

City of Defiance Housing Committee

Wednesday, January 23, 2019 – 3:00 p.m.

City of Defiance – Council Chambers

- 1) The Housing Committee meeting was called to order by Liz Keel of Maumee Valley Planning Organization (MVPO) at 3:05 p.m. in the City of Defiance Council Chambers. The Committee started with introductions of the attendees.
- 2) Defiance City Mayor Mike McCann gave a brief overview of the Community Strategic Planning that took place prior to the formation of the Housing Committee. The community planning sessions produced vision and mission statements, as well as principles and pillars to help the City reach its goals within the next five years. The pillars include Connectivity, Economic Development, Health & Wellness, Perception, Culture & Education, and Housing. Each pillar has a community leader at its helm and is working on issues relevant to the pillar.
- 3) Liz reviewed the housing survey that was conducted by MVPO in spring 2018. The biggest takeaway from the survey for the Housing Committee was the need for affordable housing.
- 4) A Housing Opportunities Analysis was also conducted for the City of Defiance following the housing survey. Niki Warncke, Defiance City Planner, explained that the Housing Analysis was three-fold. The Analysis assessed housing needs overall in the City, explored downtown housing options, and also examined the demand for downtown businesses if housing was developed on the upper floors of downtown buildings. The study, which was paid for by two private individuals, concluded that the City in its current state could support anywhere from 200 to over 300 new housing units in the next three years. The study also found that there is a high unmet demand for rental housing. The analysis also provided the need for units by price point. This study is currently in draft form and will be made available by the City once it is finalized.
- 5) Bridget Fischer, Defiance County General Health District, presented statistics on Defiance County. Bridget discussed the concept of “Blue Zones,” which are communities where people live longer and lead healthier and happier lives. Some characteristics of Blue Zones are improvements to the built environment like sidewalks, parks and public spaces, access to schools and grocery stores, and social networking opportunities. Bridget also talked about the senior population and number of falls reported through EMS in the past year. This information was relevant to planning for senior housing and considering the proximity of parking and stairs. The health department also produced a health equity report titled “Does Place Matter?” which explores health determinants in different parts of the City and County. Link: <http://defiancecohealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2018-Health-Equity-Report.pdf>
- 6) Rita Kissner explained the current proposals and options for the Defiance Middle School site, also known as the 1918 Building. The City Schools still own the property, though the middle school moved to a different location last year. Options for reusing the building include senior

housing and a boutique-hotel. These options would greatly impact decisions in the downtown area.

- 7) Liz described information she received from Jerry Hayes, Defiance County Economic Development, on options to increase development in the City. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is being used in surrounding communities to encourage new housing development. Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs) can also have a similar effect on development. The City of Defiance has a CRA with several boundaries, which could be advertised to realtors and developers more.
- 8) Liz invited all committee members to take part in the discussion and share their comments or questions on housing needs in the community:
 - Transitional housing was brought up as a need in the community, as Raven's Care spent an exorbitant amount of funds on hotels to help its clients
 - The current rental market is a "landlord's market" and many individuals struggle to find decent and affordable housing
 - The St. John's building was mentioned as a possible location for transitional housing
 - The cost to build new housing is very expensive and often exceeds what people are willing to pay
 - The demand for rentals has grown
 - The CRA in Defiance is not promoted enough
 - Another idea for the 1918 building was for a market for small businesses, like the North Market in Columbus
 - Filling empty storefronts downtown with pop-up shops and working with landlords was also discussed
- 9) Appraisal issues were discussed but were determined to only be an issue for realtors at the higher-end price range. Liz asked what the main problems were to the developing housing in the City.
 - The City needs higher paying jobs to support new development
 - The Ohio Housing Finance Agency may be an option to grow development in the community
 - Senior housing rentals are needed, which would possibly open up single-family homes to other residents
 - Infill housing is a good option as there are vacant lots in several neighborhoods and the infrastructure is already in place
 - The formation of a County Land Bank could help to take in vacant or tax delinquent properties and renovate them
 - There is also a need for condos, which could also work well for senior housing
- 10) Liz listed potential subcommittees, which include development, marketing, and rental standards. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, February 20, 2019 at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.