

CITY COUNCIL INITIATIVE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING



A study concluded what most of us knew: Shawnee County and Topeka lack affordable housing options. To ensure citizens live safe, healthy lives, Topeka must pursue Affordable Housing Initiatives that address real needs. When elected to the City Council, I will aggressively work to ensure our citizens have affordable housing, utilizing current and new methods:

Community Land Trust: In this partnership, an organization owns land while selling the home at affordable prices to people who earn 80% of an area's median income. Homeowners have the same rights of those with traditional mortgages, but don't own the land. They make a small lease payment per year, and the organization manages resales to ensure the next buyer makes 80% of the median income. Sellers reap the principal they paid and keep increases from sale of the property. Institution land ownership buffers against runaway speculation that drives prices too high or market prices that lose owners equity.

Support Non-profits: The City must partner with non-profits and religious organizations to provide additional resources and support to serve more individuals. This stops duplication of efforts and allows non-profits to serve more individuals.

Curb Property Tax Inflation: The City must consistently verify that property tax valuations are not inflated and pushes homes out of price range for low-to-middle income families to rent or buy.

Think Small: Not all affordable housing comes as single-family homes, duplexes & apartments. Small-scale housing options like accessory dwelling units, tiny homes and micro apartments go a long way to putting people with minimal income into safe, healthy living environments.

Tiered Code Enforcement: We must enforce code compliance. But most affordable housing is not designated affordable. Most low-income Topekans live in units sold & rented on the open market. We don't want small landlords to stop offering housing or who can't keep up with code. A tiered system prioritizes enforcement and ensures landlords take care of immediate needs while offering time to take care of minor and long-term issues. This keeps homes safe & healthy without large rent increases.

Advocate for Federal Policy Changes: There are federal policies that hamstring efforts to reform local land use & housing policies. FHA rules and mortgage and lending industry practices put incremental, fiscally productive forms of development at a disadvantage.

Developer Incentives: If developers build in certain neighborhoods, and designate a certain number of units for low-income renters, they should be eligible for a credit, abatement or other incentive.

Impact Statements: Any development presented to the City for approval, commercial or residential, must contain an impact statement on how it will affect low income housing. The impact must be considered when up for approval, permitting and tax assistance.

Public Transportation Incentive: Builders developing or rehabbing units should be eligible for a parking ratio reduction if projects are within 1 mile of a bus stop. Developers and landlords of multi-family projects should be eligible for credits, abatements or other incentives if they help fund new routes to existing developments.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Spencer".

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