



CITY OF TOPEKA

Aly Van Dyke
Media Relations Director
City Hall 215 SE 7th Street, Rm 352
Topeka, KS 66603-3914

785-368-0991 Tel
785-368-3966 FAX
avandyke@topeka.org
www.topeka.org

NEWS RELEASE

City proposes working group for affordable housing

The City of Topeka Thursday was honored to be an active part of Topeka JUMP's Nehemiah meeting -- a group of about 500 people passionately committed to making the City of Topeka a stronger community. This year, the group chose affordable housing as its key mission, and the City, having been working toward this issue with partners for decades, is excited to have input and enthusiasm from so many members of our City's faith-based organizations.

Toward that end, the City of Topeka is developing a working group of residents, community activists, agencies and leaders to research and ultimately recommend actions the City and community can take to improve affordable housing in our community. The logical place for that effort is out of our Citizens Advisory Council, which is charged by City ordinance to oversee the City's Housing and Urban Development funded programs.

"The CAC is honored to have JUMP join in the incredibly important task of discussing affordable housing needs and finding solutions in our community," said CAC Chairman Brandon Barnette. "We are grateful resources from across Topeka are lending us their insight and expertise, so we can approach this challenge head on, as a community."

The proposed working group would be chaired by Mayor Larry Wolgast and consist of members of the CAC, JUMP, the Neighborhood Task Force and at least one member of each of the housing programs in town, including Cornerstone of Topeka, Inc., Habitat for Humanity, Community Action Inc., Topeka Housing Authority, Topeka Rescue Mission and Housing and Credit Counseling Inc. The working group will hold special meetings at least every other month to explore affordable housing trust funds and possible fund raising opportunities for such a trust fund.

The City each year spends about \$2.7 million toward affordable housing efforts and partners with several agencies in the City to address the issue. The group's mission would supplement these efforts by identifying potential uses for additional funding from other sources.

Once the working group develops proposed actions, it will present to the CAC, which will make a recommendation to Topeka's governing body. Once the recommendation is made to council, the working group will be disbanded unless it is further needed to help raise funds toward its recommendations.

At JUMP's Nehemiah meeting Thursday, the group agreed to serve on the working group and help the City toward this purpose. The City's next meeting with JUMP to discuss next steps will be within the next two weeks. The City commits to having a resolution before the City Council establishing this working group and its mission within 45 days.

"When JUMP approached us to join the conversation about affordable housing, we were thrilled at the opportunity to have them at the table," Mayor Wolgast said. "We are glad JUMP has agreed to lend us their voices on this working group. Through the combination of our passionate citizens and agencies that work in this issue every day, I expect we can find ideas that are truly transformative."