



Date: May 7, 2021
To: The Waterloo Housing Task Force
From: Alia Mnayer, Payton Colbert, Olivia Galyon, and Haley Russell
Re: Waterloo Housing Task Force
Appendix: Housing Task Force Organization Chart and Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Waterloo Housing Task Force must be purposefully structured to ensure the longevity of its goals and representation of multiple stakeholders on the Task Force and seek frequent community input in future plans and policies.

SUMMARY

Dilapidated housing, inaccessible resources for first-time home buyers, and a declining stock of owner-occupied homes are draining community housing options in Waterloo. Under the Mayor’s instruction, the City of Waterloo has convened a Housing Task Force to tackle the issues facing Waterloo’s housing market. We believe that the City should structure the Task Force according to our recommendations to ensure successful initiatives and sustained progress in fighting Waterloo’s housing issues.

BACKGROUND

Waterloo is currently facing a housing crisis. Much of the housing stock in Waterloo is dilapidated and unaffordable. As of 2015 1 in 6 homeowners in Waterloo were housing-cost burdened and 2 in 5 renters were rent-cost burdened. Waterloo is also dealing with a housing quality issue as well, in 2017 1 in 5 homes were assessed at being in fair or worse condition.

In response to the housing crisis, Waterloo has begun the process of implementing a housing task force to address housing needs in the community. The current housing task force could benefit from greater focus on:

- Structure - establish an organizational structure that supports the goals of the task force.
- Transparency/Community Involvement - engage with and address community concerns.
- Sustainability/Longevity - create a foundation for the taskforce to be a lasting entity.

A housing taskforce is critical in addressing Waterloo’s housing needs. For the housing task force to be a sustainable entity in the community they need to prioritize functionality and community engagement while implementing an action plan as a guiding document to meet their goals and objectives.

STAKEHOLDERS

The City of Waterloo

- The current emphasis on interagency collaboration within the Housing Task Force will allow for efficient housing quality project planning. Inclusion of the City of Waterloo allows for increased access to and knowledge of adequate funding.

Business Leaders

- Business leaders include landlords and housing developers such as *Black Hawk Landlord Association* and *Echo Development Group*.

- Community business leaders can provide knowledge on potential funding and opportunities for housing rehabilitation, be external resources, and encourage private investment.

Community Organizations

- Community organizations include nonprofits and neighborhood associations such as *Cedar Valley United Way*, *Habitat for Humanity*, and *Church Row Historic*.
- Organizations focused on housing resources and housing quality could provide the Housing Task Force with key data points that will help to guide the Housing Task Force initiatives around quality housing. It is essential to focus on organizations in neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by poor housing quality.

BEST PRACTICES

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: In response to a severe shortage of decent, sanitary, and safe affordable housing to cost-burdened households, Pittsburgh:

- Assembled the [Affordable Housing Task Force](#) through city council legislation, establishing a guiding document of goals, values, structure, and responsibilities.
- Organized the members of the Task Force into four committees to organize its members.
- Created a [designated website](#) to inform the public of their goals and track their progress.

Detroit, Michigan: To address thousands of foreclosed, low-value, or blighted properties, Detroit formed:

- The [Detroit Land Banking Authority](#) to acquire the titles of vacant, abandoned, or dilapidated homes and sold them to return the properties to productive use.
- The [Housing and Rehabilitation Department](#) of Detroit to ensure access to decent and affordable housing using federal housing, economic, and community development funding, local housing policy, and public and private partnership.
- Partnered with the Grounded Solutions Network to create the [Detroit Preservation Action Plan](#).

San Antonio, Texas: To combat the effects of segregation and redlining on housing quality and affordability, the [Mayor’s Housing Policy Taskforce](#) was created to develop a framework for a comprehensive, compassionate housing strategy. The MHPT:

- Analyzed housing reports and plans, demographic, economic, and market data, and community member input.
- Initiated a [Housing Pilot](#) to stimulate public and private investments that protect low-income residents from predatory markets and involuntary displacement
- Reprioritized funds towards affordable housing and created dedicated revenue sources for affordable housing, e.g. a portion of ad valorem tax revenues.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Longevity and Sustainability:

- a. To ensure long-standing dedication to solving housing issues in Waterloo, we recommend that the task force create an [action plan](#) and enact [annual reviews](#) of the progress of its initiatives.
- b. A review committee should be appointed for an annual review and serve as an accountability body for the City of Waterloo. They should remain committed to the Task Force’s long-term goals, regardless of the active status of the Task Force.

2. Structure:

- a. The Housing Task Force should include stakeholders from multiple different areas on the issue of housing to serve equitably. Based on the success of innovative housing task forces, we recommend that the Waterloo Housing Task Force include members from
 - i. local community organizations focused on housing and tenants; and
 - ii. landlords and developers from a local landlord association to ensure membership and buy-in from this community.

3. Community Engagement:

- a. The Task Force must actively pursue community engagement opportunities for successful community buy-in. These efforts may include community-wide opinion surveys, community picnics providing opportunities for public discussion and comment, and publicized task force meetings open to public comment.
- b. Prioritize engaging in work that follows residents' needs and is guided through community buy-in sets the task force up for successful initiatives.

NEXT STEPS

- 1. Reach out to relevant parties to add support to the existing task force based on the organizational chart (figs. 1-2) and detailed in the policy report.
 - a. Apply to sponsor an AmeriCorps volunteer to gather data on needs, policies, and funding sources and apply to federal grants, starting [here](#).
- 2. Begin formulating an action plan based on the [Detroit Preservation Action Plan](#), the guidance of [Local Housing Solutions](#), and our recommendations in the policy report.
 - a. Take the Local Housing Solutions Self-Assessment to zero in on policies [here](#).
- 3. Set up a meeting with community organizations to inform them of the Housing Task Force, build connections, and solicit preliminary feedback to guide future policies.

APPENDIX I

Figure 1: An organizational chart outlining the recommended positions within a housing task force and who may fulfill these committees.



Figure 2: An organizational chart outlining the routes of communication between housing task force positions. Important features of this chart include that 1; it is non-hierarchical and 2; the role of the representatives from the housing authority and planning departments as correspondents between the committees and the mayor ensures interdepartmental cohesion.

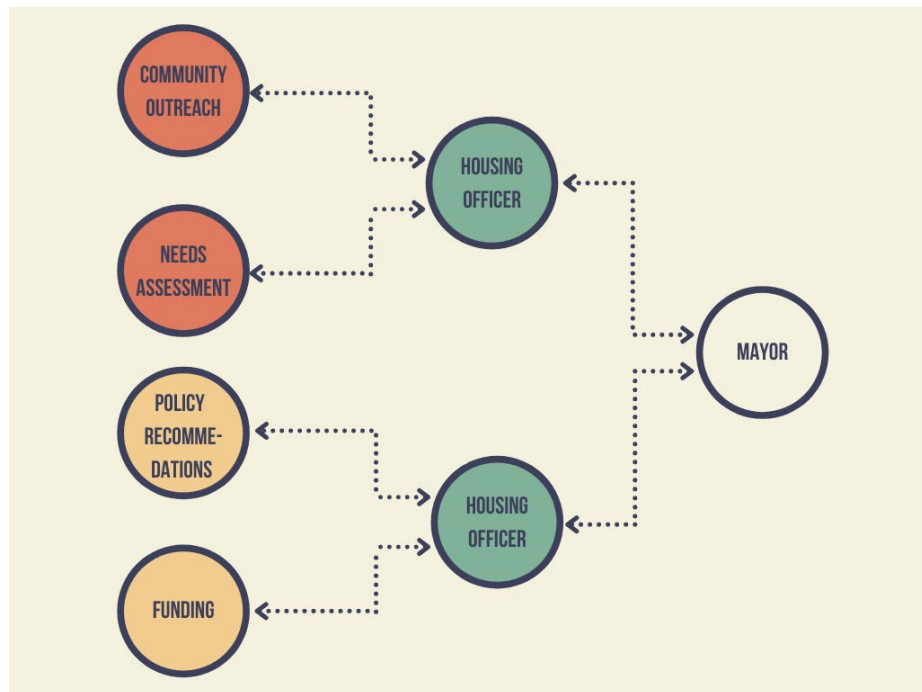


Figure 3: An organizational chart outlining the recommended focus areas for the review committee to assess the task force’s initiatives and to include within the action plan for future analysis.

