

Notes from University Community Housing Forum
Tuesday, July 30th
Bruininks Hall 312

Presenters:

Cam Gordon- Council Member: City of Minneapolis Ward 2
Steve Fletcher- Council Member: City of Minneapolis Ward 3
Kari Dziedzic- Minnesota State Senator: District 60

Moderator:

Cody Hoerning- University of Minnesota: Off-Campus Living

5:30-6:00PM

Opening Statement from Rebecca Cowin (Local Government and Advocacy Coordinator | MN Student Association)

Presentation by Gordon and Fletcher. Powerpoint Presentation [LINK](#)

6:00-6:15PM

Question and Answer with Gordon and Fletcher

Summary of items discussed:

- Inclusionary zoning
 - Currently ½ mile around University of Minnesota is exempted from Inclusionary Zoning. This interim ordinance is undergoing review in the upcoming year.
 - A metric by an outside agency is needed (FAFSA, Pell Grant eligibility, etc.) to determine which students would qualify for assistance as the current system is operating under earned income, and most full-time students do not have an income.
- Affordable Housing Fund
 - New developers could pay a fee into a housing fund. The expenditure of the fund could be area limited.
 - Funds would stay local and would be used to build affordable housing in the area where the fee was paid.
- Evictions
 - It was discovered that select landlords in low income areas were using the eviction process to profit.
 - The select landlords were evicting residents, keeping the rent and security deposit, and repeating this process multiple times per year.
- Rent Stabilization
 - City Attorney's Office is reviewing state law. Current state law may prevent cities from enacting any measures to limit rent increases in the private market.
 - Rent stabilization is being looked at by the council as a way to keep people from getting priced out of their rental units.
- Right of First Refusal and Option to Purchase

- If a rental unit is going to be sold, the renters would have the right to match the offer price and buy the unit so they can remain there.
- In large apartment complexes this may allow cooperative buying agreements and ownership amongst residents.
- Homelessness
 - There was discussion about visual signs of homelessness in the city including last year's Franklin/Hiawatha Encampment (Wall of Forgotten Natives).
 - People who are homeless are having trouble getting into permanent housing because of past criminal convictions, credit history, or high initial costs.
 - Tenant screening ordinance and security deposit ordinance were drafted in response to this issue.
 - The option for individual assessment option was questioned. The idea behind this option is to allow a property manager to get the whole picture of a potential renter. This would be used if they don't want to adhere to the city's specified guidelines and want a more individualized approach to renter assessment.

6:15-6:45

Presentation by Dziedzic. Powerpoint slides [LINK](#)

6:45-7:00

Question and Answer with Dziedzic.

Summary of items discussed:

- Property tax incentives for affordability
 - Can be a positive program when the economy is good, but can be difficult in an economic downturn.
 - Tax incentives are shifts in the tax burden.
 - The 4D program that the City of Minneapolis has to maintain naturally occurring affordable housing is under review at the state level.
 - When property owners ask why their property taxes increase, incentives and reductions can be part of the reason why.
- State contributions to affordable housing to supplement federal HUD gap.
 - State wants to be careful in how much they contribute to replace federal dollars as they may not replace these dollars when/if the program is fully funded in the future.
 - State is contributing to HUD housing deferred maintenance fund that is ~200 million in debt for MPHA. They want to keep these buildings livable until funding is restored from the federal government.
- Items were discussed as above in relation to city policy and proposals. Overlap and coordination was discussed.

7:00-7:30

Small group table discussions on individual housing concerns and solutions.

Summary of items discussed:

- Housing assistance for lower class and/or working students.
 - How to identify which students are in need?
 - FAFSA.

- Federal grant eligibility.
 - Parents income/eligibility.
 - Austin, TX as an example.
- Role of University of Minnesota Real Estate and Foundation
 - Can the foundation and university work to build affordable units?
 - Work to identify students in need and provide them stable housing.
 - Buy or build units to put pressure on the market to lower rates.
- International Students
 - Will new Tenant Screening or Security Deposit Ordinances make it difficult for international students to get housing as they do not have credit history, income history, or co-signers.
 - Current practice is to charge them more than one month of rent at the start as they do not have traditional resources/history of domestic renters.
- Rental requirements
 - What if a student does not have parents with credit eligibility or ability to co-sign?
 - Is a credit score minimum necessary in city-policy, or should patterns and the whole credit history be examined?
- Tenants Union
 - University Area Union that would look out for the needs of renters in the University Area.
 - Could help to identify bad landlords, organize to lower prices, and provide resources to those who need housing help.
- Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing
 - Can current houses be fixed up to provide safe housing that is in student's price range instead of replacing with new buildings?
 - Do students really need all the amenities that the new buildings are providing?
 - How much is this adding to monthly cost?
 - Can zoning and programming be used to encourage the older housing stock to be kept livable and affordable?
- Changing housing dynamics
 - Speculators are making University area single family homes unaffordable.
 - There is too much incentive to remodel/knock-down single family homes to build units that are more profitable.
 - How does this affect neighborhood dynamic?
 - What will happen if permanent residents are lost from surrounding U neighborhoods?
- Parking and mobility
 - Dinkytown and Stadium Village do not have enough parking for students with cars.
 - Transit options need to be improved.
 - Make U pass mandatory for students?
 - Pay through seg fees
 - University of Wisconsin-Madison Model