houses affordable for low-income residents are not replaced with those for higher income ones.
 - c. With current construction costs, replacing existing affordable housing lost to redevelopment is extremely challenging, particularly without public subsidies.
2. **A7 – Expand Energy Efficiency and Home Rehabilitation Programs (Also: AT6, Bp19,31,32)**
 - a. This deals with other expenses impacting financial stability.
3. **AT22 – Develop Programs, Resources, and Guides to Aid with Small Scale Preservation (Also: Gp20)**
 - a. Target these items to small landlords to help them preserve the affordability and safety of their rental housing, without selling the property to be redeveloped.
4. **Bp24 – Impose restrictions on practices which take units out of the housing market and drive up costs (e.g. short-term rentals)**
5. **AT12 – Develop an Acquisition Fund**
 - a. The fund would acquire, renovate, and manage existing multifamily buildings to make them affordable for the long-term.
6. **AT9 – Coordinate Preservation Strategies with Infrastructure Investments**
 - a. Work with building owners early on to find ways to preserve the affordability of property, stabilize neighborhoods, and allow existing tenants to remain in their communities when faced with increasing rents due to increasing property values as a result of the government's infrastructure improvements. (Also: Bp24,25)
7. **D - Recommendation 3: Voluntary Tax Abatement for Landlords that Agree to Limit Rents (AT51, Bp17 has similar goal)**

- a. Naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) rental units are at risk of rising rents due to rising property tax rates and the real estate market pressure to sell, renovate or replace existing affordable developments with new construction.
 - b. The goal of a property tax abatement is to preserve existing affordable rental units or provide a financial incentive for private owners to reduce rent to serve the needs of residents at 80% AMI or below. A voluntary 50% property tax abatement would be made available to property owners of all rental units affordable to 80% AMI and below. The starting point for the program is based on an agreed term of affordability of 5 years. In addition, if the owners renovate the unit during the term of affordability assessed (and therefore tax) values would be frozen.
 - c. This tool is currently being used in Hall County to attract industry to locate here. It just would have a different focus – housing for the workers, not just the workers themselves.
8. **D – Recommendation 6: Revision to Existing Tax Payment Assistance Program (or Start Such a Program) (Also: A7)**
- a. The City of Decatur has an existing property tax deferral program to help low-and-moderate income residents for whom property taxes are a severe cost burden. While homestead exemption programs serve to reduce the amount of property tax owed, tax deferral programs serve to provide homeowners with a mechanism to put off paying property taxes until the sale or transfer of the property. There are limits on the amount of deferral which is payable with interest due upon the sale or transfer of the property.
9. **D - Recommendation 5: Revise Property Tax Homestead Exemptions (Also: A8, AT1,2,21,51) Check existing homestead exemptions in Hall County & its cities**
- a. Many low- and moderate-income residents, especially seniors, cannot afford to stay in their homes because of soaring property taxes without a significant homestead exemption, making them vulnerable to the offers of speculative developers to purchase their property. This turn-over has become a major driver of teardowns and the construction of new high cost housing in Decatur.
 - b. This recommendation aims to extend and modify the current S-4 exemption to ensure low- and moderate-income seniors can stay in place. The recommendation is also an attempt to mitigate any negative community sentiment about having such a substantial tax exemption changed. Existing Decatur homestead exemptions have revealed a gap between resident need and residents served. Currently, the S-4 exemption releases *all* senior homeowners over 65 from school taxes, regardless of income or the appraised value of their home.

- c. The Task Force recommends setting limits on how much of the assessed value can benefit from the S-4 to ensure benefit is going to low- and- moderate income homeowners. A cap of \$400K to \$500K is proposed for the exemption. However, in an effort to reduce the administrative burden for both applicant homeowners *and* the City, the Task Force recommend using *the appraised value of the home* as opposed to *the income level of the homeowner* to determine eligibility for the exemption. The assumption is that appraised value is both easier to access *and* serves as an effective proxy for income.
- d. The Task Force also recommend lowering the age to 62 years to align with other City programs serving low- and moderate-income homeowners, which would expand the number of long-term residents served.
- e. **A7** – Educate residents about the various tax exemptions available so that more of them take advantage of these items.
- f. **A8** – Advocate for property tax homestead exemption for Community Land Trust homeowners who own the building but do not own the underlying land.
- g. **AT2** – Austin proposes a special exemption from property taxes for communities at risk of displacement due to market pressures that increase rents.

10. AT8 – Preserve and Create Ownership Options for Households at 80% to 120% MFI. (Bp12 has similar goal)

- a. Explore potential funding sources for this income category
- b. Imposing higher income limits for eligibility to use funds from future General Obligation Bonds
- c. Changing land development codes or other changes

11. A9 – Expand Awareness of and Increase Participation in Housing Affordability Programs

- a. Reach out to the people who these programs will directly benefit through a communication campaign and housing fairs
- b. Increase developers’ and landlords’ awareness of incentives and programs designed for them

12. U Informal – A Model Path to Affordable Housing

- a. An example of a model used by Margy Stagmeier, a highly respected developer in Atlanta, incorporates a housing partnership with a socially responsible landlord with a services non-profit.
 - i. This reduces transiency in the local school system, thereby improving students’ academic success
 - ii. Services such as free access to on-site after-school programming, gardening, and affordable medical care work in conjunction with the affordable housing to accomplish these results.

iii. Produce new dwelling units (Bp4,5,18,19)

1. **Gp10,11 – Increase Housing Supply at all Price Points, particularly the “missing middle” (Also: U4)**
 - a. If the more upwardly and geographically mobile members of our well-educated workforce are not able to find good quality rental and ownership options that meet their expectations (if they have to settle for something of a lesser value), the private sector may eventually struggle to retain and attract their most desirable employees.
 - b. Demand for housing by households earning at least \$50,000 far exceeds supply. That demand is being met by lower value housing, reducing the supply as well as raising the price of what would otherwise be available for those households earning less.
2. **U2 – Focus resources on a designated area that has potential to catalyze further development**
 - a. The example of the revitalization of “Walton Summit” which rehabilitated an eyesore and created a desirable mixed-income community with an effective use of a broad range of financing options and subsidies showed a way forward in these days of rising construction costs.
3. **D - Recommendation 14: Developer Incentives for Affordable Housing (Also: A3, AT34,41,42,43,44,58, Bp17,19,21,33, U3)**
 - a. Implement a range of additional changes to the development and permitting process for *all* projects with an affordability component, including reduction of permit fees, priority plan and permitting reviews, reduction in parking requirements (including number of spaces, use of impervious materials), and an increased density bonus. The percentage of affordable units necessary to trigger these benefits will need to be determined as part of the implementation.
 - b. **A3** – Rezone growth corridors to support higher density and affordability.
 - c. **A3** – Provide incentives for locating affordable housing near public transit since transportation costs can consume a significant portion of residents’ income.
 - d. **A4** - Urban Enterprise Zone Program provides 10-year tax abatements for residential developments that include at least 20% affordable homes
 - e. **A5** – Provide funding to fill any remaining gap between the cost of a project and what banks are willing to lend (after any Federal subsidies or low-interest loans are applied).
 - f. **AT60** – Align sidewalk planning with housing developments.
 - g. **AT 59** – Increase bikeability and walkability.
4. **D - Recommendation 9: Allow More Affordable Accessory Dwelling Units and Help to Finance Them (Also: A3, AT3,46, Bp17,34)**

- a. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are nationally recognized as a potential tool to increase density and promote affordable rental inventory. Allow them in more places.
 - b. Consider funding and developing a soft-loan program for ADUs that would use the financing to leverage a commitment from the homeowner to set rents affordable to households at 80% of AMI or below. Further study is needed to determine how long the affordability requirements would run (the Task Force recommends permanent affordability); how long the terms of the loan would run; and how both renter income and rent level compliance would be managed.
5. **D - Recommendation 12: Inclusionary Zoning (Also: A3, AT19,50, Bp17)**
- a. Adopt an inclusionary zoning (IZ) policy which requires developers building above a certain number of units to set aside a specific percentage of units for low-and-moderate income renters and/or buyers at identified AMI levels. IZ ordinances also include an option for in-lieu fees, a mechanism for developers to pay a fee to the City in-lieu of building the affordable units in their development. This fee can be used to create affordable housing in other areas of the community.
 - b. Given rising land/property prices and construction costs, the IZ ordinance should also include incentives for developers to mitigate the financial impact of the requirement. Potential incentives could include:
 - i. Density bonuses (Also Bp17)
 - ii. Transfer of development rights
 - iii. Adjustments to parking requirements
 - iv. Priority plan and permitting reviews
 - v. Reduced permitting fees
 - vi. Tax abatements
 - c. Use the Land Trust to purchase IZ-generated affordable units (either rental or for-sale) in order to maintain them as affordable.
6. **AT5 – Increase the Supply of Multi-Bedroom Housing for Families with Children**
- a. These units should be located throughout the community taking into consideration factors such as schools, family-oriented services and amenities.
 - b. This would also help create age-diverse neighborhoods which can lead to a more stable, dynamic environment.
7. **AT23 – Support a Community Goal for at Least 25% of New Income-Restricted Affordable Housing to be in Moderate-to-High Opportunity Areas (Bp12 has a similar goal)**

8. **A10 – Establish a Housing Innovation Lab to develop new and innovative ways to design, finance, permit, and construct or rehabilitate high-quality, affordable houses (Boston has one)**
 - a. This will include educating residents, banks, and housing development professionals on how these approaches can be implemented.
 - b. Offer technical assistance to non-profit developers and non-profit organizations
 - c. Partner on major development sites to integrate public transit, job centers, quality schools, and healthy food by providing master planning and design services.
9. **A2 – Expand local homeownership opportunities via down payment assistance programs (Also Bp5,26)**
 - a. Also deal with credit challenges of potential homeowners including expanding homebuyer education and counseling programs
10. **A6 – Increase Philanthropic and Private Investment in Affordable Housing**
 - a. Leverage investments in Opportunity Zones which allow investors with recently realized capital gains to invest in local businesses, real estate, or development projects in exchange for a reduction in their federal tax obligations (consider also the State of Georgia’s complementary Opportunity Zone program).
 - b. Work to encourage all sectors to be involved in expanding the supply of affordable housing.

iv. Make policies fair and equitable

1. **AT10 – Use Incentives to Support the Production of Living Wage Jobs**
 - a. Recruiting employers whose employees will be paid a wage high enough for them to live in the community should be a priority. Using the available resources to incentivize these employers rather than ones whose employees will not be able to live in the community should be mandatory.
2. **Bp22 – Implement a Rent Burden Preference to Ensure That Affordable Housing Units Serve Those with the Greatest Need**
3. **AT13 – Implement the City’s Fair Housing Action Plan and Bolster Enforcement of Existing Fair Housing Requirements**
 - a. This plan has specific actions to affirmatively further fair housing choice.
4. **AT17 – Implement Recommendations in Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable Report: Locked Out**
 - a. This is designed to address barriers to housing for persons with criminal backgrounds.
 - b. Review and revise policies for recipients of city funding to ensure they have reasonable look-back periods for both misdemeanors and

felonies, and that there is an appeals process built into the admissions policies.

5. **AT36 – Expand the Supply of Housing for People with Disabilities (Bp13 has similar goal)**

v. Renters' assistance

1. **D - Recommendation 8: Rental Assistance Program (Also: A2,4,7, Gp20)**
 - a. Many of the existing programs and tax exemptions serving low-and-moderate income residents focus on homeowners. But given the nearly 50% rate of housing burden for renters in Decatur, there is a critical need for policies or programs to address this glaring financial challenge.
 - b. The rental assistance program should be structured to help with upfront rental costs including first and last month's rent and security deposit or emergency assistance to enable residents to avoid eviction and remain in place. This program could be set up under a nonprofit and structured as a soft loan program to be paid back in small monthly payments into a designated fund housed by the nonprofit.
2. **AT15 – Implement Tenant Relocation Assistance Program**
 - a. A City ordinance requires property owners or developers to provide advance notice to tenants when the apartment buildings or mobile home parks they live in will be demolished or closed.
 - b. It also created a relocation assistance program for low-income renters and mobile home tenants who are displaced by new development.
3. **A7 – Expand access to eviction defense and other housing-related legal issues (Bp5,24 & Syracuse, NY also have an Eviction Prevention Program)**
 - a. Having an eviction on a person's record, makes finding a dwelling much more difficult in the future.
 - b. Frequent moves forced by poor housing quality, unsafe neighborhood conditions or large increases in rent cause disruptions for families and may negatively affect social, mental, and physical health. Children who move frequently also experience negative impacts on their education.
4. **A7 – Promote housing voucher accessibility**
 - a. There are many landlords who will not accept these vouchers due to the amount of paperwork involved.
 - i. Look at ways of simplifying this process to make it easier to deal with.
 - b. Actively recruit landlords to participate in this and other incentive programs

- c. It may include a “Risk Mitigation Fund” to provide financial protection for landlords who rent to vulnerable or hard-to-house tenants.
 - 5. **Bp34 – Test ways to help landlords who offer below-market rents continue to offer quality and affordable rentals.**
 - a. Seek ways to have them proactively maintain their properties.
 - 6. **Bp5,24 – Launch a 1,000 homes campaign**
 - a. Combat displacement by supporting the purchase of 1,000 rental housing units from the speculative market and income-restricting them via an expanded Acquisition Opportunity Program.
 - 7. **AT32 – Support the Creation of Deeply Affordable Units Serving People at 20% MFI and Below**
- vi. *Work to reduce other living expenses such as transportation, property taxes, utilities, repairs and maintenance, or health care. Such savings can then be applied towards housing costs. (Also: Bp31,32)*
- 1. **AT35 – Support Efforts to Prevent and End Homelessness**
 - 2. **AT55 – Strengthen Scoring Criteria and Develop Policies to Prioritize Affordable Housing Near Current and Future Transit Service**
 - 3. **AT56 – Minimize the Displacement of Core Transit Riders**
 - a. Redevelopment and major rehabilitation threaten the stock of market rate affordable rental housing (housing built by private developers that is affordable without a subsidy due to size, location, age, quality, maintenance, or other factors), where residents may depend on transit.
 - b. When developing transit corridors and nodes, every attempt should be made to ensure that development does not reduce transit ridership.
 - 4. **AT57 – Link Housing Choices with Transportation Choices**
 - a. Use density bonuses, reduction in parking requirements, subsidies, or infrastructure improvements for housing around transit stations
 - 5. **AT61 – Ensure Access to Affordable Care and a Healthful Environment**
 - 6. **AT62 – Increase Opportunities for Households to Reduce Utility Costs (Bp31,32)**
 - 7. **AT63 – Increase Access to Healthy, Affordable Food for All Residents**
 - a. Work with efforts to decrease areas experiencing food insecurity due to lack of grocery stores or markets.
 - 8. **AT64 – Improve Access to Affordable Quality Communications and Digital Services**
 - 9. **Bp34 – Promote new tools to help older adults share their homes with students and other renters looking for reduced rents.**
 - a. This would provide income to the homeowner that could be used for these other expenses as well as housing costs.

vii. *Funding for various initiatives*

- 1. **A2,4 – Maximize Existing Funding Sources (Also AT26,27,31, Bp28)**

- a. Such as existing federal programs like CDBG, HOME Investment Partnerships, the Emergency Solutions Grant programs, and Low-income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), National Housing Trust Fund
 - b. These can possibly be paired with funds from Tax Exempt Bonds
2. **D - Recommendation 16: Development Impact Fees (Also: Bp28)**
- a. Allowable services covered by impact fees include libraries, recreation, water supply, roads and bridges, public safety, wastewater treatment and storm-water management.
 - b. Impact fees cannot be used to *directly* support affordable housing efforts, but as they are collected, general revenue currently covering these functions can be redistributed to support affordable housing activities. The Task Force recommends that the Commission dedicate a certain portion of these “liberated” revenues to affordable housing.
 - c. Another potential source of revenue through impact fees are called “Linkage Fees” imposed on new commercial construction but calculated by the total square footage of a project rather than the costs for the infrastructure or resident services required by the project. (Also: AT52, Bp28,30, Los Angeles)
 - d. The drawback to linkage fees is that they are currently disallowed under state law and would require state legislative approval of the use of linkage fees for Decatur.
3. **D - Recommendation 17: Bonds (Also: Bp28)**
- a. Housing Opportunity Bond (HOB) (Also: A5) - a publicly issued municipal bond secured by the local governments’ general funds. Through a HOB, money would be lent to the city at a low interest rate to fund affordable housing projects and programs. Because HOB funds are generally offered as *loans* and not grants, the proceeds are paid back by the borrowers that are funded, and not by taxpayers.
 - i. HOBs have been used successfully in Metro Atlanta for over a decade via Invest Atlanta. They allow HOB funds to be used for land acquisition and assemblage; single family loans (owner-occupied rehab, down payment assistance, construction financing, etc.); and multi-family loans (construction financing). HOB funds are generally used to leverage additional financing from the private and philanthropic sectors.
 - b. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or Tax Allocation District (TAD) Bonds (Also AT29) - gives cities and counties the authority to sell bonds to finance infrastructure and other redevelopment efforts within a specially defined area called a Tax Allocation District or TAD. The bonds are secured by a “tax allocation increment” which is the increase in the property tax revenues resulting from redevelopment activities undertaken.
 - i. TIF Bonds can be used to fund the following items within the designated TAD district:

- a. Capital Costs
 - b. Financing Costs
 - c. Professional Service Costs
 - d. Administrative Costs
 - e. Relocation Costs
 - f. Organizational Costs
 - g. Payments to a Political Subdivision
 - h. Real Property Assembly Costs
- ii. Currently in Gainesville, most of the funding is being used for commercial or mixed-use developments rather than for affordable housing.
- c. **A5-** Scattered Site Bond Finance program provides tax-exempt bond financing for affordable homes on scattered sites, including small-scale multifamily apartments
 - d. **A5** – Monetize a Lease-Purchase Bond program to incentivize developers to rehabilitate and/or construct multifamily rental and mixed-use residential properties. This program would reduce property tax payments for developers that would be used to repay these bonds.
 - e. **AT24** – General Obligation Bonds for affordable housing
 - i. To prevent displacement of long-term residents and provide rental assistance to prevent homelessness
 - ii. To include services to support at-risk families, seniors, and people with disabilities
- 4. D - Recommendation 18: General Funds (Also A5, AT25,40, Bp28)**
- a. Annually dedicate a portion of its General Funds for affordable housing; this will serve as one indicator of the government’s commitment to addressing this pressing issue.
 - b. Used to fund administrative/planning costs, land acquisition, predevelopment activities, program design and management and income eligibility and compliance efforts. Longer-term, it will provide needed dollars to fund infrastructure development, construction financing and affordable housing subsidies.
 - c. The local governments will need an immediate funding source to undertake the required studies to design the Tax Allocation District, Housing Opportunity Bond program as well as the additional analysis required to build-out an innovative land acquisition pipeline, design an IZ program and address density barriers in the Unified Development Ordinance.
 - d. Funding for a staff or consultant-driven fiscal impact study to develop a concrete budget for affordable housing over the next decade, looking at minimum at funds from an Housing Opportunity Bond, TAD/TIF funding, released funds through Impact Fees, In-Lieu fees through IZ,

general revenue and leveraged funds from external public, private and philanthropic sources will be necessary.

5. D - Recommendation 19: Additional Sources of Revenue

- a. *In-Lieu Fees* - While initially described as part of a proposed Inclusionary Zoning policy, these in-lieu fees can be an important source of funds for an affordable housing program.
- b. *Real Estate Transfer Tax* – dedicating all or a portion of this revenue source so that it is removed from the annual budget process could prove to be a meaningful source of funds for the government’s affordable housing initiatives.
- c. **A5 Vacant and Underutilized Property Tax or Fine** –
 - i. These types of properties contribute to blight, damage community cohesion, fuel property neglect, and create unsafe environments.
 - ii. Also, warehousing property for potential development can prevent developable land from being used to meet current housing needs.
 - iii. This tax/fine would be to encourage landowners to maintain their property and return them to productive use.
- d. **SAN** – The Seattle Housing Levy is a voter approved tax levy to fund primarily affordable rental housing for low-income residents and new construction or preservation and improvements to existing buildings.

6. D - Recommendation 20: Strategic Partnerships (Also: AT28,30)

- a. The development of affordable housing in Decatur will require strategic partnerships and coordination between multiple sectors and actors.
- b. The City will need partners to provide private equity, access certain types of public funds, design and execute financially sustainable projects, produce innovative housing design that promotes affordability, manage construction, market new housing to eligible low-and-moderate income applicants, and ensure compliance with respect to income qualification.
- c. The Gainesville Housing Authority has specific legal authority and jurisdiction related to the development, ownership, and management of affordable housing. It also has a nonprofit which can provide access to nonprofit funding sources, including public, private and philanthropic grants.

7. D - Recommendation 21: Financing the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (Greenville has one also)

- a. This is not the same as a Land Trust. This is a means of putting money aside each year into a fund (trust) until it can be used. It is similar to a Capital Projects fund that many local governments use to enable multi-year projects to be done.

- b. While identifying potential sources of local funding for affordable housing activity is a critical part of the Task Force’s mission, it is equally important to explore options for holding and protecting these dollars from the challenges of political cycles and competing municipal needs. The Task Force recommends the City look at an Affordable Housing Trust Fund as its primary container for dedicated affordable housing dollars.
- c. “Housing trust funds are distinct funds established by city, county or state governments that receive ongoing dedicated sources of public funding to support the preservation and production of affordable housing and increase opportunities for families and individuals to access decent affordable homes. Housing trust funds systemically shift affordable housing funding from annual budget allocations (and allow for) the commitment of dedicated public revenue.”

IX. Overcoming Obstacles

a. Resistance to the recommendations

i. G p3,20 - “Affordable Housing” is one of the most vexing issues communities in America face today.

- 1. Sometimes “Affordable Housing” is a mistaken synonym for public housing, which is generally viewed quite negatively or
- 2. means housing for the poor, who are generally presumed to be not very good neighbors or
- 3. is housing for the unemployable whose lack of a job and resulting challenges cement their status as undesirable.
- 4. The bricks and mortar of affordable housing, as well as the residents, are frequently viewed negatively, making the politics of housing very dicey.
- 5. Building affordable housing, even that which is accepted by the community, means actually paying for it and actually locating it.
- 6. Who pays is an issue and where it gets located are critical hinge factors in any affordable housing discussion.
- 7. Government subsidized housing has, at best, a very checkered history.
 - a. Despite often good intentions, regrettable architecture, and poor planning left bad memories of public housing.
 - b. The stigma of housing as a policy subject is powerful everywhere and few want to touch it.
- 8. There are many other people such as young adults from middle class backgrounds just starting their careers who find it difficult to access housing in places they want to live.
- 9. Critically, each initiative must be designed to address the city’s affordable housing challenges while contributing to the long-term fiscal health and competitiveness of the City.

ii. Community Education and Engagement

1. **D - Recommendation 22: Create Effective Community Engagement and Education on Affordable Housing (Also A13, U1, H)**

- a. What are the primary arguments that affordable housing opponents would likely use in their resistance to the recommendations in this report?
- b. What are the messages that can be used to confront and neutralize them?
- c. What are the engagement and communications mechanisms that can be leveraged to broadcast these messages?

2. **D - Recommendation 23: Identify High-Impact Messaging for Community Education and Engagement Efforts (Also A13, U1)**

- a. While Recommendation 22 addressed the *process* of communicating a positive message about the value of affordable housing, Recommendation 23 addresses the proposed *content* of these messages.
- b. We want our workers to be able to live here and want to keep longtime residents in place.
- c. To make Decatur's housing goals a reality, steps must be taken to add housing units to Decatur and to prevent the loss of lower-income and older residents.
- d. Because of the cost of land in Decatur, adding low-density affordable housing is not possible. Decatur must understand this relationship and the trade-offs around density that are needed to build affordable housing.
- e. Other viable ways to add housing in Decatur are to convert homes into duplexes/triplexes/quadplexes, to build small multi-unit development in neighborhoods, and to add ADUs to homes. These will also increase density. However, if one looks around at any neighborhood in Decatur, they will see this has been done successfully in the past and is already part of the community fabric.
- f. National data shows that school quality is not negatively impacted by percentage of student growth. Before reacting negatively to larger schools, Decaturites need to understand options for increasing the schools' capacity, and that this can be done without negatively influencing the strength of the schools.
- g. There has been good national research on the impact of various types of messaging on resident and decision-maker opinion and behavior, including the following high-level suggestions about how to frame communications:
 - i. *Elevate the Issue*: Create messaging that builds broader understanding about why affordable housing is a matter of public concern – why does it impact the whole community?

- ii. *Explain Disparities*: Help people understand what restricts access to affordable housing, and how both historic and current racial discrimination contributes to the problem.
- iii. *Highlight Solutions*: Emphasize that more effective approaches are currently working elsewhere and are within reach.
- a. **Key myths** about the negative impact of affordable housing will need to be identified and consistently addressed in all communications on the issue. Some core myths that have been expressed in various public forums include the following:
 - i. Will decrease property values
 - ii. Inappropriate for community/ “neighborhood character”
 - iii. Will add strain on schools and local services
 - iv. Will increase local traffic
 - v. Bad design does not fit in
 - vi. Too much density
 - vii. Will contribute to crime and urban blight
 - viii. Too much change

X. How do We Measure Progress?

- a. *What gets measured, gets done!*
 - i. City of Atlanta 13 metrics – see [page 40](#) of their report
 - ii. City of Greenville metrics for evaluating fidelity to principles and for evaluating progress – see [pages 24-25](#) of their report

Glossary of Terms

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

A room, set of rooms, or a small dwelling on the same grounds as and ancillary to a single-family home.

Affordable Housing	Housing for which the household pays no more than 30% of its gross income for housing costs, including utilities.
Affordability Period	The length of time that a housing unit is required to maintain its below-market rent or sales price.
Area Median Family Income (AMI)	Defined by HUD as the median household income for a particular region.
Cooperative Housing	Housing where residents own shares and occupy a specific unit.
Density Bonus	A regulation that allows more (height, number of houses per acre, etc.) than is permitted by base zoning rules in exchange for certain public benefits.
Extremely Low Income	Households whose income is at or below 30% of AMI.
FAR (Floor Area Ratio)	The relationship between the total amount of usable floor area that a building has or has been permitted to have and the total area of the lot on which the building stands. The ratio is determined by dividing the total or gross floor area of the building by the gross area of the lot. A higher ratio is more likely to indicate a dense or urban construction.
High Opportunity Areas	Areas typically with access to jobs, transportation, education, and a healthy environment.
Housing Opportunity Bond (HOB)	Bond backed by General Funds and created to provide gap financing to address a growing need for affordable workforce housing units across the income spectrum for homeowners, builders, developers and community housing development organizations.

Impact Fees	Fees imposed on property developers by municipalities for new infrastructure that must be built or increased due to new property development.
Inclusionary Zoning (IZ)	Municipal and county zoning ordinances that require a specific share of new construction to be affordable for households with low to moderate incomes.
Income-Restricted Affordable Housing	Housing for which renters or buyers must meet specific income guidelines to be able to live in the unit.
In-Lieu Fees	Fees paid by developers who are required to build a set number of affordable housing units but can opt to pay an “in-lieu” fee instead of building the units. In-lieu fees are typically paid into a housing trust fund and used to finance affordable housing developed off site.
Linkage Fees	Linkage fees link the production of market-rate real estate to the production of affordable housing. Linkage fees typically work by charging developers a fee for each square foot of new market-rate construction, which are then used to pay for affordable housing.
Low Income Households	Defined by HUD as those households whose incomes do not exceed 80% AMI.
Low Income Housing Tax Credit	Tax abatement offered to developers planning on creating or rehabilitating affordable housing units.
Missing Middle Housing	Range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family homes, which includes duplex, triplex, carriage houses, accessory dwelling unit, whether for rent or for sale.

Moderate Income Households	Defined by HUD as those households whose incomes are near the area's median (80-120% of the median).
Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)	Housing units that are affordable without public subsidy support, to people living at or below median income for that area.
NIMBY	An acronym for "Not In My Back Yard," a characterization of opposition by residents to a proposed development in their local area. It carries the connotation that such residents are only opposing the development because it is close to them and that they would tolerate or support it if it were built farther away.
Subsidy	Grants approved by the government, usually awarded to nonprofit organizations, to reduce the construction costs of affordable housing units.
Tax Abatement	A reduction of taxes granted by a government to encourage economic development. The most common type of tax abatement is a property tax abatement granted to a business as an incentive to come to a city or expand existing operations within the city.
Tax Allocation District (TAD)	A defined area where real estate property tax monies gathered above a certain threshold for a certain period of time to be used a specified improvement.
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	A public financing method that is used as a subsidy for redevelopment, infrastructure, and other community-improvement projects by issuing bonds backed by tax increases from these developments.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD)	A type of urban development that maximizes the amount of residential, business and leisure space within walking distance of public transport.
Very Low-Income Households	Defined by HUD as those households whose incomes do not exceed 50% AMI
Workforce Housing	Housing affordable to households earning 60% to 100% of AMI.
YIMBY	An acronym for "Yes In My Back Yard," a pro-development movement in contrast and opposition to the NIMBY phenomenon.

Sources:

1. **City of Decatur, Georgia** – “*A Report on the Findings and Recommendations for Decatur’s Future Affordability and Inclusivity*” prepared by the Decatur Affordable Housing Task Force, February 2020. Noted in this summary as **D**. <https://decatur.civicweb.net/document/3180>
 - a. This report was used for the basic structure of this summary due to the recent release date and the layout of the concepts.
 - b. Additional relevant points from other governments’ reports are added and referenced throughout the summary including specific recommendation from that report.
 - c. The recommendations from other governments vary somewhat in the details but have been included in the most relevant area.
2. **City of Atlanta, Georgia** – “*One Atlanta Housing Affordability Action Plan*”, June 2019. Noted in this summary as **A**. <https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/mayor-s-office/projects-and-initiatives/housing-affordability-action-plan>
3. **City of Austin, Texas** – “*Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint*”, Spring 2017. Noted in this summary as **AT**. Their recommendations were not numbered. The author assigned a sequential number for reference. See copy of Appendix B attached for those assigned numbers. <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/austin-strategic-housing-blueprint>
4. **City of Greenville, South Carolina** – “*Balancing Prosperity and Housing Affordability in Greenville: Findings and Recommendations from the Affordable Housing Steering Committee*”,

September 2016. Noted in this summary as **G**. Their recommendations were not numbered. References are to page numbers in the report. <https://www.greenvillesc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11456/Balancing-Prosperty-and-Housing-Affordability-in-Greenville?bidId=>

5. **City of Boston, Massachusetts** – “*Housing a Changing City – Boston 2030 2018 Update*”, September 2018. Noted in this summary as **B**. Their recommendations were not numbered. References are to page numbers in the report. <https://www.boston.gov/finance/housing-changing-city-boston-2030>
6. **Urban Land Institute, Atlanta** – “*Affordable Housing Strategies for Gainesville and Hall County*”, March 2019. Noted in this summary as **U**. <https://www.unitedwayhallcounty.org/housingreport/>
7. **City of Seattle, Washington** – “*Seattle Housing Levy Administrative & Financial Plan*”, Program Years 2017-2018. Noted in this summary as **S**. <http://www.seattle.gov/housing/levy>
8. **City of Houston, Texas** – “*Can I be Your Neighbor?*” outreach campaign. Noted in this summary as **H**. <https://houstontx.gov/housing/sayyes.html>
9. **Champlain Housing Trust, Vermont** – “*Shared Equity Program*”. Noted in this summary as **CH**. <http://www.getahome.org/homes>
10. **City of San Francisco, California** – “*Accessory Dwelling Unit Program*”. Noted in this summary as **SAN**. <https://sfplanning.org/accessory-dwelling-units>