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Housing Next Leadership Council Formed

First Order of Business: Hiring a Housing Champion

Ottawa County, Michigan – A new Leadership Council has been formed to collectively focus on workforce housing solutions. The Leadership Council, composed of the area’s top community and business development organizations will work to ensure housing is available for all area workers.

Mike Goorhouse, President of the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area, and Holly Johnson, President of the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, will serve as co-chairs of the newly formed Housing Next Leadership Council. The Council also will include representatives from the West Coast Chamber, Chamber of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg, United Way of Ottawa and Allegan Counties, Ottawa County, Lakeshore Advantage and Community SPOKE.

“Affordable housing was already a big problem in our community and it is getting bigger. Recent estimates of the shortage have grown to between 12,000 and 15,000 units, said Goorhouse, co-chair of the Housing Next Leadership Council. “Local businesses, government, and nonprofit organizations are all seeing the lack of affordable housing creating tremendous difficulty in many families’ day to day lives and constraining our overall ability to grow and thrive as a community.”

The Housing Next Leadership Council was formed due to the extensive housing research effort lead by the United Way of Ottawa and Allegan Counties – Ottawa Housing Next. The Leadership Council’s first order of business will be to hire a director fully focused on workforce housing solutions. This individual will be the champion for workforce housing solutions in our community. The position description for any interested applicants can be on the United Way website:

<https://www.ottawaunitedway.org/employment>. The Council plans to have its new director in place by the end of 2017.

“Lack of affordable housing is both a social and an economic issue, and will require government, business and nonprofits all working together to make significant progress towards a solution,” said Johnson. “I can’t remember a time when these eight organizations have collaborated so closely to address a key community priority.” In addition to the Leadership Council, there will be a broader Advisory Board which will have representation from developers, businesses, philanthropy, housing nonprofits, government and residents.

Housing Next has identified four strategies to help our community better access these market-driven solutions:

- Matching private and nonprofit developers' interests with local housing needs.
- Working with local units of government to collectively clarify their vision for the types of affordable housing developments they desire for their communities and establishing the regulatory environment that will allow those developments to happen.
- Assisting developers in accessing public and philanthropic resources to fill financial gaps that might otherwise prevent projects from moving forward.
- Connecting new developments with local nonprofit partners to ensure critical services and supports are available for future residents. This strategy will be accomplished primarily through increased grant funding from the Housing Initiative Fund at United Way.

In addition to Johnson and Goorhouse, other members of the newly formed Leadership Council include:

Patrick Cisler, Executive Director of Community SPOKE

Jane Clark, President of the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce

Joy Gaasch, President of the Chamber of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg

Patrick Moran, President of United Way of Ottawa and Allegan Counties

Jennifer Owens, President of Lakeshore Advantage

Al Vanderberg, Ottawa County Administrator

Lyn Raymond, Director of the Lakeshore Housing Alliance will serve as liaison from the Leadership Council to the broader Advisory Panel.

“United Way is pleased to transition the leadership on this effort to this Leadership Council, while still keeping all the important members of Ottawa Housing Next informed and engaged,” said Patrick Moran, President of the United Way of Ottawa and Allegan Counties. “This cross sector council is the right group at the right time to increase market driven housing solutions.”

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