

## 5.0 Housing and Livable Communities Design

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### 5.1 Introduction

A critical component to a healthy and vibrant community is a diverse and balanced housing supply in good physical condition that includes a variety of price levels, housing types, and sizes. A mix of housing tenures, types, and rent and sales prices provides residents with a range of choices so that they can continue living in their community as their housing needs change through their lifetimes. The affordability of housing is especially important for all

According to AARP, “A livable community is one that is safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and offers supportive community features and services.”

residents because it provides a stable foundation on which to build one’s life. Affordable housing can also improve health outcomes by freeing up family resources for nutritious food, transportation, and health care expenditures. A diverse housing supply can also better adapt to future environmental, social, and economic changes than one that is largely based on just one of these types. A full range of housing options also enables communities to address the housing needs of

employers and a diverse workforce. These qualities define a livable community.

Housing in Rice County has been presented in a housing study that was finalized in August 2018, titled “Comprehensive Housing Study: Rice County and Identified Sub-Markets.” The complete study can be reviewed in Appendix E. The report identifies current and future needs, recommends a housing mix, and the suggested amount and types of housing that could be developed to meet the needs of Rice County for the next five, ten and fifteen years. Major housing issues identified in the County by the study were high cost of housing (third most expensive area for housing in Minnesota, ranked behind Rochester and the Twin Cities) and a gap in ownership by minority residents versus white residents (98 percent of households in Rice County are owned by whites compared to the State in which 75 percent of whites own homes). The data also shows a lack of senior housing and affordable rental housing units. Opportunities for encouraging construction of missing housing options are discussed in the Recommendation section of the report. For more information on Rice County’s housing in addition to the study, see the Household Characteristics and Housing documents in the FIG.

### 5.2 Goals, Strategies and Action Items

The following goals and strategies are general statements that focus on Rice County’s Housing and Livable Communities Design. The goals are broadly worded, while strategies are actions that can be taken to achieve the overarching goal. The action items are related to the goals and strategies, but are more specific and detailed. It should be noted that goals, strategies, and action items are in no particular order of importance.

## 5.2.1 Housing

### **Goal 1. Create a diverse range of housing types for all income levels.**

**Strategy 1.** Partner with local communities to develop and manage housing choices for seniors, low- and moderate-income families, and minorities.

**Action Item 1:** Incorporate services into denser areas that support affordable housing.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage the availability of an adequate supply of land and infrastructure for multi-family housing developments.

**Action Item 3:** Allow accessory dwelling units in single-family houses or on single-family lots in certain districts that are subject to specific development, design, and occupancy standards.

**Action Item 4:** Encourage the development of mixed income housing units.

**Strategy 2.** Work with other organizations to coordinate funding for additional affordable housing units.

**Action Item 1:** Use tax increment financing to support housing projects that serve a mix of incomes and housing types.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage private-public partnerships to aid in the development of affordable housing.

**Strategy 3.** Promote mixed-use development near infrastructure that integrates rental housing.

**Action Item 1:** Support the provision of rental assistance programs for low-income residents.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage the cities to use inclusionary zoning and developer incentives to integrate affordable rental units into market rate developments.

**Action Item 3:** Support the provision of programs that provide affordable financing options to owners of rental housing to maintain, improve and upgrade the existing supply of rental housing in the county.

58% of citizen survey respondents felt that single-family housing is very important in rural areas.

### **Goal 2: Make available adequate housing for all life stages to ensure diverse communities.**

**Strategy 1.** Encourage affordable senior housing to allow residents to age in their own communities instead of needing to relocate to get the care they need.

**Action Item 1:** Work with cities to locate senior housing in or adjacent to basic amenities and transit hubs.

**Action Item 2:** Promote a range of housing types for seniors; e.g., adult family homes, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living, and independent living communities.

**Strategy 2.** Promote the development of affordable workforce housing for newly hired workers (e.g. teachers, nurses, city/county employees, etc.).

Citizen survey respondents felt that single-family (69%), affordable (61%) and senior complexes (61%) are very important types of housing in urban areas.

**Action Item 1:** Provide education on first time home buying and homeownership.

**Action Item 2:** Look for opportunities to co-locate housing with other civic project and/or employers.

**Strategy 3.** Continue to promote homeownership and increase opportunities for minority families.

**Action Item 1:** Support and collaborate with Rice County's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)

on assistance programs.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage equitable access to housing, making a special effort to remove disparities in housing access for people with disabilities, people of color, low-income households, diverse household types, and older adults.

**Strategy 4.** Support housing that addresses the needs of people with physical or developmental disabilities, or mental illness.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage the development of specialized programs to provide rental assistance to persons with disabilities.

**Action Item 2:** Support development of physically-accessible housing to allow for a diverse supply of affordable, accessible housing to meet the needs of people with disabilities, especially near basic amenity areas and provide services and transit.

**Goal 3. Encourage maintenance and improvements of existing housing stock.**

**Strategy 1.** Support the provision of homeowner rehabilitation and improvement programs that assist low and moderate income residents with the financial means to maintain and improve the quality of their homes.

**Action Item 1:** Partner with non-profit housing providers to rehabilitate existing housing for low and moderate income homeowners.

**Action Item 2:** Advocate grant and loan programs that provide residents with the ability to make energy and weatherization improvements to their properties in order to make their homes more energy efficient.



Source: rhondahowlett.blogspot.com

**Action Item 3:** Support educational programs that provide residents with information on how to rehabilitate, improve and upgrade their homes.

**Strategy 2.** Support local city and township redevelopment efforts.

**Action Item 1:** Support local efforts to retrofit existing homes with accessibility improvements.

**Action Item 2:** Support tax incentives policies that encourage the rehabilitation of existing housing in the county.

**Goal 4. Advocate for housing near basic amenities and features necessary for a high-quality of life and to maintain a healthy life style.**

**Strategy 1.** Support land use patterns that efficiently connect housing, jobs, retail centers and civic uses.

**Action Item 1:** Collaborate with cities to put housing in transit corridors and near greenway/recreation corridors and basic amenities.



Source: AARP

**Action Item 2:** Encourage compact, mixed-use, multi-modal development that will increase travel options within existing urbanized areas, employment centers, and along transit nodes and corridors.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage the cities to have complete, walkable neighborhoods that provide proximity to daily goods and services in order to decrease automobile dependence, and enhance livability and build community cohesion.

**Strategy 2.** Support the development of housing that is in close proximity to healthy foods and recreational opportunities.

**Action Item 1:** Build and encourage partnerships that work to expand residential access to healthy food.

**Action Item 2:** Provide convenient and accessible recreational open space.

**Action Item 3:** Improve year-round access to both public and private recreational facilities.