



# HOUSING

# IMPROVING OUR HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

**“Together we will ensure that Scott County residents have access to achievable, safe, and high-quality housing opportunities for all lifestyles and income levels.”**

Housing development is necessary for healthy economic development and population growth within a community. It can attract new residents to a region and is a factor many industries consider when deciding to relocate to a community. While housing growth is needed within Scott County, it is important that the county also diversifies the types of housing to ensure all residents of all income levels have access to safe and high-quality housing options. Diversifying the housing within Scott County does not just mean building workforce housing or rental units; it also includes housing where seniors can age within a house, higher-end housing for corporate and working professionals, and starter homes for families looking to purchase their first house.

Developing multiple types of housing can attract a diverse population in terms of age, income-level, family structure, and ethnic backgrounds. This can be more attractive to new residents and typically creates a more resilient community through recessions and demographic shifts. Scott County has the unique opportunity to capitalize on residents wanting to live in a rural setting as well as those who want to maximize what they can purchase while still commuting to the greater Louisville area. Diversification of housing also helps retain those currently living in the community, helping keep recent graduates living in Scott County and providing accommodations for elderly looking to downsize. The median housing price in Scott County is lower than neighboring counties, areas around Scottsburg have quality broadband access, local public schools are strong, and commuting to major employment hubs in the larger Louisville region is convenient.

## WHY IS THIS GOAL IMPORTANT TO SCOTT COUNTY?

- Quality housing that is more affordable than nearby communities in Clark County could be a key factor in population growth for Scott County.
- Scott County has the potential to capture residential growth from northern Clark County for those who commute to jobs within the larger Louisville/Southern Indiana region.
- An estimated 38% of households within Scott County earn less than \$35,000, which is less than the average income needed to afford to buy or rent a home within the county. Housing for all income levels should be considered as growth occurs.
- If Scott County continues to grow, more housing options (types and price points) will be needed to meet the needs and demands of residents.
- Redevelopment of vacant or abandoned housing structures can improve housing quality, overall community aesthetics, and visitor perception.
- Retention of young adults is often directly tied to diverse housing within a community, as recent graduates may not be able to afford a traditional house and opt for renting directly after school.

## HOW CAN WE MOVE THIS GOAL FORWARD?

Many organizations and groups are working towards improving health within Scott County. The following action items work towards the goal of improving housing quality and availability within the county. Some of these items are currently being addressed by one or more organizations while other action items were identified as gaps that need to be solved. Two catalyst projects were identified for Housing that will build momentum, address critical and immediate needs, and create a sound base for future action steps.

### Action Items

1. **Develop a sustainable plan for new housing that protects the area's natural resources and amenities.**
2. **Replace and/or rehabilitate damaged and neglected housing.**
3. Identify incentives and amendments to the zoning regulations that promote a wider range of housing that can better accommodate first time home buyers, growing families, and the elderly.
4. Consider creating a county-wide rental registration program to protect tenants and ensure renter-occupied housing units are being properly maintained.
5. Identify aspects in the community which may inhibit "aging in place" and work with local partners and organizations to create programming to overcome these challenges.
6. Consider creating a housing revitalization and education program which targets first-time home owners.

Catalyst  
Project

Catalyst  
Project

### CATALYST PROJECT - ACTION ITEM 1: Develop a sustainable plan for new housing that protects the area's natural resources and amenities.

While new housing is needed, it is important that new development does not negatively impact the community's sensitive environment and natural resources. Creating a plan for new housing which protects these resources is the first step in that effort. A sustainable housing plan balances the need for development with the preservation of natural resources, open spaces, and agricultural land. The plan should take advantage of compact development, create a range of housing types which fit current and future needs, preserve natural resources and farmland, ensure new development is fiscally reasonable for the community, and encourage social interaction. A housing plan identifies prime locations for new residential development, the type of housing and price points that could be absorbed by the market, outlines best practices, and identifies potential incentives that could be used to implement the plan.

#### WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT TO SCOTT COUNTY?

Projected population growth within the region will increase demand for housing and other supporting development. Creating a plan that balances new housing development while preserving the rural character can help identify areas for growth and housing types that can be supported by current and future population. Sustainable practices can also be identified within a plan which can help minimize waste during construction and limit pollution, both of which help protect the county's natural resources and save up-front costs.

The county has multiple natural assets which could be affected by new housing development such as prime farmland, woodlands, and natural wetlands. The county's unique natural assets are part of the community's character and can be used by residents and visitors for both active and passive recreation purposes. Zoning incentives can be one way to encourage the compact development needed to preserve these resources, allowing developers to construct more units per acre than normally allowed by zoning regulations if certain conditions are met (such as preserving open space or farmland). This would allow housing construction to meet current demands while providing natural spaces and passive recreation opportunities within new residential subdivisions.

#### WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

- Grow the county's housing stock through planned growth and sustainable practices.
- Limit the impact of new housing development on the county's rural areas and prime farmland.
- Preserve more prime farmland, woodlands, and natural wetlands through compact development.

#### WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

1. **Short:** Identify changes within local zoning and subdivision ordinances to balance development needs with the county's natural assets and incentivize sustainable development practices.
2. **Short:** Determine incentives (such as zoning incentives or tax incentives) that should be implemented to spur workforce housing development.
3. **Short/Mid:** Update local comprehensive plans to identify areas most appropriate for residential land uses and the types of housing development needed to satisfy growth.
4. **Mid:** Complete a housing study to analyze current housing stock and determine future needs based upon local and regional trends.

## WHO ARE THE POTENTIAL PARTNERS?

**Local Governments:** These organization can identify updates to local zoning regulations, subdivision control ordinances, strategic/comprehensive plans, and development incentives which will allow for more compact development and focus on preservation of natural assets and prime farmland.

**Building and Development Association of Southern Indiana (BDASI) and Developers:** These groups can help identify and advocate for regulatory updates and new incentives which increase the viability of developing compact housing development, workforce housing, and limit impacts to the environment.

## HOW HAS THIS BEEN DONE SUCCESSFULLY?



Source: Keefe Real Estate

Conservation subdivisions provide protection to natural areas while allowing for condensed housing development to occur. These types of subdivision can be found in communities where preservation of natural resources or creation of recreational space is needed. Conservation focused subdivisions do not necessarily indicate a low-density development and can vary in size depending on access to utilities and existing infrastructure. These subdivisions have

the ability, with proper policy, to support the same number of housing units as a traditional single-family subdivision on only a fraction of the land. Scott County could mimic these conservation subdivision types, which are already being utilized by Clark County to the south, to preserve natural resources while allowing developers to construct a typical number of units.

### CATALYST PROJECT - ACTION ITEM 2: Replace and/or rehabilitate damaged and neglected housing.

Replacing and/or rehabilitating damaged and neglected housing within a community not only improves the visual aesthetics of a community but also helps introduce houses back into the market. Rehabilitation efforts can be initiated by local governments, developers, or property owners, increasing the chances properties and building could be repurposed. However, it can be a difficult and lengthy process for communities or individuals wanting to improve a neglected home, and it may require multiple partners and funding sources to complete a project. Local governments have the ability to assist in these efforts, and Scott County communities should begin identifying what resources are available for them to use in order to progress the redevelopment or demolition of issue sites within the county.

#### WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT TO SCOTT COUNTY?

Rehabilitating or replacing housing structures within a community can improve substandard housing and increase property values in the surrounding area. Often times rehabilitation of housing structures can create new housing options, turning single-family homes into duplexes and developing multi-family units on previously vacant property or bringing a vacant house back into the housing stock. Diversifying housing through rehabilitation efforts opens the unit back up for a new occupant and helps meet the needs of residents who may be looking to downsize, rent, or buy their first home. It can also help improve the quality of life for those living in housing that doesn't meet current building standards.

Neglected housing can create a negative image within a community with visual impacts which may stand out to residents or visitors. Abandoned properties can lead to potential neighborhood blight within a community as surrounding properties begin losing value and owners attempt to move away or leave their homes entirely. Identifying these issue properties and finding ways to incentivize their redevelopment or rehabilitation is a first step for local governments working to expand their housing options while providing safe living conditions, improving visuals, and enhancing the overall quality of life within the community.

#### WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

- Reduce the number of vacant or abandoned buildings within the county.
- Introduce rehabilitated homes back into the market with a focus on workforce housing.
- Improve the visual appearance and image of the county.
- Provide safe living conditions within the county.
- Improve access to health food options and physical fitness options.

#### WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

1. **Immediate: Determine the feasibility of creating a county-wide land bank to manage abandoned housing.**
2. **Short: Locate and prioritize abandoned properties and significantly dilapidated houses throughout the county, and identify partners that can aid in improvements or rehabilitation.**
3. **Short: Evaluate local property maintenance ordinances to determine if additional regulations and/or enforcement is needed.**
4. **Short/Mid: Create a database of local, state, and federal funding sources available for property owners wanting to rehabilitate a house.**

## WHO ARE THE POTENTIAL PARTNERS?

**Local Governments:** These entities should identify vacant or abandoned properties within the community and determine if rehabilitation or demolition is needed. They can also evaluate current property maintenance regulations and enforcement efforts.

**Local Economic Development Organizations:** Local economic development corporations can work with local governments and other partners to create a land bank for abandoned and blighted housing throughout the county.

**Scott County Community Foundation:** The foundation can help coordinate the multiple organizations and entities within the county the who are actively working to rehabilitate or reduce the community's vacant or abandoned properties.

**Developers and Property Owners:** These groups can work with local governments and other organizations in efforts to acquire blighted properties and identify potential new uses for each.

## WHERE HAS THIS BEEN DONE SUCCESSFULLY?



The Detroit Land Bank Authority created a program, Rehabbed & Ready, which stabilizes neighborhoods by rehabilitating homes through a community fund and selling them back to new home buyers at market rate. Rehabbed & Ready helps bridge the gap between home value and repair expenses, an issue many potential home buyers may not be able to overcome. Investments typically include high-cost fixes such as HVAC systems, windows, and utilities. The program has strengthened neighborhood housing markets, restored home equity, and made it easier for future home buyers to access financing.

While Scott County may not have the ability to fund multiple rehabilitation efforts within the community, the ability to form a land bank to identify and purchase issue properties is a possibility. A land bank would help the county acquire property and transfer it to potential developers or those looking to personally rehabilitate a home for renting purposes or their own personal use.