

**Cultivate Hopkins Advisory Committee**  
**February 7, 2018 Social Environment Meeting**  
**Notes from Discussion**

**Table Discussion**

- Discussion centered on reaction to “Sold Out” video on affordable housing challenges
- Questions about the definition of affordability and how Hopkins received its affordable housing allocation – consistent with Metropolitan Council standards and methodology; more information available here: <https://metro council.org/Housing/Planning/Affordable-Housing-Planning-Needs.aspx>; Hopkins’ allocation for the plan is 197 new affordable units
- Video was eye opening regarding challenges people faced
- Confirmation that this is “really real” for low income people in the community, based on experience working with clients
- There are issues for seniors as well – many people want to live in Hopkins but units aren’t available for them
- Permanent affordable housing often has years long waitlists
- Focus group of affordable housing residents (people living with disabilities) – many felt outcast due to mental health issues, racial issues as well; very challenging to try to balance accommodating people with mental illness (e.g. PTSD) while also respecting overall community; one resident indicated they felt that they were being forced out due to their condition and behavior

**Process Update**

- Upcoming meetings and events:
  - February 13 – housing subgroup will meet as part of City Council work session on affordable housing issues; all are welcome to attend; this will feature what the City has been doing to date on topic
  - March 20 – joint meeting of Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council to review progress to date and draft plan materials; 5 PM at City Hall
  - Thursdays in April – Hopkins Academy (sign up online by March 1) <http://www.hopkinsmn.com/events/citizens-academy.php>
  - April 11 and May 9 – next Advisory Committee meetings, focused on implementation
  - May 22 – Planning & Zoning Commission public hearing on draft plan (tentative)
  - May 24 – commission recognition dinner
  - June 5 – City Council approval of draft plan to launch six month review (tentative)
- Advisory Committee members welcome to participate in all events, but all are optional except implementation work sessions in April and May
- Comment on summary from last meeting: note that the options on housing strategy were limited; while limiting concentration of poverty is a concern, need to ensure it’s being done in a way that’s not disruptive or resulting in displacement; will need to get into more detail in terms of specific policy direction as part of implementation plan

## **Interfaith Outreach Presentation**

- Interfaith Outreach provides range of services to families in eight western suburbs  
<https://www.iocp.org/>
- Benefit of building relationships with families to help create a longer term trajectory for success, not just providing services in isolation
- Poverty has become suburbanized – more low income people than ever in the suburbs and growing at much faster rate than urbanized area
- Low income households value good schools and safer neighborhoods in suburbs, but also may feel socially isolated, and have more challenges with transportation and access
- Rents have been increasing steeply in recent years, and driving up a cost of living that well exceeds minimum wage levels
- These economic challenges have led to increased proportion of clients dealing with homelessness
- Working to build new affordable housing, but it's extremely expensive to construct and not enough units to meet demand; need to find other ways to meet demand that are less expensive, including naturally occurring affordable housing

## **Transportation**

- Update provided from last time, showing priorities for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including key crossings that need improvements
- Results are a documentation of needs, and will be used to guide development of city's plans and project priorities

## **Quality of Life**

- Note on decline of people finding schools to be “excellent” since 2008, although most still think they're at least “good;” likely this is linked to issues the district had with statutory operating debt that came to light in 2007; district's reputation has recovered somewhat, but not back where it was then
- Discussion covered presentation of opinions on city services, as well as the Changing the Lights video, which highlighted unintentional bias in complaint-based systems for providing services
- Question regarding whether Hopkins uses complaint-based systems – answer is yes, for many things; new lighting installation is handled by petition system that requires approval of percentage of neighbors within impacted area
- Some areas feel scary at night without adequate lighting; however, lighting can also shine into residences and be disruptive – need to balance concerns
- Complaint based systems are very widely used by Hopkins and other cities often because they lack the staffing to be fully proactive about going out and looking for issues to address; it is

common that the “squeaky wheel gets the grease” – but higher income areas more likely to ask for assistance

- Could the City use other staff to be on the lookout for issues and report on them, when they're out and about on other duties? Perhaps, but it's often a lot to ask of people, especially when it's not their main job
- Example of design thinking – how do we think differently about a situation and change people's perceptions, to try to find different insights and solutions?
- City should make it easy to report things that occur day by day; discussion about using City app but it's apparently no longer active
- Some surprise that the positive results of survey were so high – seems like we hear mostly from people complaining all day long
- Need to consider unintended consequences of policy, and screen policies and practices by through lens of equity
- Cottageville Park area was blighted and felt unsafe – but park investment has changed perception and increased neighborhood pride; also decreases crime (e.g. through better visibility of area); lots of families use it; makes a big difference especially community garden
- City should look at other areas with poverty that need improvement
- Someone noted that their neighborhood was considered by some to be the “ghetto of Hopkins” – but they felt safe there, and thought perception might just be based on racial diversity of area
- Important policy approach: if City invests in a place, it can make a difference
- City should provide plowing on sidewalks promptly (not just roads), particularly to provide access to transit stops; important for transit riders
- People at Highway 7 & 12<sup>th</sup> bus stop were actually standing on Highway 7 after recent snowfall due to lack of plowing
- Need improved transit stops and shelters, particularly along Highway 7
- Need to plow areas around stops as well – people are getting let out of bus at nearest intersection rather than stop itself because stop is inaccessible
- Plowing also needed at pedestrian crossings – should pay particular attention to locations near facilities housing and serving elderly and people with disabilities; also possibly consider longer crossing time in at pedestrian signals in the winter?
- City is already working on an ADA priority plan; considering accessibility around key facilities such as Vail Place, Sonoma, Hopkins Activity Center, etc. – will be mapping areas with vulnerable populations, which will also be useful for emergency response
- Another barrier for low income people: buses stop running at 10, so people can't get back out here if it's late
- City should look into other aspects of guidance from GARE (Government Alliance on Race and Equity) e.g. improvement to city practices on procurement, hiring, and financial practices
- Think about how the City's major focus on Mainstreet may have worked against equity, with less focus on places like Blake Road corridor
- The City has been taking a thoughtful look at race and equity issues over the past two years, with range of ways to improve city practices; included working with facilitators and providing training to city staff

- Hopkins Race and Equity initiative has moved forward, and has involved taking some risks along the way – including discussion of white privilege
- Example of impact: thinking about how choice of language matters; switching from “small town feel” to “home town feel” because of implications of small town; and switching from Citizens Academy to Hopkins Academy
- See results of survey on social determinants of health in presentation; Neighborhood and Physical Environment is major focus of city, while other areas mostly have a support role

### **Sense of Community**

- Discussion covered results of survey on race and equity issues and Race The House We Live In video on redlining and patterns of racial discrimination in mortgage lending
- Note that a study found that current infant mortality rates are still correlated with historically redlined areas
- Question if City has focus group in Dow Towers or Hopkins Village where they go to talk to residents since it’s harder for them to go places (more likely transit dependent)
- Need to ask others for feedback, particularly populations more diverse than this committee, because probably will get different answers; note this is consistent with City’s “take it to them” strategic goal
- Note that a single working parent just isn’t going to have time to participate in a committee like this one; how do we find time to connect that works for them?
- Need to build stronger relationships with others to make this happen
- It’s very expensive to be poor in America
- Need to reach people in different ways; example of City’s outreach via “planning and a pint” event – but may need to try harder, and take on challenges like culture and language barriers
- National Night Out is a good example of connecting in neighborhoods
- People may be afraid to ask about how to participate, and not sure they know enough; may also wonder if City even cares what they think
- Helping immigrants can mean needing to address major cultural differences, including different understanding of how government works and what you need to do to make things happen
- Redlining shows the importance and impact of government policy; need to look at what the implications of policies are today
- Need to be bold and take it on; this includes determining what approaches will actually make a measurable difference
- Support programs and services needed with training
- Millennials are renting partly by choice, but also because there are barriers to ownership; this has cultural/racial dimensions: for ages 18-34, the black homeownership rate is just 8% but it’s 50% for whites; reflects fact that whites much more likely to have parents who can help with downpayments due to wealth accumulation; student loans also factor in
- Working with people to help them think through the steps needed to reach homeownership; also need to work with banks to help households with blemished history (e.g. spotty credit)
- Question about availability of foreclosed properties in Hopkins; note that Hopkins has had fairly strong home market with fewer foreclosures than surrounding areas, so not much available

- Agree with need to be bold
- Need opportunity to talk amongst themselves on specific policies – possibly set up a closed group in Facebook for discussion purposes? City staff will look into this
- Need to ensure what happened in Richfield doesn't happen here
- Recommendation of book: Evicted – Poverty and Profit in the American City  
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/25852784-evicted>