

What Are Our Community's Housing Needs?

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One basic need in every community, regardless of its size or location, is adequate shelter for present residents and potential new families. The generic term of housing involves far more than simply the erecting of buildings. It involves assessment of the total community — population trends, economic resources, technical resources, physical resources and social values.

The local housing market area

Like schools, hospitals, shopping facilities and services, housing within a given area is important to the desired growth of the community.

The community housing problems to be studied would include those within any given housing market area that involves more than the confines of a town, city or metropolitan area. Discussion considerations for the local area would include:

What constitutes adequate housing?

- Safe and sound structures
- Safe and abundant water supply
- Sanitary sewage and waste disposal
- Adequate space for building and expansion
- Modern facilities, such as streets, sidewalks and parks
- Aesthetically desirable environment

What community problems exist that prevent or make difficult the supply of adequate housing?

- Lack of locally available building materials and qualified craftsmen
- Building code (none or out-of-date)
- Planning and zoning protection (none or out-of-date)
- Large percentage of low-income families
- Inadequate financing
- High cost of individually owned housing, high interest rates, tight money and high taxes
- Lack of or poor condition of rental housing
- Lack of job opportunities
- Inadequate land area for sale
- Present housing not adaptable to future needs, such as smaller homes for the elderly

Are the people in the community aware of the housing needs that exist and, if so, are they interested in improving the conditions? Do they understand what choices of action are appropriate?

How many homes in the community do not meet minimum housing standards?

The basic minimum housing standard would include modern plumbing, indoor bathrooms, adequate lighting, adequate heating and a structure that is tight (windows, doors, roof, etc.).

What steps should be taken to provide adequate housing for the needs of the residents and to ensure the new homes being built will meet the future needs of the community? (Analyze population trends.)

Is building new housing units the only answer to the housing shortage, or is the rehabilitation of existing units appropriate?

Planning and developing a community housing program

To develop a community housing program, one must assume that there is a need for better housing, that the effort is important to community growth, and that the community would give it support. Discussion concerning the planning and development of the housing program for the community should include the following:

- Pride in the community leading to increased community spirit and participation in decision making.
- Private and/or public housing. Are there adequate numbers of private housing units to meet the needs of the community population groups, or is there a need for the community to own and maintain public housing units for certain segments of the community population?
- Attraction to industry. Will industries employ local people or bring in new people? Do local residents accept the values of newcomers and welcome them to the community? Or will some attitude adjustment be needed?
- Better understanding of the total community structure, such as income levels, occupational training and available labor force. Do local and new people prefer individual houses, apartments, mobile homes, etc.? What kind of environment do they want to create for everyone in the community?

Using the following guide, what steps could you take to meet the housing needs of the community?

- Determine the number, kind and price range of housing needed and preferred by present and potential members of the community.
- Locate the land on which to build housing. Consider both developed and raw land, but keep the land cost within a reasonable price range. Is it in an area where noise or air pollution control is possible?
- Locate sources of financing.
 - HUD
 - Farmers Home Administration
 - Others
- Determine the availability of utilities and services to the property selected.
 - Electricity
 - Gas
 - Water
 - Telephone
 - Sewage and waste disposal

- Determine the advantages associated with the selection of the land with respect to schools, churches, shopping centers, recreation areas, etc.
- Determine the number of housing units that might be made adequate through rehabilitation.

The data in the worksheets can help with this determination. This data would be collected by the local community officials, such as the city council, community housing committee or a special citizens group. The first step in the data collection process would be to collect and analyze the community for their income levels and types of residents. Next, an analysis of the available housing units within the community would be necessary to determine the numbers of housing units, by type, that are being lived in, those vacant and those needed.

The last two worksheets refer to the community resources and what is being planned for the community. This is one step in total planning and zoning for the community. Each worksheet is so constructed to allow for the past, present and future analysis of the housing needs. As an example, the worksheet "Housing relative to income level" could be based on 1970 for the first block, 1971 for the second and 1980 for the third. These worksheets then could be maintained and updated for future reference, then used to base predictions for future planning.

References

- *A Study of Community Facilities and Programs Serving Residents of Low-Rent Public Housing*, TA-16, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, June 1967.
- *Build Our American Communities*, Farmers Home Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, June 1970.
- *U.S. Population Mobility and Distribution*. (charts on recent trends), AH-347, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (75 cents).
- Renne, Ronald R., *Land Economic, Principles, Problems and Policies in Utilizing Land Resources*, Revised Edition, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Harpers and Brothers, New York, NY.
- *Catalog of Federal Assistance Programs*., (610 pages, one copy limit). Contact Information Center, Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C. 20506.
- *Self-Help Housing for Low-Income Rural Families*, PA-822. Contact your local county Farmers Home Administration supervisor.
- *Quality of Our Environment and Economic Approach to Some Problems in Using Land, Water and Air*,
- Resources For the Future, Inc., 1755 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (\$2).

Contact your local MU Extension center and Soil Conservation office for materials dealing with subjects related to home building such as zoning, ordinances, suitable soils for septic tanks and building of sewer lagoons.

Related MU Extension publications

- DM7005, The Planning Process and People
<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/DM7005>
- DM7616, Practicing Community Development
<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/DM7616>

Order publications online at <http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/shop/> or call toll-free 800-292-0969.