



For Immediate Release

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Housing Next Announces Regional Effort to Address Housing Crisis with Support from the Greater Grand Rapids Chamber Foundation and other partners

On March 3 at Haworth Inc., Housing Next announced a new partnership to grow the effort to identify and remove obstacles to housing supply and affordability in greater Ottawa and Kent Counties.

Through the leadership and contributions of the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, the Community Foundation of the Holland /Zeeland Area, and Haworth, they established an effort called Housing Next 4 years ago. Their focus was on workforce housing, including individuals and families that are fully employed and work in Ottawa County but can't afford to live here.

Housing Next has already supported the approval of thousands of new multi-family rental units and for-sale homes in Ottawa County through the revision and modernization of 6 local zoning codes with the goal of reducing regulatory barriers and increasing diversity of housing products in the market, partnering with 4 communities on the contribution of public land for affordable/attainable and market-rate housing, collaborating with 21 different developers (for-profit & non-profit) to leverage more than 3,900 new housing starts and 30 new developments across the County, managing the Ottawa and Kent Housing Needs Assessments, and assisting in the creation of the Grand Rapids Affordable Housing Fund.

To address the growing gap in housing needs in Ottawa and Kent Counties, now estimated at 37,000 units, Housing Next has partnered with the Greater Grand Rapids Chamber Foundation. Through their support and with a growing number of other West Michigan employers and organizations, Housing Next has added Brooke Oosterman as the new Director of Policy and Communications to lead the developing coalition.

"Housing Next is one of many ways we have focused on increasing access to affordable housing in our community," **said Hadley Streng, President of the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation.** "Our efforts in Ottawa County will now have the benefit of additional capacity, support, and tools and are a key part of a new regional strategy."

"The opportunity ahead of us to improve economic opportunity and shape healthier, more equitable communities is significant and urgent," **said Ryan Kilpatrick, Executive Director of Housing Next.** "We want to work with non-profit, for-profit, and public sector partners to ensure

that every family in West Michigan has good housing options in safe, stable, and affordable neighborhoods.”

“Housing supply and attainability has been a major area of our advocacy work for several years, and we have been so thankful for Housing Next’s leadership in advancing solutions that align with our goal of creating a thriving and prosperous West Michigan for all,” **said Joshua Lunger, Vice President of Government Affairs at the Grand Rapids Chamber.** “We are thrilled to be able to support the growth of this highly effective program through the Greater Grand Rapids Chamber Foundation in partnership with the founding members and other West Michigan employers, associations, and philanthropic organizations.”

“The creation of Housing Next has been critical in addressing what has been the number one concern of many businesses and non-profits: affordable housing close to where people work,” **said Joy Gaasch, President of The Chamber of Commerce Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg.** “Our entire region is feeling these same pressures, and the urgency is growing. It is clear that we had the need, but also the opportunity and interest, to take a step forward into this work.”

Housing Next will be immediately working to engage a broad, diverse coalition to support the projects and policies that align with the mission. They will advance this work by communicating and facilitating dialogue to articulate the value and importance of housing supply at all price points. They will provide subject matter experts to identify obstacles and solutions and will help to organize informed support by residents, employers, community leaders, and other key stakeholders to achieve aligned policies and projects.

Housing Next will:

- Provide up-to-date and accessible information regarding regional and local housing needs across Ottawa and Kent counties.
- Articulate a context sensitive approach to urban, suburban, and rural communities which allow for more housing choice at all price points while maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods.
- Educate the public that housing affordability for every household requires more housing supply as well as targeted strategies to stabilize at-risk households.
- Build an impactful coalition of diverse voices to advance the mission and grow the target audience, seeking support from “Yes in My Backyard (YIMBY)” individuals who are prepared to take action when called upon. This includes business leaders, institutional leaders, faith leaders, community partners, and residents from every community.
- Review, propose and engage in support of the aligned policies and projects as well as monitor all planning commission and board/council meetings across the two-county area for zoning and development items.

Housing Next needs your help. To be successful engagement from individuals and organizations is needed. Connect with us today: <https://www.housingnext.org/contact>

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About Housing Next:

Housing Next partners with local governments, developers, and nonprofits in West Michigan to remove barriers to the creation of housing at all price points. It also works to identify, promote

and foster quality housing for all – regardless of income, socioeconomic background or race. Housing Next is committed to eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in housing.

www.housingnext.org

About the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation

The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation is a public, charitable organization serving Northwest Ottawa County community since 1971. GHACF is regularly recognized as a top 100 Community Foundation in the nation and is the 7th largest community foundation in the State of Michigan. It encourages philanthropy by individuals, families, corporations, and organizations, and serves as a steward of their charitable funds and legacies. In addition to awarding grants, the Foundation offers technical support to nonprofits, convenes community leaders on issues of importance, and advocates for the nonprofit sector. For more information visit ghacf.org.