

A. Summary

1. Overview

The Housing Element seeks to encourage stabilization, reinvestment, expanded homeownership and new options for upscale housing in Downtown and along the Bayfront. Sandusky's housing stock contains a disproportionate amount of rental housing and the City is not capturing a share of regional new construction. The City's neighborhoods and building stock serve as an excellent starting point to developing a stronger, more diversified housing base.

2. Funding Considerations

As an entitlement city, Sandusky will be guaranteed a certain level of federal funding for a variety of activities, including housing.

3. Major Recommendations

The following is a summary of the major recommendations of the Housing Element.

- A. Encouraging residential development in appropriate locations that can be serviced by utilities, transportation, community facilities and parks.
- B. Maintaining property values.
- C. Targeting state and local resources to facilitate affordable housing (new and rehabilitated) through the Bay Area Neighborhood Development Corporation (BANDC)/Habitat for Humanity, Erie Metropolitan Housing Authority, and other community not-for-profits.
- D. Targeting state and local resources to facilitate homeownership (new and rehabilitation) through grants and program income, emergency home repair, downpayment assistance and working with local banks. Prioritize the promotion of the benefits of homeownership and living in the City of Sandusky, especially to first time homebuyers currently residing in the county.
- E. Encouraging conversion of multi-tenant structures to single family ownership when feasible.
- F. Developing zoning standards for downtown residential uses.
- G. Encouraging rehabilitation as an option to demolition of condemned structures by targeting code enforcement and CDBG funds.
- H. Supporting and encouraging City pride by continuing the residential property Pride Awards.
- I. Improving neighborhood security.
- J. Continuing to use housing code enforcement to improve property conditions and maintain property values.

B. Goal

Promote a range of quality housing opportunities for all income levels while encouraging neighborhood revitalization, increased homeownership, and the construction of new single-family housing.

C. Objectives and Strategies

1. Encourage Housing for All Income Levels

Housing must be provided for a diverse population. That is an important factor in ensuring Sandusky has an exceptional quality of life and can attract employers to the City through a diversified local work force. Historically since the 1930's and 1940's, Sandusky has had a high share of rental property compared with the region. New construction and rehabilitation efforts should focus on bringing the housing stock into balance by increasing homeownership opportunities.

Strategies

A. Encouraging residential development in appropriate locations.

As informal development proposals are submitted to the City, the Staff should encourage applicants to consider those locations that can be easily serviced by City utilities. Likewise, development proposals submitted for approvals should be discouraged where utilities cannot be economically provided, unless non-city funding is available.

The City should encourage quality new single-family residential development. The general public and the City's Advisory Committee indicated that this target was appropriate given other opportunities within the Sandusky housing market and regional housing trends.

The City has streamlined the building/zoning permit process, which serves as an incentive to attract builders and developers.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: Community Development Director
Timeframe: Ongoing

B. Maintaining and enhancing property values.

Maintaining and enhancing property values is crucial to stabilizing the City's population base, building local wealth and encouraging reinvestment and redevelopment. The City has at its disposal several actions that can help to maintain property values. These include the following:

1. Enhanced code enforcement that ensures property is well maintained.
2. Increased homeownership through the strategies in this Element.
3. Encouraging rental rehabilitation through targeted funding.
4. Increasing investment in neighborhood infrastructure by the City through reconstruction of existing streets, curb and gutter, stormwater improvements, sidewalks and street lighting and maintaining street trees.

The City should consider drafting implementation strategies on a neighborhood basis as the means of coordinating these various actions. This would be accomplished by initiating a formal Neighborhood Planning Function which would result in a series of neighborhood-based plans -- building upon the planning work previously completed by the Community Development Department.

Implementation: Community Development Director, City Engineer, and Finance Director
Timeframe: Short Term and Ongoing

C. Targeting state and local resources to facilitate affordable housing.

The Bay Area Neighborhood Development Corporation (BANDC) has the opportunity to be effective in improving the City's housing stock through rehabilitation and architecturally appropriate infill new construction. Those efforts should continue and the City should continue to target available state and local funds in this direction. BANDC should also be encouraged to continue to use its model new construction homes that have been designed to be compatible with local architectural trends. In addition, participation by local financial institutions in housing loan programs should be expanded.

Implementation: Community Development Director, City Engineer, Finance Director and Bay Area Neighborhood Development Corporation
Timeframe: Short Term

D. Marketing the City as a housing alternative within the region.

The City should prepare and distribute materials to local realtors and corporate human resource departments that stress the positive benefits and attributes living in Sandusky. This educational campaign is important to boosting home ownership levels in the City, especially among management level professionals. Educational training for realtors and corporate human resource departments could also be a component of this outreach effort.

Implementation: Community Development Director
Timeframe: Mid Term

E. Continuing to monitor housing conditions.

The City should continue to monitor housing conditions and should update the CHIS as appropriate through the Community Development Department.

Implementation: Community Development Director
Timeframe: Ongoing

2. Encourage Homeownership

In line with encouraging housing for all income levels, the City must continue to emphasize homeownership. This is important to Sandusky's future quality of life and economic well being. Homeownership brings with it stable neighborhoods and wealth creation for residents. While a need will always exist for rental housing and affordability, Sandusky must target new construction and rehabilitation which increases homeownership.

Strategies

A. Targeting state and local resources to facilitate homeownership.

State and local resources should be targeted to facilitate homeownership (new and rehabilitation) through grants and program income, emergency home repair, downpayment assistance and working with local banks.

Implementation: Community Development Director
Timeframe: Short Term and Ongoing

B. Encouraging conversion of multi-tenant structures to single-family ownership.

The conversion of multi-tenant structures to single-family ownership should be encouraged by targeting rehabilitation funds, updating zoning standards and targeting code enforcement. Specific actions should include the following:

1. Update zoning standards (and down zone additional neighborhoods) to create a regulatory environment that discourages multi-family uses and promotes single-family uses within targeted neighborhoods. This should be coordinated with neighborhood plans as recommended in the Land Use Element.
2. Target code enforcement at multi-tenant structures to ensure they are well maintained and meet building and health codes.

Implementation: *Community Development Director*
Timeframe: *Short Term and Ongoing*

3. Encourage Upscale Housing in the Downtown and the Bayfront

A specific target for future housing efforts is to increase the amount of upscale housing in the Downtown and along the Bayfront. Initial efforts have already occurred with a limited amount of new investment, but additional steps must be taken to make the investment climate more positive. Updating zoning standards is equally important to create an enhanced investment climate that ensures investors and future homeowners will be taking minimal risks.

Strategies

A. Organizing to guide revitalization efforts.

The City should organize a set of actions to facilitate housing reinvestment in the downtown and Bayfront. The geographic area should be those properties designated as Downtown in the Land Use Element. The City should consider undertaking the following actions:

1. Prepare a mission statement integrating participation by property owners, tenants and residents of the targeted area.
2. Conduct a housing market study to determine the potential demand based on quantity, unit size, cost, amenities and other factors. The market study could then be used to promote the Downtown and Bayfront to potential developers.
3. Develop incentives to encourage new construction.
4. Work toward the implementation of the Bayfront Corridor Plan.

In addition to new construction, the City could promote historic rehabilitation through education/outreach on the Ohio Basic Building Code, tax benefits and the Ohio Historic Preservation Office's Building Doctor Clinic.

Policy Direction: *City Commission*
Implementation: *Community Development Director*
Timeframe: *Short Term and Ongoing*

4. Stimulate Neighborhood Revitalization

Sandusky is a community of neighborhoods with unique characteristics that provide the City a richness not found in nearby suburban communities. The mix of people, incomes and lifestyles adds to this rich fabric. The City should continue to focus its efforts on revitalizing and stabilizing key neighborhoods to ensure Sandusky's quality of life is protected and to provide a climate that attracts new residents to the City. The health of individual neighborhoods affects the entire City's well being.

Strategies

A. Supporting and encouraging resident pride.

The residential property pride award program will be continued to recognize individual homeowner investments in new construction, rehabilitation and remodeling. City employees shall be encouraged to live within the municipal boundaries of the City of Sandusky.

Implementation: Community Development Director
Timeframe: Short Term

B. Improving neighborhood security.

Neighborhood security should be improved through a coordinated street lighting program and promotion of home outdoor lighting, encouraging home security and expanding the block watch program and community-based policing.

Implementation: Community Development Director and Police Chief
Timeframe: Short Term

C. Encouraging appropriate off-street parking.

Appropriate off-street parking should be encouraged by developing standards for location, screening, buffering, security and lighting. This would be accomplished as part of a major update of the Zoning Code.

Implementation: Community Development Director
Timeframe: Mid Term

D. Encouraging compatible infill development.

Compatible infill development should be encouraged by developing Zoning Code standards relative to density, setbacks, architecture, building materials, targeting incentives and downzoning. This would be accomplished as part of a major update of the Zoning Code.

Implementation: Community Development Director
Timeframe: Mid Term

E. Continuing to link infrastructure improvements with housing programs.

The City should continue to link infrastructure improvements with housing programs through the capital improvement program, CHIS and CDBG target areas. Improving neighborhood infrastructure, including sidewalks, curb and gutter, and street surfaces, provides an incentive to homeowners to reinvest in their properties and aids in stabilizing neighborhoods. Park improvements should be programmed as well.

Implementation: Community Development Director and City Engineer
Timeframe: Ongoing

F. Developing neighborhood-based playgrounds.

See Parks and Recreation Element.