

Affordable Housing Strategies – Land Acquisition to Increase Supply of Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing Need

Access to safe, decent, and affordable housing is a critical factor in creating stability and opportunity for Eugene’s lower-income families and individuals. Based on the draft 2020 Eugene-Springfield Consolidated Plan, there are a total of 21,535 low-income renter households and 7,390 low-income owner-occupied households in Eugene. Housing of all types has been identified as a priority need in the Consolidated Plan.

The supply of rental units and homeownership units affordable to low-income households does not meet the demand. As a result, the waiting lists for subsidized affordable housing units are long. The community also has a significant homeless population. The 2019 Point-in-Time Count identified 2,165 people experiencing homelessness. Of those, 1,633 individuals were without shelter.

Strategy: Land Acquisition for Affordable Housing Development

More stock of affordable housing is necessary to meet community need. Through the Land Acquisition program, the City acquires land suitable for the future development of housing affordable to low-income persons. Acquiring an appropriate site is a difficult part of the development process. A site must be affordable, zoned properly, the right size, proximate to jobs, schools, transportation options and services, free of environmental contamination, and must access existing infrastructure. Through this strategy, the City creates a steady development pipeline in areas of opportunity across the city. The program has also supported the formation of a strong local network of affordable housing developers by offering regular development opportunities.

Since the purchase of the first site in 1979, over 91 acres have been acquired for affordable housing using a combination of federal and local funds. These properties have enabled construction of 922 units of affordable housing for low income households intentionally located throughout the City. The 24 development sites have supported homeownership and rental housing developments. The developments are indistinguishable from market rate developments and are often admired for their high-quality appearance, construction, and management.

The City aims to continuously identify sites for future development. One of the five-year goals of the draft 2020 Eugene-Springfield Consolidated Plan is to increase the supply of affordable housing through property acquisition for future affordable housing development. The five-year goal is to purchase two sites.



Land Acquisition Activity

The City of Eugene acquired vacant land at 1525 River Road using CDBG funds for the future development of affordable housing. The site was offered through the 2018 Housing Request for Proposals, and City Council awarded the property to St. Vincent de Paul's 53-unit River Road Affordable Housing proposal, later named Iris Place. In addition to the land, the City awarded housing development funds and systems development charge fee waivers, in a coordinated allocation process. The City plans to award a 20-year property tax exemption to the low-income rental housing development. St. Vincent de Paul was awarded construction financing through the state. Construction will begin in 2020.



1525 River Road Land Acquisition Site



Rendering of River Road Affordable Housing, now known as Iris Place

The City has an Option Agreement on second property located downtown at 1059 Willamette Street. City Council approved CDBG acquisition funds to create a mixed income residential development, with 51% of the units targeted to low-moderate income households earning no more than 80% of area median income, and 49% of the units for market rate rentals. There are currently no other examples of mixed income residential buildings in the area.

Staff continually reaches out to community partners including faith organizations and schools to identify potential sites. The types of sites being sought out include land suitable for multifamily rental as well as land suitable for affordable home ownership or cottage clusters.