

# Public Forum: Finding Common Ground

**Community Solutions to Affordable Housing (CSAH)  
A Project funded by the Kansas Health Foundation (KHF)**

**May 4, 2019 3:00-5:00 Leadership Studies Building**

## **Summary Report**

### Background

Since the first forum on affordable housing was held April 2018 by the KHF-funded CSAH project<sup>1</sup>, there have been multiple opportunities provided for public learning and interaction on this issue. The April 2018 forum featured round-table discussions among a cross-section of 94 residents who shared their stories of searching for a home in Manhattan, Kansas, then characterized the local housing environment based on their experiences.

From that convening, fourteen residents volunteered to meet in two Study Circle groups over the summer of 2018, to read and discuss information on housing affordability approaches taken in other communities. The two groups came together in September to develop and apply criteria for selecting three solutions for further investigation by the community. The criteria for solutions included: increasing the number of persons “at home” in Manhattan; resulting in real improvement in residents’ lives; empowering under-represented groups; having clear targets for implementation; and monitoring and improving the quality of Manhattan housing stock. The solutions selected were: 1) rental code enforcement, 2) neighborhood revitalization programs, and 3) housing trust fund development.

Results of the forum and Study Circles were presented at Manhattan City Commission meetings, and free workshops for learning about other towns’ programs for each solution were offered through early January 2019. During this time, Facebook blog ([S.A.H.A. - Safe and Affordable Housing Action](#)) and an association of tenants ([Renters Together](#)) independently hosted community conversations to inform and inspire residents pursuing improvements. CSAH organizers attended meetings of agencies and groups dedicated to housing, and proposed that a collective conversation among these and other stakeholders could generate specific proposals for change.

Accordingly, the 2019 forum featured a “world café” rotation of all participants among a collection of housing interest groups, followed by break-out sessions investigating the three solutions identified in 2018. The break-out sessions ended with a plenary summary session and opportunities to sign up for two additional work sessions per solution over the summer.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on Community Solutions to Affordable Housing, please visit [www.ksu.edu/cecd/civic/csah/](http://www.ksu.edu/cecd/civic/csah/)



### World Café

The objective of the World Café session was to maximize interaction with task-oriented visits to as many discussion tables as possible within a short time. Each table was hosted by a housing interest group<sup>2</sup>. Fifteen local government, non-profit, and business interest groups associated with housing were invited. Of those, nine offered tables, and two city agencies sent pairs of representatives without tabling. The task of each roving participant was to interact with the housing interest group then leave a vote (colored dot) on a *Values Matrix* of terms the housing group maintained at its table. Value terms were collected in advance from website or Facebook pages of all groups invited.

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<sup>2</sup> [Flint Hills Association of Realtors](#); [Flint Hills Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) & [ATA Bus](#); [Manhattan Area Habitat for Humanity](#); [Manhattan Area Housing Partnership](#); [Manhattan Area Technical College](#); [Manhattan Emergency Shelter, Inc.](#); [Manhattan Housing Authority](#) ; [Region Reimagined](#) ; [Renters Together](#)

Value terms from invited housing interest groups:

accessibility	ethics	quality of life
accountability	faith-based	renters
advocacy	financial solvency	safety
affordability	growth	self-sufficiency
assistance	habitability	seniors
choice	health equity	shelter
community involvement	home ownership	skilled, qualified work[ers]
community outreach	hope	smart growth
community vitality	housing rights	social equity
compassion	jobs	students
democratic participation	low-income	support
dignity	minorities	transformational development
diversity	mobility	sustainable community
economic development	partnerships	transportation
efficiency	professionalism	volunteerism
equity	property maintenance	workforce

Values matrix after visits: Sample from the *Manhattan Area Habitat for Humanity* table:

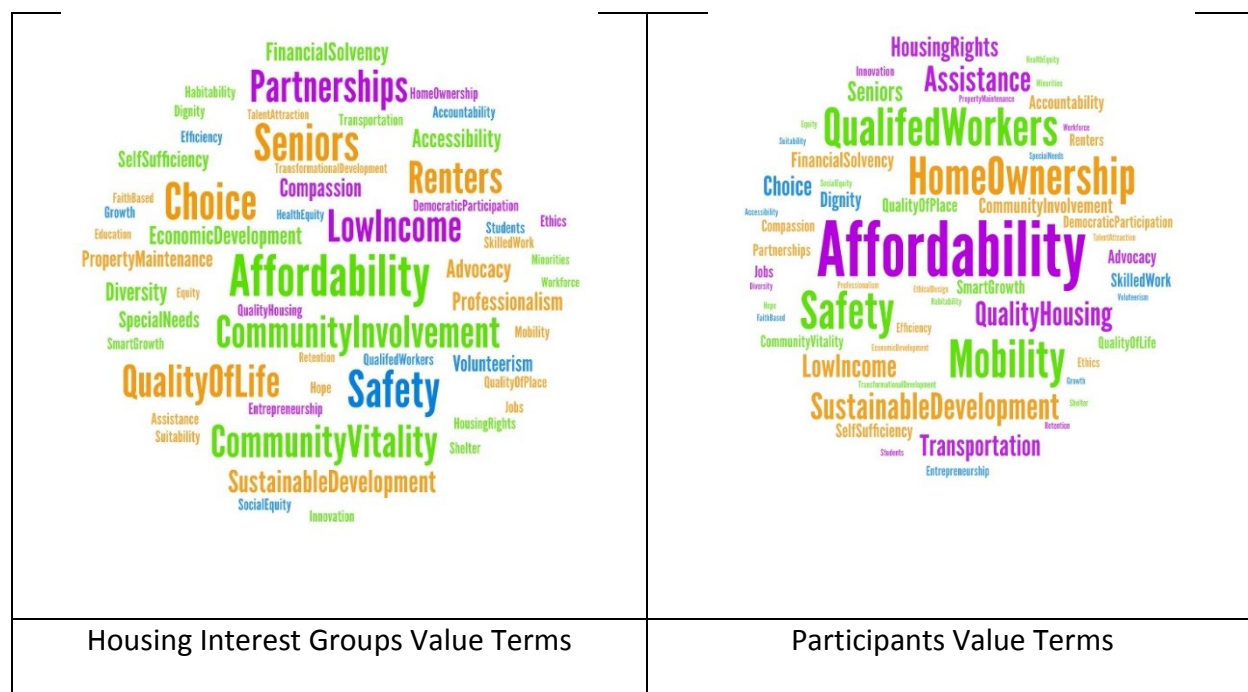
## HOUSING VALUES MATRIX – MAHFH

VALUE TERMS	MAHFH – Manhattan Area Habitat for Humanity	STICKY NOTES FOR OTHER TERMS (NOT FOUND IN PROGRAM LIST)
Affordability	X        	
Community Involvement	X  	
Compassion	X 	
Dignity	X      	
Faith-Based	X	
Hope	X 	
Low-income	X  	
Seniors	X	
Shelter	X 	
Sustainable Development	X  	
Transformational Development	X 	
Volunteerism	X 	

A Word Cloud illustrates by font size the number of times a word has been selected. Before visits by the participants, the value terms that were selected by a third or more of the nine housing interest groups were: Affordability(5), Safety(4), Choice(4), Seniors(4), Community Involvement(3), Community Vitality(3), Partnerships(3), Low-Income(3), Quality of Life(3), and Renters(3). Thirty-four participants were given 10 voting dots per person, and the value terms most selected after roving among the tables were Affordability(31), Safety(12), Homeownership(12), Mobility(12), Qualified skilled workers(12), and Sustainable Development(11).

Notably, both housing groups and participants gave highest rankings to affordability and safety, but participants did not overlap with housing organizations in the remainder of value terms that had more than a third of their votes. Housing groups recognized the closely related values of community involvement, community vitality, and partnerships to goal achievement, and their appearance at this forum was a testimony to that. They also showed a marked interest in renters, while participants selected homeownership as a high-ranking value. Quality of Life was a significant value signaled by housing interest groups, and qualified skilled workers was a value highlighted by participants.

These distinct value choices are not so dissimilar as to suggest that the preferences of Manhattan residents as a whole (not represented in this sample) are not reflected in the approaches of housing interest groups. But the value frames that engaged residents “bring to the table” when addressing this issue can influence agendas and broader involvement. When the scores were combined, the primary values that might inform future joint conversations were Affordability(36), Safety(16), Sustainable Development(14), Qualified Skilled Workers(13), Mobility(13), Homeownership(13), along with Assistance(11) and Low Income(11) focus.



## Break-out Sessions



After a plenary review of the profile of housing values and priorities, participants were asked to select a breakout session to attend based on the solution that seemed to them most aligned with their own values. Each of those sessions began with an exercise in introductions that involved stating one's name and a strongly-held housing value, then tossing a ball of twine to a person in the circle who indicated they also prioritized that value, until a visible network including all individuals was formed. Following a template, facilitators issued questions to each solution group that paired current [undesirable] situations with future [desired] outcomes, assets/resources with challenges/barriers, and a short list of potential projects to be developed in more detail during the summer Study Circles. The following pages contain templates of notes from the three solution break-out groups.

<b>Focused Outcome for: <i>Proactive Rental Inspections Room 111</i></b>	
<b>Current Situation</b>	<b>Desired Future (Outcomes)</b>
Mold	Peace of mind
Outdated [appliance] electrical	100% of rental properties inspected
Code non-compliance	Increase proportion of inspections
Heating and Cooling	
Unsafe systems	
<b>Assets / Gifts / Resources</b>	<b>Challenges / Barriers</b>
Registration program	Political power
Kansas Tenant-Landlord Act	Illusion of safety
Free code inspection	Legal questions
K-State	Privacy rights questions
Kansas Legal Services	
K-State Attorney	
MHK Code Services	
Elections in fall	

Potential Projects (to be developed in detail during June, July)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification (“approved” rentals) -&gt; Scorecard (e.g., military)</li> <li>• Include info in lease re: rights and resources (Ordinance)</li> <li>• Amendment to current registration process</li> </ul>

Focused Outcome for: <i>Neighborhood Revitalization Programs 113</i>	
Current Situation	Desired Future (Outcomes)
NORTHVIEW -> education access elementary school size	Every apartment allowing 10% Section 8 /4142 vouchers Change community perception
Section 8 Stigma	Improved housing quality -> Seamless neighborhood transitions Continuity of place/quality of place Sense of vitality, pride, care Infrastructure & roads
Transitional state -> KSU enrollment down Ft. Riley deployments Med. income up (MHK, MSA) Long-term landlords retiring Rental rates down (+affordability –stock)	Property owner accountability -> maintenance
Lower quality for price compared with others in Midwest (quality, character, price point)	Renter rights/agreement awareness
Talent retention problem	Needs based, collaborative grassroots plan Adopted by city, incorporated in CIP Focus on CORE <sup>3</sup> area
What is affordability? -> HUD cost burden, > 30% monthly income spent on housing	Prevent apartment oversaturation
EAST CAMPUS – Unsafe housing; dilapidated houses; broken windows; drug issues Lack of housing for large household size that is affordable & safe Campus Edge up-zoned	
City MHK has bldg. codes; surrounding areas don’t, but will -> prevent sprawl	
Taxes and specials – Higher costs; Unknown, Misconceptions	

<sup>3</sup> CORE area – East and West campus, Downtown focus



<b>Assets / Gifts / Resources</b>	<b>Challenges / Barriers</b>
Neighborhood MHK launched – organic structure	Income based/owner assistance can't help large # of rental property generally
	Heavy rental demand w/ few owners -> single family zones to attract owners failed
<b>Potential Projects (to be developed in detail during June, July sessions)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations on type of development should be part of the neighborhood revitalization plan</li> <li>• Get neighborhood buy-in on plans/projects</li> <li>• Leverage grant funds (to help broader population) -&gt; equitability</li> <li>• Incentivize maintenance / buy in (small gifts) -&gt; younger population</li> <li>• Secondary dwelling unit to harness rental demand: affordable; attentive; attractive</li> <li>• Incentives to afford renovations? Grants; matching; involve homeowners &amp; landlords</li> <li>• Neighborhood associations -&gt; collective action</li> <li>• Code enforcement</li> </ul>	

<b>Focused Outcome for: <i>Community Housing Trust 113</i></b>	
<b>Current Situation</b>	<b>Desired Future (Outcomes)</b>
Barriers to entry -> Homeownership Down-payment, affordable mortgage payments are challenge.	Young, 1 <sup>st</sup> . time homeowners can enter the market.
Banks, financial institutions unfamiliar with this model; No existing partnerships like this (yet).	Partnering with financial institutions.
Cost of construction on land, start-up costs [prohibitive].	"Nest egg" [supported by trust] is feasible.
Need for suitability/standards.	Establish standards for suitability; Examine modular structures.
Finding land to build on is a challenge; Foreclosed land rarely goes to city.	People moving to MHK see good changes happening, long term. Attract talent, urban community.
<b>Assets / Gifts / Resources</b>	<b>Challenges / Barriers (see Current Situation)</b>
CHDO – Community Housing Development Organization: Manhattan Area Housing Partnership is the CHDO in MHK	
Resident champions	
Habitat for Humanity	
FHLB Affordable Housing Grant (see Jerry Davis)	
Greater Manhattan Community Foundation (appropriate place to house future funds)	
Unoccupied, deferred maintenance properties – Existing stock could be sold cheaply. City could put pressure on landlords to sell/donate	
As a non-profit developer, can get representation	

Potential Projects (to be developed in detail during June, July sessions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish the legal foundation for a land bank/trust.</li> <li>• Put a plan in place for the non-profit entity (proposal).</li> <li>• Identify and inventory tax foreclosed properties.</li> <li>• Reach out to owners of unoccupied/deteriorating properties.</li> <li>• Determine if Habitat for Humanity works with land trusts.</li> </ul>

## Summary

Before adjourning, participants from the three break-out sessions reconvened to share the desired outcomes and potential projects they discussed. As in 2018, an invitation was extended by the CSAH project team to anyone interested in meeting for further development of project proposals, in June and July. These meetings will be scheduled two times per solution interest group and will also update participants on parallel developments happening through other government, private, and non-profit housing interest groups. To track progress of the Community Solutions to Affordable Housing project, please visit the project website ([www.ksu.edu/cecd/civic/csah/](http://www.ksu.edu/cecd/civic/csah/)) or contact any of the CSAH investigators listed below.

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