

Housing Opportunities Action Council (HOAC)
2016 Scanning the Landscape & Key Informant Interviews
ASSESSMENT RESULTS RECAP

This document summarizes the input from the Housing Opportunities Action Council's (HOAC) 2016 Scanning the Landscape survey, Governance Council's feedback, and preliminary key informant interview results to inform the mid-point update to the "Ten Year Plan to Address Homelessness."

In January 2016, the HOAC released a 4 question on-line survey to initiate feedback from the public. The Benton County Health Department administered the survey, distributing it widely to community groups and coalitions throughout the county, with 168 community members participating. Full Report available.

At the February 2017 HOAC meeting, participants were asked to supplement the results with anything they felt was missing, given the changes in the landscape over the last year.

In November 2016, Benton County Health Department began conducting key informants interviews with organizations, government entities, and individuals. Preliminary themes from 42 interviews were included in March 2017.

Additional input from persons with lived experience will be incorporated pending results, anticipated June 2017.

STRENGTHS – What assets and resources do we have to increase the availability of affordable and healthy housing in our community?

- Progressive, caring, supportive community with strong history of civic engagement and activism.
- High level of community awareness and concern with more voices speaking out about the housing crisis in this community.
- Corvallis has significant wealth and assets, with more capacity than most communities in Oregon to contribute funding and volunteers to addressing the problem.
- Community is engaged and ready to take action.
- Concerned organizations, invested local partners and growing partnerships.
- Vibrant business community and strong economic development.
- Numerous public and private agencies providing social services, mental and behavioral health care, home ownership/renter education, and housing assistance with some collaboration happening among some organization.
- Academic expertise, leaders, and resources available through Oregon State University.
- Strong inter-denominational faith community.
- WNHS expertise in advocating for and developing affordable housing.
- HOAC's determination to publicize, coordinate and collaborate, and work hard.
- County and local government are becoming more engaged in the issue of housing affordability and homelessness.
- County and City staff have significant professional expertise and commitment.
- Concerned private realtors, landlords and property managers want to contribute to the solution, with some landlords filling major unmet needs in their communities (e.g. Harriet Hughes in Philomath, Duerksen in Corvallis).
- Article 9 of the Corvallis Comprehensive Plan.
- City of Corvallis CDBG and HOME Programs.
- Strong housing code enforcement department, new City code.
- New policy tools such as the construction excise tax, and other housing strategies previously unavailable to communities (Corvallis Housing Development Task Force recommendations).
- Undeveloped land near cities/South Corvallis/and at the airport (Adair Village has land available and is eager to grow, with some industrial land owned by Benton County). Empty, vacant buildings throughout the county.
- Significant number of builders/construction companies in the greater Corvallis-Albany area.
- A fare-less transportation system that reaches most in Corvallis and Philomath and subsidized transportation from Corvallis to Adair Village, etc.
- Infrastructure for streets, sidewalks, water and sewer.
- High air quality.

OPPORTUNITIES - Where, what, and when are the opportunities for increasing access to affordable, healthy housing in our community?

- Funding can materialize when a coordinated, well developed plan is accepted by the majority of the community.
- Updated HOAC plan is timely given OR legislative focus on affordable housing and future state and federal funding.
- Samaritan and IHN-CCO have the potential to expand health care sector commitment to this issue.
- Fully implement Oregon inclusionary zoning policies; Corvallis Housing Development Task Force recommended voluntary inclusionary zoning at the City level.
- Annex land specifically to expand work force housing and other affordable housing types.
- Update the Land Development Code, to reduce parking standards and increase accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- City and County could purchase and/or convert publically owned property.
- City and County could pass ordinances requiring a proportion of affordable housing in every residential development.
- Advocate for policies to support low-income property developers.
- Invest in manufactured home parks that have vacant sites or are deteriorating and replace with healthier units.
- Purchase and remodel older apartment buildings or motel complexes.
- Increase the construction and rehabilitation of housing for families/multi-families.
- Promote infill development/continue building infill throughout the community.
- Provide tax credits to local housing owners or developers.
- Provide tax incentives for donating land for affordable housing.
- Create a community land trust home ownership program.
- Align HOAC planning with City and County strategic planning process and Affordable Housing Task Force recommendations.
- Growing aging population is putting the spotlight on the issue of healthy aging and aging in place.
- Continue coordination with OSU given impact of student housing.
- Land bank for affordable housing development.

WEAKNESSES - What are the greatest factors contributing to insufficient affordable, healthy housing in our community?

- Desirability of Corvallis as a community in which to live.
- Limited growth possible due to urban growth boundaries.
- New resources/tools/ policy strategies that are not being used, e.g. annexation, etc.
- Lack of vacant land for housing development.
- Annexation policy (public vote needed) limits land availability. “Everyone has to vote on everything, too much process.”
- Extremely low vacancy rates which contributes to high rental costs.
- Housing affordability, high property values, high rental costs. Land prices/high real estate prices.
- Impact of OSU student housing on availability of housing for low and moderate income housing individuals and families.
- Limited mid-level priced SROs, single family, “starter homes.”
- Landlords who are unwilling to accept those on housing assistance.
- Landlords who don't maintain their properties.
- Difficulty renters experience in reporting/complaining about landlords, and fear of landlord retaliation.
- Need to strengthen private sector representation (landlords, developers, etc.) in HOAC and 10 Year Plan implementation efforts.
- Zoning and building codes do not allow for high density multi-level housing in residential neighborhoods.
- Land use code does not encourage ADUs, multiple housing on single lots.
- Housing development/construction costs/building codes can be prohibitive. Some developers see land use policies and Corvallis development codes as overly restrictive and burdensome.
- No financial incentive for developers/landlords to provide lower cost housing to make up the gap in what they can get at market rates (no financing structure that promotes housing for people below the federal poverty level [FPL]).
- Several key resources (Stone Soup, CDDC, Men’s Shelter) are in temporary locations.
- Many rental properties are "affordable" but unhealthy due to lack of maintenance and repairs.
- Many environmental health implications related to dilapidated housing, especially in rural areas.
- There is no Healthy Homes program in Benton County similar to Multnomah County.
- Insufficient incentives to remodel older homes or convert buildings into affordable housing.
- Lack of rental housing inspections/inconsistent enforcement of rental properties.
- Unanticipated outcome of the new Corvallis Livability Code is actual displacement of people.
- Corvallis Police Department does not have community services officers dedicated to the homeless population.

**THREATS - What challenges or barriers prevent people
from accessing affordable, healthy housing?**

- Corvallis has the highest income disparities in the state, and the faces of poverty are often hidden in our community.
- Despite increased visibility of homeless, broader community doesn't have a good understanding of the complexity of the problem.
- Need for increased education and social marketing about the lived experiences of people who are homeless or housing unstable in our community.
- Lack of common language and definition of homelessness and poverty.
- Some see the homeless as "others" and not deserving of the respect and opportunities as the rest of the community.
- No shared community vision about strategies for addressing the problem and no solid plan that is embraced by the majority of the community.
- Conflicting set of values between environmental and affordable housing stakeholders.
- Sentiments of "NIMBYism/not in my neighborhood" and community backlash as homelessness grows and solutions are not identified.
- Lack of political will to drive system level changes and encourage mixed income neighborhoods.
- Lack of willingness by voters to allocate public funding for affordable housing.
- Lack of living wage jobs, loss of agricultural and processing jobs, and discrepancy between wages/SSI benefits and cost of housing.
- Current social services/safety net system is strained and beyond capacity, and likely to get worse given current federal administration.
- Section 8 and other subsidized housing has long waiting lists.
- Many can't find rental units that will accept them even with Section 8 (1/3 of housing vouchers issued for Benton County are returned to LBHA after 120 days).
- Denial of housing because of the number of children in a family (housing code violations).
- Families and women tend to get the most help, leaving a large need among the adult men.
- Inadequate state and county mental and behavioral health infrastructure that is crisis driven vs. primary prevention focused.
- Over reliance on law enforcement due to lack of comprehensive and coordinated service system.
- Fragmented, uncoordinated services, particularly case management. AST tries to address this gap but is a limited and under-resourced model.
- No single point of entry to access services. We have niche housing supports (i.e. vets, single women with children, persons with disabilities, etc.), but need to address the gaps with a comprehensive system.
- Fragmented data systems make it difficult to understand the need and complexity of the problem. Lack of shared data system/single point of entry.
- Lack of information, knowledge or confusion about available services.

- Benton County is located between Veterans Administration (VA) catchment areas (i.e. is a “dead zone”) which creates service access and transportation barriers for local vets.
- OSU INTO is a for-profit agency, that does not coordinate and assist families of students accepted into their program so community must address gaps.
- Complicated and confusing application processes for accessing services. Application process for renters (credit check, background check, fees); Social Security #, driver’s license requirement for housing
- Discrimination and racism, with many services only offered in English (i.e. Second Chance Renters Program, First Time Home Buyers, etc.)
- Shame and stigma of accepting assistance.
- Insufficient commitment from the public sector which puts pressure on underfunded non-profits to compete for limited resources.
- Not planning for the growth of older adults/aging population, and persons with disabilities.
- Lack of reliable transportation, particularly in rural areas. Lack of accessible transportation system (especially connecting Corvallis to neighboring communities).