

# THE STARK COUNTY HOUSING STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. Create education around affordable housing for all elected officials

- a. The elected officials throughout the county should be educated on the importance of affordable housing development of all types. Preventing and removing the attitudes of “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) and “Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything” (BANANA) should be top of mind when creating and rolling out the education
- b. Consider a marketing campaign as well that includes positive social media posts about affordable housing creation, video education series, and even billboards promoting Stark County as a forward-thinking community tackling affordable housing.

## 2. Create an easier pathway to housing development in the community

- a. Institute a “Developer Roundtable” with county and city planning/zoning to address restrictive issues impacting housing development.
- b. Create a “One Stop Portal” online website specific to housing developers.
- c. Create an ordinance that allows for more density when creating new housing projects within the County/ Towns/Villages.
- d. All townships should revise zoning and regulations restrictive for multifamily developments including townhomes
- e. Work with banks in the community to create a special interest rate for developers who are building affordable single-family and multifamily housing.
- f. Update/Revise regulations with Regional Planning to make it easier to develop subdivisions

## 3. Reinvest in existing housing

- a. Reinvesting in existing housing in Stark County offers several significant benefits that can positively impact the community's economic, social, and environmental well-being.
- b. Property tax credit for home rehabilitation.
- c. Establish programs aimed at improving the quality of rental housing.
- d. Create a Community Foundation to fix up Blighted Housing that is owned locally
- e. Work with local financial institutions to develop a low-interest rehabilitation loan to encourage work on existing properties.
- f. Weatherization programs to assist low-income residents reduce energy costs by making homes more energy efficient.

## 4. Create smart regulations in the county for housing development

- a. Zoning Reform
  - i. Mixed-Use Zoning
  - ii. Upzoning
- b. Streamlined Approval Processes
  - i. Expedited Permitting
  - ii. Pre-Approved Plans
- c. Incentives for Affordable Housing
  - i. Density Bonuses
  - ii. Tax Incentives
  - iii. Inclusionary Zoning
- d. Infrastructure Investment
  - i. Utility Upgrades
- e. Community Engagement and Equity
  - i. Anti-Displacement Measures
- f. Financial Tools and Assistance
  - i. Housing Trust Funds
  - ii. Public-Private Partnerships
- g. Regulatory Flexibility
  - i. Flexible Lot Sizes
  - ii. Parking Requirements
- h. Monitoring and Evaluation
  - i. Regular Reviews

## **5. Redevelop Empty Industrial Buildings**

- a. Reinvesting in empty industrial buildings for housing and other commercial uses is a great way to reinvigorate portions of the community while creating potential new lifestyle areas for certain demographics. These tend to attract Young Professionals, higher-income partners, and businesspeople into areas near downtown amenities. These redevelopments can also be used to target more affordable/attainable housing if they can be cost-effective for the developer through incentives and tax credits. There are examples of communities nationwide that have successfully completed these types of projects with better-than-expected results.

## **6. Open up more attainable housing through senior living neighborhoods**

- a. Every year, more seniors who live in Stark County will need housing closer to grocery stores, pharmacies, and physicians

## **7. Seek to grow the non-profit housing development for lower-income individuals and households across Stark County**

- a. Our team met with multiple entities seeking to ensure housing security primarily within, but not limited to, Canton. One of the individuals started a non-profit construction company, but their capacity is limited. This, along with other programs already in existence, is having difficulty keeping up with demand and meeting needs. We have several recommendations to make this more robust.

## **8. Create a community led priority workforce housing project**

- a. The number one issue we heard from stakeholders across the spectrum was for more affordable workforce housing. This type of project is an opportunity for collaboration and focus on this specific housing need. Local government needs tax revenue > Tax revenue is generated from commerce/industry/ employment and finally consumerism > Industry needs workers > Workers need housing. Thus, it is logical for local government to work on solutions that generate necessary housing in the community.

## **9. Create the Stark County Housing Summit to attract outside developers**

- a. A housing summit to attract developers into the community should be a priority once the other strategies, especially zoning/restrictions and education to elected officials, have been completed. We also recommend that leadership from Stark County perform leadership visits to several communities that have successfully implemented many of the strategies listed in this document. One in particular may be Danville, Virginia which has tackled their housing issues in multiple ways similar to what Stark County desires to do. Our team is happy to make additional recommended leadership trips and help coordinate those through Stark Economic Development Board.

