Community Solutions to Affordable Housing (CSAH):
Participatory Community Forum

Summary Report

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APDESIGN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND REGIONAL & COMMUNITY PLANNING
THE COLLEGE of ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING & DESIGN // K-STATE

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES LAB
HEALTHY, EQUITABLE, RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

About the Event

Community Solutions to Affordable Housing (CSAH) is a two-year project funded by the Kansas Health Foundation. It is organized by the Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy (ICDD) in conjunction with the Healthy Communities Laboratory and the College of Architecture, Planning, and Design at Kansas State University. The overall goal of the project is to assist the community in exploring the issue of affordable housing in Manhattan, KS and in developing an array of solutions for development and decision-making.

The first phase of this project generated a two-hour participatory community forum, held on April 12th, 2018 at the Manhattan Public Library. This event was structured by small-group dialogue designed to encourage exploration through personal stories and community-wide observations. Following the guidelines of the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation[1], an "exploration" engagement should "encourage people and groups to learn more about themselves, their community, or an issue, and possibly discover innovative solutions". This type of public engagement event is oriented toward issue learning and perspective sharing. Before progress can be made on such a complex issue, stakeholders need to unify under the common bond of community and explore one another's perspectives.

In order to recruit participants for this event, members from the team of CSAH organizers were each assigned a major stakeholder group. These broke down into landlords, students, faith communities, Northview community members, and at-risk or unhoused persons. Within these groups, individuals were contacted via email, phone, and door-to-door canvassing. Flyers were also placed throughout Manhattan with CSAH team contact information to increase outreach. On a voluntary basis, individuals were brought together for pre-event discussions to help better understand the goals of the forum and the varied perspectives that would be present. To overcome barriers to participation on the evening of April 12th, dinner and free child-care were provided. Experienced facilitators were recruited by ICDD, and assisted in the design of the forum to make it inviting and inclusive to all Manhattan community members.

In preparation for the April 12th forum, the project team analyzed interviews collected by the Healthy Communities Lab from previous public events and appointments. The purpose of the interview analysis was to understand Manhattan community members' lived experiences of housing, and to understand the roles community members have in relation to housing. From these interviews, the team developed a series of composite personas, shown on the following page. The housing personas are anonymous representations of real people and quotes that exemplify their lived experiences.   Large posters of these personas were displayed at the forum.

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[1] National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation. "Engagement Streams Framework." NCDD, 2010, http://www.ncdd.org/files/NCDD2010_Engagement_Streams.pdf

RENTER*
I am an older, single parent.
I am unemployed due to health problems.
I live in public housing.

"[I] always had a job, always been self-dependent. But now I'm struggling due to lack of education, transportation, and poor health."

On barriers to accessing social services that could decrease housing cost burden...

"You could go there one day and speak with someone ... and then go back and get someone else, and you have to start fresh, and there you go, back to square one."

RENTER*
I have a spouse and child.
We came to Manhattan from another country to earn higher education (Phd).
We struggle due to high cost of living.

"Some families want choices – to have more kids. But not for us. We are conscious that we face challenges. If we had a second child, it would be worse. It would take me even longer [to complete PhD]."

"You would think that higher education would mean having healthcare, or having a nice house to live in – not a nice house, but room to live in. ... A very big need is childcare. [With childcare] I would probably have more free time to finish up my dissertation and most likely apply for a job and contribute to my household."

HOMEOWNER and HOUSING ADVOCATE*
I am married.
I worked in the non-profit and education sectors, and served in local government.

"Low-income people are to some degree invisible here. We find ways to support them, but we are not finding ways to lift them up out of poverty...And it is so multi-layered. I mean, locally we do what we can...."

"The need is increasing... it's not getting any less. Shepherd's Crossing helps with rent, the amount they have given out this year is staggering."

"We've had discussions in this community over years about trying to... address density issue.... We have a tendency to talk a good talk, but when it comes time to execute, the economics don't allow it to happen."

REALTOR AND PROPERTY OWNER*
I own rental properties and advocate for land development policy.

"We created monstrosity of zoning requirements in this city. ... "Someone needs to come in here and basically have land zoned properly and meet conditions of zoning requirements to make it affordable to build. Anybody can do something, as long as it's affordable."

"The city is responsible for letting the specials... and they have bid all that. [The] developer doesn't have to worry about bidding. He just has to worry about building vertical. [Developers] just have to hook up to water, electricity and sewer. The infrastructure is going to be there because the city is going to pay for it. If we let the developer pay for it, it would be more competitive and lower our costs. That's my opinion."
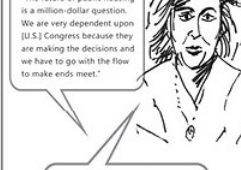
PROPERTY OWNER & COMMUNITY DEVELOPER*
I own and manage property.
I advocate and work for community growth and economic development.

"Well, the affordability thing is obviously subjective. They are still selling the houses in Grand Mere, and the prices are getting higher. My question, do we have the right housing segment? Clearly we don't have enough $150,000 to $250,000 homes in this community."

"The question is...are we investing in this class or are we investing in that class? What's the mobility [for upper socio-economic status]?... much, much greater....Things turn, if a better job offer comes from University of Michigan, they are gone."

HOUSING ADVOCATE*
I work closely with those seeking public housing.

"The future of public housing is a million-dollar question. We are very dependent upon [U.S.] Congress because they are making the decisions and we have to go with the flow to make ends meet."

"It's a problem nationwide...Our capital need backlog [in public housing] is growing. [The federal housing agency] tells us is that they want us to think outside the box and think like a business. But it is difficult because there are so many regulations that...prevent us from doing that."

RENTER and HOUSING ADVOCATE*
I work in the non-profit social services sector.

"...[W]hen you live in poverty and live paycheck to paycheck, you are in a constant mode of crisis and survival, so everyday it's how to get to the next day and how to make your dollars stretch."

"The point is to get [unhoused people] to where they can overcome whatever barriers, so they can then go rent in fair market units or public housing units.

"And when you are in that mode and can't see the bigger picture, [you might get] into payday loans or fixing your vehicle and not paying your rent, so then you don't have a place to live but you have a car, [you are] not making choices to keep yourself housed."

WHAT'S YOUR HOUSING STORY?

Themes from Forum Discussion

Ninety-five persons attended the April 12 forum, 45 of whom identified themselves as renters, 40 as housing owners, the remainder un-identified. The actual percentage of 60% renters to 40% owners in Manhattan is a significant feature of the housing market. Participants on April 12 included parents, singles, workers, retirees, and volunteers from many walks of life. They were organized into eleven tables with roughly six participants at each table as well as one facilitator and one recorder.

Part I of the dialogue, "My Housing Story," began with facilitators asking participants to share what brought them to Manhattan, their length of residency, and factors that have caused them to move while in Manhattan. Each participant was given a placemat with a map of Manhattan on which they could write or draw, accompanied by questions to outline the progress of their story.

After soliciting personal experiences from participants, the facilitators asked questions in Part II titled "MHK: The Big Picture," eliciting participants' perspectives on larger housing issues in Manhattan. The recorder at each table was responsible for synthesizing comments from participants and recording them on large note sheets at each table, which were collected, along with the individual placemat notes.

After the forum, CSAH project members analyzed and coded participants' and recorders' notes. Rather than employing a pre-existing coding scheme, researchers used a "grounded theory" method of analysis, capturing themes from repeated ideas that emerged from the

notes.[2] Three graduate research assistants read through the transcription notes multiple times and consulted with one another to identify an initially large set of themes that was then condensed into more general, over-arching themes. Rather than focusing on a count of specific items, this approach was directed at distinguishing clusters of ideas. Distilling themes from the participants' responses allowed the CSAH team to look at commonalities and variations in participant input.

The tables below summarize responses for each of the six questions asked by facilitators. Each table contains a question along with several derived themes, accompanied by a description and sample comments.

Next Steps

The next phase of this project will include a series of Study Circles that will occur in Summer 2018, designed for deeper investigation and a framework for deliberation. Though the initial dialogue functioned to foster learning and understanding about the topic, deliberation takes this one step further by considering solutions to be enacted as the end-goal of the conversation.[3] Concurrently with the Study Circles, the CSAH team will continue to conduct one-on-one interviews with community members, further developing and illustrating the variety of community members' experiences with housing.

[2] Dey, Ian. Grounding Grounded Theory: Guidelines for Qualitative Inquiry. San Diego, CA, Academic Press, 1999.
[3] Pearce, Kimberly. Public engagement and civic maturity: A public dialogue consortium perspective. Lulu Enterprises, Inc., 2010.

Part I: Question 1				
"What have been the challenges in finding the right place for you to reside?"				
Theme	**Location**	**Economics**	**Conditions**	**Politics**
Description	Comments in this category relate to the physical location of the property. Many comments referred to the proximity of other community features (e.g. schools, groceries, etc.) or neighborhood features such as relationships with neighbors or a quiet neighborhood.	Comments in this category connect to either socio-economic status, finances, or the housing market.	Comments in this category connect to the material conditions of the property, which ranged from safety to specific amenities offered.	Comments in this category ranged from interpersonal politics between tenant and landlord to government policies and/or responsibilities.
Examples	-"Space that has a good location" -"Finding a place to have good relationship with neighbors" - "Safe neighborhood" -"Transportation issues" -"Access to grocery store"	-"Hard to find affordable housing on one income" -"Housing market after bubble burst" -"Have to move quickly due to high demand" -"Affordability (e.g. single parent, utilities)"	-"Good condition" -"A place that is comfortable" -"Storm shelter" -"Handicap accessibility"	-"Lease flexibility" -"Hard to find landlords who would take Section 8" -"Trust with landlords" -"Housing issues are very political"

Part I: Question 2				
"What are your bare minimum expectations for housing that have guided your moves in Manhattan? What are your priorities when considering places to live that have guided your moves in Manhattan?"				
Theme	**Location**	**Economics**	**Conditions (*Amenities)**	**Politics**
Description	Comments in this category relate to the physical location of the property. Many comments referred to the proximity of other community features (e.g. schools, groceries, etc.) or neighborhood features such as relationships with neighbors or a quiet neighborhood.	Comments in this category connect to either socio-economic status, finances, or the housing market.	Comments in this category connect to the material conditions of the property, which ranged from safety to specific amenities offered. (Top 4 comments) -Due to a high volume of comments, this category includes amenities as a specific subcategory. Amenities refer to specific material features of the property (Bottom 4 comments).	Comments in this category ranged from interpersonal politics between tenant and landlord to government policies and/or responsibilities.
Examples	-"Walk/bike-ability" -"No housing association" -"Good school & low traffic" -Connections with neighbors" -"Transportation within town and outward to KC"	-"Affordable/ Affordability" -"Tax break possible" -"Fair market rate"	-"Meets city code" -"Number of bedrooms" -"Safe & clean" -"Quality housing" -"Parking permits" -"Dishwasher, washer & dryer" -"Green space/yard"	-"Respectable landlord" -"Reliable tenant-owner/management relationship" -"communication/ relationship between landlord/tenant"

Part I: Question 3			
"Considering your experiences, what advice would give to someone who is looking to rent or to buy in Manhattan?"			
Theme	**Financial Planning**	**Research**	**Advocacy**
Description	Advice in this category is focused on individuals making choices about their resources.	Advice in this category is focused on gaining enough information about the housing market to be able to make an informed decision.	Advice in this category is focused on tenant/landlord responsibilities and government policies.
Examples	-"Don't 'stretch' to buy (understand the market) -"Housing is cyclical" -"Have enough income to pay for housing"	-"Research before you rent (ask local renters)" -"Be conscious of zoning changes in the area you want to live" -"Look at all the possibilities"	-"Get city involved if necessary" -"Know your rights" -"Negotiate with landlord"

Part II: Question 1 & 3 (grouped together here because they answer the larger question about concerns related to affordable housing but from differing perspectives)			
"When you think about affordable housing in our community, what comes to mind? What concerns you? What bothers you personally?" "Have you heard other concerns in our community that haven't been raised here?"			
Theme	**Social Justice**	**Market Justice**	**Political Action**	**Livability**
Description	Concerns regarding social justice refer to specific groups of people, typically marginalized individuals (e.g. those with disability, those of low socio-economic status).	Concerns regarding market justice refer to the difficulties in seeking out housing, due to problems of affordability and availability.	Concerns regarding political action refer to tenant/landlord rights and responsibilities, as well as government policies.	Concerns regarding livability refer to the interior and exterior material conditions of a residential property.
Examples	-"Stigma of Section 8 or other low-income housing" -"Living wage doesn't match housing"	-"Difficult competing with military & students" -"Students become commodity for	-"Affordable housing trust fund push" -"Repercussions for requesting inspections" -"3rd party assistance for	-"When safety is compromised" -"Property owners ignoring fundamentals" -"Landlords not making repairs" -"Unsafe housing"

Note: The second table's header row has five columns (Theme, Social Justice, Market Justice, Political Action, Livability).

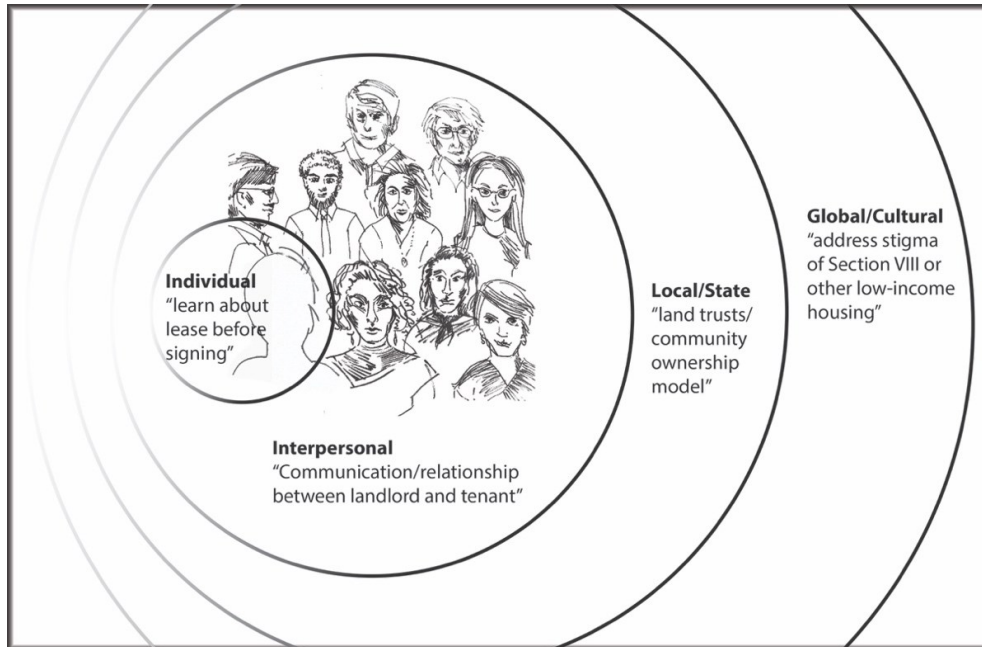|	-"Handicap/ disability" -"Gentrification"	landlords to make money" -"Limited affordable housing options"	tenants navigating the system"	

Part II: Question 2			
"What do you think we should do about the issue?"			
Theme	**Empowerment**	**Improvement**	**Development**
Description	Empowerment refers to solutions or changes at the individual level.	Improvement refers to solutions oriented around how we can *improve* what we already have.	Development refers to solutions that we could add or create that do not currently exist as part of our community.
Examples	-"Educate on lease before signing" -"Change mindset about what is acceptable" -"Vote/advocate for more equitable city ordinances"	-"Reinstate inspections of rentals/city overseeing" -"Improve bus service"	-"Land trusts/community ownership model" -"Tiny house village" -"Rent controlled housing"

Questions for Further Discussion

This forum brought out at least two notable features of the affordable housing issue in Manhattan that can inform the upcoming summer Study Circles. The first is a disparity between cost and quality/safety. Many individuals made comments about how the cost of rent or home ownership in Manhattan does not match the physical conditions of the properties. The disparity typically manifested as a trade-off participants have had to make between having affordable housing and having *safe* housing, characterized as housing that is up-to-code. Should public policy improvement focus on code enforcement, and what impact would that have on the current housing market? How should the public and private segments of the economy address increasing the supply of affordable housing stock?

A second feature that appeared from discussion is the focus on solutions in multiple realms. Concerns and challenges reported here, as well as solutions, illustrate that participants understood affordable housing to be a complex issue that must be addressed not only through changes in the local or state policy realm, but also in the individual and interpersonal realms of control.

Individual
"learn about lease before signing"

Interpersonal
"Communication/relationship between landlord and tenant"

Local/State
"land trusts/ community ownership model"

Global/Cultural
"address stigma of Section VIII or other low-income housing"

CSAH team researchers will continue to examine how the themes derived from forum responses intersect/interact, during the subsequent study circles. Participants in those discussions will be residents who volunteered on April 12 to continue working on the issue. Based on this report, their efforts will focus on identifying information and formulating proposals to meet the need for safe and affordable housing in Manhattan.

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