



GOAL 05

Build affordable and attainable housing advocacy

The Johnson County Housing Study prioritizes the need to establish, create, and develop a network of housing advocates as an over-arching goal to achieving safe, stable, and attainable housing. Recent community engagement through surveys and the Housing for All Task Force made it clear that a vast number of community members understand the housing needs and support projects to address them. While group conversations and connections are crucial and already prevalent throughout Johnson County, there is a need for organized advocacy and common direction. A grassroots network would bring diverse knowledge and experiences to housing discussions in Johnson County. Such a network could raise awareness to the different housing needs throughout Johnson County and open more community communication with City officials.

RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW:

★ 5.A	<p>Develop a grassroots network of housing advocates in all communities to be a voice for housing affordability and diversity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Educating various sectors in our community on the history and impacts of systemic racism in Johnson County to increase knowledge of our shared history and promote a more unified narrative of our community. ■ Promoting social diversity and importance of housing options by offering access to peer learning or study groups for residents interested in actively supporting attainable housing solutions. ■ Developing and managing a Housing Fact Book to be widely used by realtors, elected officials, citizen groups, and others when advocating for housing programs, products, and location. ■ Support job training efforts to expand the pool of available housing workers to help reduce construction costs and delays occurring from a lack of available workers. Partner with local schools, builders, and organizations to create internship programs to help develop housing worker pool.
5.B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Expand the benefits of homeownership to more people. Create a “Homeownership University” that teaches the nuts and bolts of working with real estate agents, choosing an affordable mortgage, accessing down payment, and closing cost assistance, as well as budgeting, planning, record keeping, home repair, and taxes.

★ Top recommendation as recommended by Housing Task Force

■ Community for All Ages, see page 23



RECOMMENDATION 5.A

Develop a grassroots network of housing advocates in all communities to be a voice for housing affordability and diversity by:

- Educating various sectors in our community on the history and impacts of systemic racism in Johnson County to increase knowledge of our shared history and promote a more unified narrative of our community.
- Promoting social diversity and importance of housing options by offering access to peer learning or study groups for residents interested in actively supporting attainable housing solutions.
- Developing and managing a Housing Fact Book to be widely used by realtors, elected officials, citizen groups, and others when advocating for housing programs, products, and location.
- Support job training efforts to expand the pool of available housing workers to help reduce construction costs and delays occurring from a lack of available workers. Partner with local schools, builders, and organizations to create internship programs to help develop housing worker pool.



CONTEXT:

A grassroots network would bring diverse knowledge and experiences to housing discussions in Johnson County. Such a network could raise awareness to the different housing needs throughout Johnson County and open more community communication with City officials. Challenges could include raising awareness and ensuring equitable and continued participation in the network.

United Community Services of Johnson County and other organizations have focused on the need for attainable housing options for all Johnson County residents. There is a history of disproportionate impacts of housing challenges on communities of color in cities across the country. Structural racism played a significant role in Johnson County’s early development. From deed restrictions to home associations to FHA-subsidized communities, Johnson County, like many of the United States’ new suburban developments, witnessed each of these tools in action. Increasing knowledge in our community around these topics provides more awareness and advocates for diverse and accessible housing. This video explains how changes in demographics and generational preferences attribute to changing market realities, as individuals, couples, and families desire different types of housing to suit their lifestyle in the Kansas City metro area. [Watch here.](#)

Hear how Johnson County is taking action to address disparities and create both health and housing Equity. An exhibit at the Johnson County Museum tells the story of the birth of Johnson County and its impact on racial diversity in housing to provide context for the data contained in this study. [Learn more here.](#)

Promoting social diversity in housing options could increase affordability and housing options for diverse social groups. A non-profit or grassroots group could convene peer learning or study groups for residents interested in actively supporting attainable housing solutions. Such a group could build community capacity, advocate for more affordable, attainable, and diverse housing types, and explore the feasibility and implementation of affordable housing policies and strategies across the county.

A Housing Fact Book could be useful in communicating housing topics to community members and promote local advocacy through creating a common framework. Realtors, elected officials, citizen groups, and others could use this tool when advocating for housing programs, products, and location. Cons may include the time and resources needed to create the book and distribution as well as agreement of content. This recommendation alone would not make visible changes in Johnson County housing but provide information on how to do so.

RECOMMENDATION 5.A

Continued

Creating a well-trained workforce and adequate number of workers to fill open construction positions is important to help lower housing costs. Positions left unfilled can create delays in development adding to final costs. Programs that offer internships for high school and college students can fill seasonal warm weather positions when development is at its peak and provide valuable training that allows students to fill open full-time positions after graduating. The Kansas City region has many workforce development initiatives underway. Establishing partnerships with organizations such as, Workforce Partnership, Johnson County Community College, or MARC's Regional Workforce Intelligence Network (RWIN) can be beneficial to expanding the workforce pool in not only housing construction, but other trades that are tied to housing like plumbers and electricians.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Ability to age in place, cost of housing, lack of diverse housing types, misinformation and social media, NIMBY-ism, political will, systemic racism



COMMUNITY TYPE:

Countywide



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

Existing or new non-profit providing education and tools; workforce development organization; local schools and institutions



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

1 - 3 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Membership numbers
- Quantity of testimony given
- Number of people reached with educational and outreach efforts
- Number of units of attainable housing built
- Number of website views of Housing Fact Book
- Number of Housing Fact Books downloaded



CASE STUDIES:

With strong neighborhood leadership and resident community, the Lykins Neighborhood in Kansas City was able to implement neighborhood planning strategies, build neighborhood wealth and safeguard residents against displacement as the neighborhood starts to deliver higher economic and social opportunity. [Learn more here.](#)

Rhode Island has created a Housing Fact Book that is reviewed and updated yearly to provide a state and regional analysis of affordable housing. [You can review the fact book here.](#)

Wyandotte County utilizes an action team to focus on reducing housing barriers with equitable strategies. [See Safe and Affordable Housing section of the Community Health Improvement Plan Year 2 Annual Report for to learn more about the action team and the work they do starting on page 15 of the report.](#)

RECOMMENDATION 5.B

■ Expand the benefits of homeownership to more people. Create a “Homeownership University” that teaches the nuts and bolts of working with real estate agents, choosing an affordable mortgage, accessing down payment, and closing cost assistance, as well as budgeting, planning, record keeping, home repair, and taxes.



CONTEXT:

Many first-time homeowners are unaware of the process and upkeep of owning a home. Providing more educational information and resources, such as workshops, videos, and trainings on how to maintain a property could significantly enhance quality of life for renters and avoid expensive rehabilitation later.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Cost of housing, knowledge of programs and resources, limited supply of first-home buyer options



COMMUNITY TYPE:

Countywide



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

Interested advocates in conjunction with realtors, Homebuilders Association, Chamber organizations



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

1 - 3 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Quantity of potential homeowners served
- Quantity of people who go through program and purchase a home



CASE STUDIES:

Saint Louis University has provided a housing benefit to its employees through an Employer Assisted Housing Program (EAHP). The EAHP provides three benefits for the University employees including housing information and education on home ownership. [Learn more here.](#)

Landlord University is a training sponsored by the Neighborhoods and Housing Services Department of the City of Kansas City, Missouri. [Learn more here.](#)

Johnson County already has an existing program:

- Johnson County – Homebuyer Assistance Program

Some Johnson County Municipalities have existing programs:

- Olathe – Homeownership Program



How to Talk About Housing in Your Community (Pro Tips)

Help municipalities facilitate meaningful conversations with elected officials and the public and move forward identified recommendations for action.

We are all in this together! Attainable housing benefits the entire community, not just the individual. Solutions are for everyone, not only those seeking affordable housing. Focusing on the benefits to the community will help drive support for ideas and new proposals.

Talk about the past and plan for better outcomes. The history of racial segregation in housing and how it impacts today's housing policies must be talked about. A community that understands what led to many concerns with affordable housing can plan for better outcomes and help create an inclusive and equitable community.

Housing affordability is complex! Identify all the links that led us here. Many factors impact housing including zoning, commodity pricing, workforce availability, transportation, wages, historic and current policy along with many more. It is important for each community to identify, discuss, and propose solutions to the root causes that create a lack of attainable housing to reach a viable solution.

Build support by talking about people and homes, not commodities. Housing should not be viewed as only a commodity to be bought and sold, but instead discussed with examples of how adequate housing benefits people and the community. Discussions that require communities to choose what kind of community they want to be and what the community values will help frame the conversation in a positive people focused way that will help lead to solutions that work.

Frame your conversation for your community—don't shut down the conversation at the first "buzzword". Common jargon like density, affordable, incentives, and other phrases can paint an inaccurate picture of the need and path towards addressing affordable housing. Avoid using words that will create a negative view of what your community is trying to accomplish by creating a picture of what affordable housing looks like. Do you want more density or do you want a community that offers nearby amenities, allows your children to safely walk or bike to school, includes nearby jobs eliminating long commutes, and offers nearby outdoor spaces for recreation?

Conversation starter:

How many of you have ever lived in an apartment?