

# Evanston Affordable Housing Plan Community Engagement Findings

Community Workshop 03.05.2020



# Goals of the Community Engagement Process

- Facilitate the work of the Affordable Housing Plan Steering Committee in identifying and prioritizing affordable housing needs, goals, and strategies through a community outreach and planning process.
- City staff is providing other inputs for the plan include an on-line affordable housing survey, data collection and analysis, and a review of strategies pursued by other cities.
- Founded in 1996, Millennia Consulting is a Chicago-based firm dedicated to serving the nonprofit, public and philanthropic communities.

# Elements of the Community Engagement Process

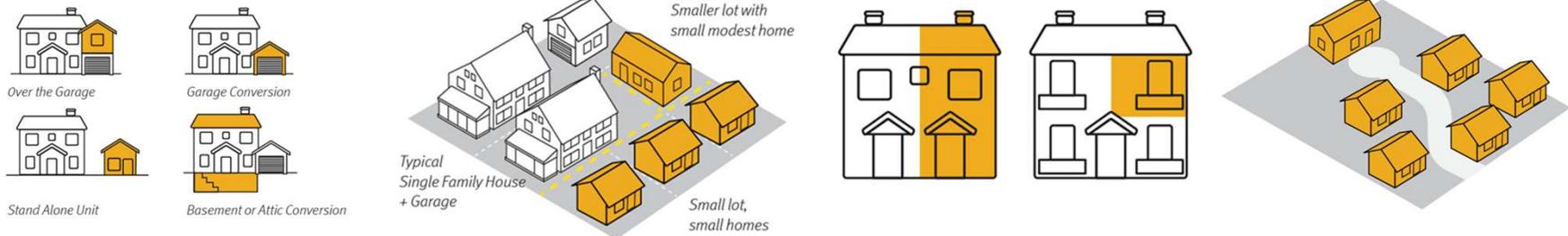
1. With the Affordable Housing Plan Steering Committee:
  - Framed the questions to be explored.
  - Identified groups and individuals to be talked with.
2. Provided coaching and training for Committee members on how to use the interview/small group materials.
3. Summarized key findings from the small group and individual meetings.
4. Helped shape a community meeting to share the findings and gather additional input.

# Questions We Asked

1. Have you, your family, or someone you know tried to find affordable housing in Evanston? What were you/they looking for? What happened?
2. In your opinion, what is the area of greatest housing need in Evanston. What type of housing is most needed – and what group(s) in the community need it most?
3. What do you think should be done to address Evanston's affordable housing needs? What solutions should be considered?

# Questions We Asked (Continued)

4. Some of the possible ways to address Evanston's affordable housing needs are described in the Housing Solutions attachment. Which of these strategies seem most promising to you? Which would you encourage the City Council to adopt?



# Who We Talked With: Individual Meetings

- 38 local leaders and residents (10 by Millennia Consulting and 28 by Steering Committee members and City Staff)
- Meetings with:
  - Neighbors
  - Religious congregation leaders (Beth Emet Synagogue, First Church of God, First Presbyterian Church, St. Nicholas Catholic Church)
  - Realtors, developers, and architects
  - Non-profit organization leaders
  - Housing advocates
  - Current and former aldermen
  - Area business and Chamber of Commerce leaders

# Who We Talked With: Small Groups

- 23 small group discussions with 200 participants (14 by Millennia Consulting and 9 by Steering Committee members and City Staff)
- All wards/areas of the city represented in individual meetings and small groups
- Small groups composed of:
  - Local workforce (teachers, firemen, city employees, childcare workers, restaurant workers, Rotary employees)
  - Religious congregations (St. Nicholas Catholic Church and St. Luke's Episcopal Church)
  - Residents from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> wards
  - Leadership Evanston participants
  - Inclusionary housing unit waiting list
  - Realtors
  - Downtown Evanston
  - Recent graduates from ETHS
  - Evanston housing providers

# Most Common Affordable Housing Stories

**Middle-class and blue-collar households are finding it increasingly difficult to find single family homes they can afford (33 stories)**

- “I’m a first responder earning \$100,000 who grew up in this community and I couldn’t find a home I could afford in Evanston. I bought in Zion.”
- “As a teacher, I wanted to live in the community I taught in. We couldn’t find anything with the square footage we needed for the price we could afford. We bought in Skokie instead.”
- “We were unable to find anything in our price range (\$300,000 to \$350,000) that didn’t need a lot of work. We moved west to find a home we could afford.”

# Most Common Affordable Housing Stories (Cont.)

## Affordable rental housing for low- and moderate income Evanstonians is scarce (19 stories)

- “Poor people in Evanston are moving to the southern suburbs or collar counties to find housing they can afford.”
- “We found a 2-bedroom apartment with heat, but it was a struggle – and the landlord keeps increasing the rent.”
- “I almost ended up on the street because I couldn’t find someone who would let me live with them and share the rent.”
- “I’m a restaurant owner and none of my workers can afford to live in Evanston.”

# Most Common Affordable Housing Stories (Cont.)

**Young adults, including many who grew up here, can't afford to rent or buy a home in Evanston (14 stories)**

- “Our neighbors wanted to sell their home to their son but there was no way he could afford it.”

**People can't afford or are moving out of Evanston because property taxes are too high (13 stories)**

- “My property taxes are now \$800/month. As soon as my son graduates from ETHS we are moving.”

**Single moms can't find affordable housing in Evanston, especially after a divorce (10 stories)**

- “I can only afford a 1-bedroom apartment which means my son has to sleep in a converted closet”

## Other Common Affordable Housing Stories (Cont.)

- **Credit scores & high security deposits are barriers** to renting & owning homes. (6)
- Many **current lower-income home-owners** are struggling to stay in their homes. (5)
- **Senior citizens can't afford to retire in Evanston** because of high housing costs. (5)
- **African Americans have difficulty renting** in Evanston because of discrimination and previous evictions. (5)
- **Latinx renters are struggling** to find affordable apartments in Evanston. (5)
- **Code enforcement is too aggressive** and drives up rents. (4)
- **Diversity** in Evanston is **diminishing**. (4)
- Public school **students are housing insecure**. (4)
- **Refugees & immigrants have a hard time finding affordable housing** in Evanston. (3)

# Most Mentioned Housing Needs

## **We need more moderately-priced single-family homes (20 stories)**

- Homes for: “first time home-buyers,” “families with young children,” “housing for police, teachers and middle managers,” “starter homes,” “homes under \$500,000,” “homes in the \$200,000 to \$250,000 range.”

## **Preserving and enhancing Evanston’s racial diversity is critical (16 stories)**

- “We need more affordable housing options (ownership and rental) for African Americans given the history of segregation in Evanston,” “We need to address segregation in Evanston,” “It seems only the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward has remnants of affordable housing.”

## **■ We need more affordable 2- and 3-bedroom apartments for Evanston’s lower-income families (14 stories)**

- Especially for: “Families with young families with children,” “larger families,” “people now forced to commute to Evanston for their jobs,” “Housing that is in good shape: No dumps.”

# Other Housing Needs

- **Higher density housing** (Townhomes/row houses) **near public transportation** – including some affordable to low-income people. (6 stories)
- **Affordable housing for seniors** (Both “assisted living” and “non-retirement homes”) (6 stories)
- **Address rental barriers** such as low credit scores and criminal records (4)
- **Affordable housing** needs to be in **all wards of the City** (4)
- **Increased housing of all types** including smaller and ‘tiny’ house (4)
- Housing for **people with disabilities** (3)
- Housing for the **homeless** (3)
- Housing for **single parents with children** (3)
- Housing for **young people, especially with limited skills** (2)
- Housing for **immigrants and refugees** (2)

# Most Mentioned Housing Solutions

- **Smaller houses, ADUs, and coach houses (20 stories)**
  - “Remove the red tape for owners who want to build ADUs,” “allow for smaller houses on smaller lots,” “permit big houses to be split into multiple units.”
- **Decrease segregation and increase inclusion in Evanston (10 stories)**
  - “Provide affordable housing throughout Evanston,” “Create a ‘culture of welcome’ for people of color,” “We need a process to increase neighborhood buy-in for affordable housing.”
- **Engage or require Northwestern University to be part of the solution (9 stories)**
  - “NU should chip in more money for the City’s budget and stop buying up land and houses.”

# Most Mentioned Housing Solutions (Cont.)

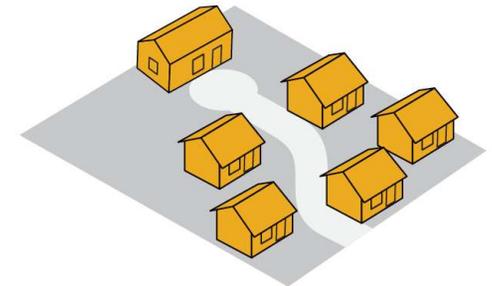
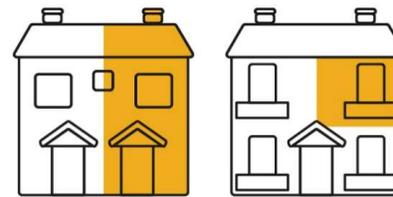
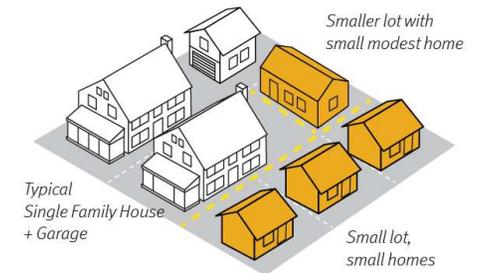
- **Require developers to include affordable housing** versus making “in lieu” payments (7)
- **Reduce property taxes** or provide targeted tax relief to lower-income homeowners (6)
- Provide **counseling to lower-income home-buyers and renters** (5)
- Build **more townhouses, duplexes, and 3- and 4-flats** (5)
- Focus **less on luxury housing downtown** and **more on affordable housing** in the neighborhoods (5)

# Other Housing Solutions

- Provide **home repair and maintenance assistance** to low-income homeowners (3)
- **Increase funding for affordable housing** with new, stable revenue sources (3)
- **Update the zoning code** with an ‘equity lens’ (3)
- Create a **rent subsidy fund** (3)
- Provide **more senior housing** (3)
- Create **land trusts** to own low-income housing (3)
- Promote **home sharing and co-housing** as solutions (3)
- Institute **rent control** (3)
- **Increase local wages** to help people afford higher cost housing (2)
- Work with Habitat for Humanity to **build homes with ‘sweat equity’** (2)
- **Curtail AirBNB** in Evanston (2)

# Views on “Housing Solutions”

- Four “housing solutions” were shared with participants:
  - **Granny Flats (ADUs)**
  - **Smaller Footprint, Smaller Lots**
  - **Same Footprint, 2-4 Units**
  - **Shared Living, Co-living**
- **All four ideas were supported** by participants with majorities ranging from 68% for Smaller Footprint, Smaller Lots to 84% for ADUs.





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