



Local Housing Funds in Michigan Webinar: Key Q&A's

On May 13, 2020 Stephanie McGreevy from the Mackinac Island Community Foundation and Ryan Kilpatrick joined us to discuss how they leveraged local funds for housing development projects. Here are some of the questions discussed in the session:

- **Mackinac City Support: How did the City agree to use their bonding authority? Was there push-back to that idea?**

The City was onboard from the get-go, they started the housing committee and local action to identify the needs. The city had also been affected directly by the lack of housing, in 2018, the Dept. of public works interviewed 8 applicants for 2 positions from which 4 were offered a job and the four had to turn down the offers due to the lack of available housing.

- **Any advice for organizations that are trying to raise funds for specific projects or a general housing fund? what are the first things to consider and obstacles to overcome?**

Start with data to identify and back-up where the need is, vacancy rates, and comparing the data to economic development projections, establishing healthy vacancy rates points, price points and relevant information that made it easier to make the case for employers and local philanthropic partners. Story telling for the region and the project as a whole and bringing in partners that had influence to support the initiative. Data and narrative, leaning in economic development will help get the initial conversations at the door. Also, engage the partners with credibility in the community to build your narrative. Defining the structure and the messaging is relevant to gain buy-in.

- **Did the City of Mackinac consider the use of tax increment financing to help pay back the bond?**

The city's lawyers and Cinnaire were the ones that decided to use a bond, but the City was familiar with the process since they had just used a bond to purchase a dock for the island.

- **Was there any effort from employers to provide properties for housing projects for their own employees? vs targeting projects for the general public?**

While there were conversations about that, there wasn't any employer who was willing to be the only investor and then they didn't have multiple employers to invest in somebody else's property. The other element was wanting to have two degrees of separation between the employer and employee. It's important to consider how complicated the employee-employer relationship can get when not only does one depend on the employer for income but also, for housing. (Not that any employer would exploit any employee) but the perception of power changes. There are some employers with land that could be considered but it is important to analyze priorities and how employees can be located closer to amenities, transportation and other things.

Creating pathways and partnerships for housing in Northwest Michigan.

PO BOX 506 | TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN 49685 | 231.342.1242 | info@housingnorth.org

housingnorth.org