

Rock River Ridge Neighborhood

Comments and Frequently Asked Questions April 2024

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT?

Everyone who works in or contributes to our community should be able to live here. In partnership with the City of Watertown, the Foundation is working to create a neighborhood that provides a full continuum of housing options to meet the needs of community members across the lifespan.

Watertown – along with the entire nation – is experiencing a housing crisis. There is both a shortage of homes for rent or purchase, and at the same time, housing prices have risen dramatically.

HOUSING CRISIS?

If you or a close family member or friend haven't been in the market to buy or sell a home lately, the figures may shock you.

Cost: The *median* price of a home in Jefferson County in February 2024 was \$327,000. That's not a new home or a huge home. It's not Madison or Milwaukee. That's the average home on the market in our community right now.

The costs to build new are higher than ever right now: Costs to build a single-family home have increased **36% in just the past four years**.

Shortage: Available housing units grew 4.69% from 2012 to 2022. Households in Jefferson County grew nearly 10% during that same time frame. There are more households than available homes and rentals, leading:

- » Longer commutes. More than half of the employees working in Jefferson County commute in from outside the county.
- » More competition, which drives up prices/rents, particularly for the lower end of the market.
- » People either living in smaller homes that don't meet their needs, or overspending on housing – at the expense of other financial needs.
- » ***Ultimately... the workforce will gravitate toward communities where housing is available and affordable.*** That's why so many communities are scrambling to work on housing solutions. Our economic future depends on it!

WHY WILL THE NEIGHBORHOOD INCLUDE BOTH RENTAL AND FOR SALE PRODUCTS?

Housing is a system and our community is short on all fronts. Seniors are staying in larger homes longer, meaning fewer homes available for families. More young people are renting longer because the cost of starter homes is far higher now.

We need homes that span the life cycle that enable movement – making it possible for people to downsize or upsize and opening up our housing system with more options for all.

HOMES ARE SO EXPENSIVE! WHY CAN'T YOU JUST BUILD AN ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD OF SMALL, 3 BEDROOM RANCH HOMES FOR \$200,000 EACH?

We agree – the cost of new homes is higher than any of us will like.

However, everyone, everywhere is dealing with similar affordability issues. It is the reality of today's housing market and underscores that this is a nationwide crisis. Providing a mix of homes as affordable as possible will help stabilize Watertown's overall housing system.

We looked at several different planning options for the neighborhood. This is the plan that is financially viable - and that is with City support and a **\$1.3 million subsidy** from the Foundation. Without that subsidy, we would be looking at even higher prices.

HOW IS THE GREATER WATERTOWN COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION INVESTED IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD? AND IN WATERTOWN OVERALL?

The Foundation invests a sizable portion of its \$80 million endowment in Watertown. This neighborhood represents the Foundation's largest investment to date. When we look back five years from now, the Foundation's net investment in this campus will have been \$22.7 million. This neighborhood investment is in addition to the \$5.5 million in cash grants the Foundation has provided to Watertown agencies since 2017.

The overall investment in transforming the former Bethesda campus will bring Watertown many benefits including:

- » 194 new housing units
- » 1.2 mile paved walking/biking path providing a safe place for community members to be active together
- » 226 early education slots
- » A new YMCA
- » Shared services for nonprofits
- » \$914,000 annual increase in tax revenue



IS THIS THE ONLY THING THE FOUNDATION IS DOING TO MITIGATE THE HOUSING SHORTAGE?

The Foundation is making many investments to address housing affordability and availability in Dodge and Jefferson counties:

- » Invested **\$2M in Jefferson County “Live Local Fund”** - a revolving loan fund to provide gap financing to attract developers, with a goal of creating an additional 500 new housing units.
- » Providing a **\$2.5M low-interest loan to Dodge County Housing Authority** to support creation of 40 additional housing units in Juneau and Reeseville.
- » Supporting **ThriveED's** capacity as Jefferson County's housing champion.
- » Donations to **Habitat for Humanity** of Dodge and Jefferson Counties.
- » **Building regional capacity** to advocate for policies and financing resources that support rural housing development.

WILL THE NEIGHBORHOOD INCLUDE “PUBLIC”, “SECTION 8” OR “LOW INCOME” HOUSING?

This phase of development will not include Public, Section 8 or Low Income housing.

ONCE DEVELOPED, WILL THIS NEIGHBORHOOD PRODUCE TAX REVENUE FOR OUR COMMUNITY?

Yes. Once completed, this development will create more than \$900,000 in annual tax revenue for our community