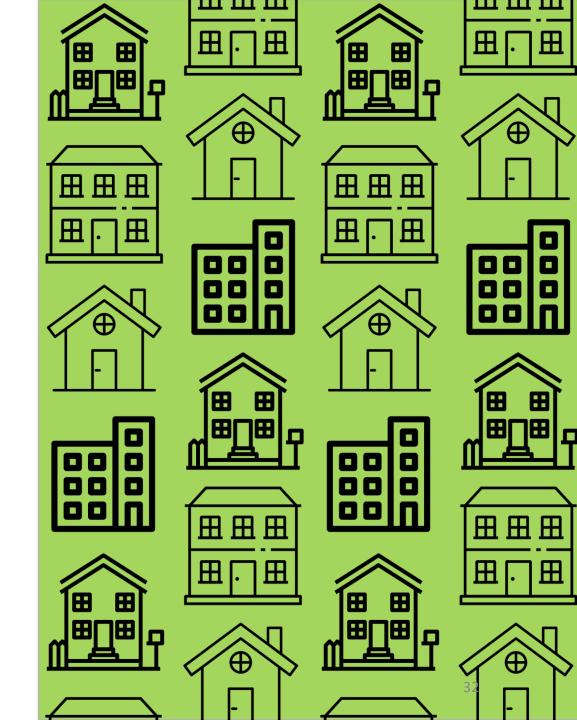## Priority B. Education and Advocacy

In facilitated discussions with SCALE representatives and other housing stakeholders from around the County, it was expressed that one area SCALE should continue their work is through educating the community and advocating for specific housing needs. This section explores several opportunities for SCALE and Scott County communities to engage specific demographics that will benefit from information and resource sharing regarding the need for a full range of housing choices. Additionally, through advocating for the unique needs of Scott County, SCALE can involve a diverse group of entities in projects where they are needed.

Objective B.1: Educate the community about Scott County's diverse housing needs.

Scott County represents unique housing needs. Without properly educating residents about those needs, it is likely many of them will go unaddressed due to lack of understanding, therefore support. Inaccurate and destructive beliefs about housing types and the people that use them can be alleviated through clear education and a shared knowledge throughout the County.

Strategy (B.1.a)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Consider partnering with local non-profits that can share information about diverse housing needs found across Scott County				

Examples and Resources: The following organizations should be engaged for partnership and/or best practices examples for achieving Objective B.1:
- Minnesota Housing Partnership: https://www.mhponline.org/
- Family Housing Fund: https://www.fhfund.org/

Objective B.1: Educate the community about Scott County's diverse housing needs. (continued)

Strategy (B.1.b)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Evaluate options to engage employers, service providers, and others to be part of the housing conversation				
	Examples and Resources: This could be an entirely new team or be an added element to a team that already exists like the LLE Housing Work group. SCALE members and staff should work to make this an inclusive conversation and include entities in the community usually not involved in housing to understand the burden and challenges surrounding the topic.			

Strategy (B.1.c)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Consider hosting open house events for developers and builders				
	Examples and Resources: This event could be used to attract new development by advertising available lots, advertising what is wanted and needed throughout the County, and any available incentives. Taking the start-up work out of the process for developers will demonstrate the community's willingness and excitement for partnership and new development.			

Objective B.1: Educate the community about Scott County's diverse housing needs. (continued)

Strategy (B.1.d)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Consider hosting workshops with high schools to encourage careers in housing				
	Examples and Resources: Refer to the Urban Land Institute Urban Plan Program for more information about their curriculum regarding real estate and planning careers: https://minnesota.uli.org/get-involved/urbanplan/.			

Strategy (B.1.e)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Develop a communication plan to encourage landlords to support acceptance of Housing Choice Vouchers				
	Examples and Resources: The Housing Choice Voucher program is typically portrayed in a negative light but is generally a wise investment decision for landlords and property owners. Teaching landlords about all the benefits of the being part of the program is a low-cost method of increasing affordable housing options for the community.			

Objective B.1: Educate the community about Scott County's diverse housing needs. (continued)

Strategy (B.1.f)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Create a communication plan to educate the community about the benefits of supporting a full range of housing options				
	Examples and Resources: Ensuring Scott County has a diverse set of housing options contributes complete economic vitality and will benefit the community beyond just housing needs. When residents pay a reasonable amount for their housing based on their unique financial situation, they have more money to spend in the local economy on food, entertainment, and necessities.			

Strategy (B.1.g)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Consider a county-wide survey to gauge the interest of allowing additional dwelling units (ADU) and conditional use permits (CUP), and provide technical assistance to communities to adapt their land use codes and policies accordingly				
	Examples and Resources: Additional dwelling units (ADU) are a unique housing tool because they satisfy several needs all in one. They work as senior living spaces for family, rentals for young professionals, and lower-cost housing units for anyone. They also provide extra income to homeowners. It is worth staff time to engage Scott County residents and see if they would be interested in an ADY model. If there are considerable positive responses, staff can work with each city to provide technical skills and guidance, and work with interested residents to walk them through the process. ADUs are becoming increasingly more popular because of the various ways they alleviate housing shortages. Share this guide from the Family Housing Fund with residents and community officials about how ADUs can be helpful in Scott County: https://www.fhfund.org/report/adu/.			

Objective B.1: Educate the community about Scott County's diverse housing needs. (continued)

Strategy (B.1.h)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Create a communication plan for agreed upon language and definitions of housing terms for each city to utilize when implementing housing plans and programs				
	Examples and Resources: For a jumping off point regarding shared terminology, refer to page 9 of this document.			

Strategy (B.1.i)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Review and share records of housing development trends and possible drivers				
	Examples and Resources: Every year, the Family Housing Fund reports on similar trends that can be found here: https://www.fhfund.org/report/housing-counts-data-2002-2017/. Use this resource as inspiration for configuring more detailed statistics for Scott County.			

Objective B.2: Encourage the use of local financing mechanisms to support housing affordability.

Financing mechanisms like tax abatement and tax increment financing are tools that provide gap funding for the development of new housing. This should be considered an investment in the community to address the housing needs. These additional funds, in many cases, are paramount in ensuring that the project is financially feasible. Although structurally complex, the tools are worth planning for to help make projects viable that otherwise would not be. Disseminating information about the types of programs will help establish public support and confidence in Scott County housing goals and actions.

Strategy (B.2.a)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Assist cities in identifying potential tax increment financing (TIF) districts to support affordable housing across Scott County				
	Examples and Resources: Partner with a public finance company to work with cities interested and make recommendations.			

Objective B.2: Encourage the use of local financing mechanisms to support housing affordability. (continued)

Strategy (B.2.b)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Create options for uses of tax abatement in affordable housing development to share with cities and the County				
	Examples and Resources: Review the League of Minnesota Cities Handbook on Public Financing for more information about how this could work in Scott County: https://www.lmc.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/Financing-Public-Improvements.pdf.			

Strategy (B.2.c)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Provide resources for communities to understand the benefits of supporting tax credit projects				
	Examples and Resources: Novogradac Consulting has a variety of free resources that can be distributed to the community to better understand tax credit opportunities: https://www.novoco.com/resource-centers.			

Objective B.2: Encourage the use of local financing mechanisms to support housing affordability. (continued)

Strategy (B.2.d)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Research supportive data and information on the shared community benefits of increased densities				
	Examples and Resources: There are thousands of examples and pieces of data that support how higher densities improve communities overall. Review the resources below for more information: • Strong Towns: https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/1/3/comparing-approaches-to-achieving-density?ibp-adgroup=adwords&gclid=Cj0KCQjw0caCBhCIARIsAGAfuMwQpuvrOU87ufaFCihdlMgLdmv-7BGPKdVTZUDspcGj7VpMiQ5jGqcaAoVrEALw_wcB • ULI Higher Density Myth or Fact: https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/HigherDensity_MythFact.ashx_.pdf • Visualizing Density: https://www.lincolninst.edu/publications/books/visualizing-density			

Objective B.3: Support the senior population.

Many older adult and senior residents are unable to plan for the future because they lack information on housing options as they age. By providing information sharing and instructional resources, older adult and senior residents are better equipped with the resources they need to make plans for themselves and their families as they grow older. AARP estimates that nearly 40 million Americans provided unpaid care to an adult between 2014 and 2015.

Strategy (B.3.a)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Consider hosting bi-annual workshops for senior residents and caregivers				
	Examples and Resources: By disseminating information to those caring for our older adults and senior residents, we can help improve their quality-of-life, whatever stage they are in, and help them prepare for the future. This event should be informative and helpful for those in attendance, providing resources and tools for them to better care for their residents. Helpful tools should include financial assistance to ease the cost of being a caregiver, government payment options for family caregivers, local events, information about new senior housing units, tips for managing someone else's money, caring for adults with dementia, and other informative topics. Collect feedback after the workshop to better tend to the needs of caregivers in the County. American Seniors Housing Association and Comfort Keepers provides helpful tools for seniors, aging adults, and caregivers. Consider resources provided from these entities to inform planning efforts for community workshops.			

Objective B.3: Support the senior population. *(continued)*

Strategy (B.3.b)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Create and disseminate helpful housing tips and information to senior residents				
	Examples and Resources: Continue to support senior residents through regular emails that contain helpful, informative resources. The emails should include details about how and when to apply to a care facility, who to contact for repairs, local businesses and nonprofits to contact for different services, and a calendar of events they may be interested in.			

Objective B.4: Share educational resources to increase knowledge of housing programs.

Educating community members, regardless of age, household income, or type of housing desired, will help improve overall understanding of what offerings exist for their unique needs. When residents have the proper understanding of what their options are, they can independently eliminate some of the housing issues they face.

Strategy (B.4.a)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Provide housing resource information to cities such as a resources booklet and website page links				
	Examples and Resources: Oftentimes, the first place people will go to get information about housing is the city's website. Each community should have a centralized location that acts as a repository for any and all housing information. Make it easily accessible and with clear instructions. If cities feel they have a considerable number of people that come into their buildings to look for housing resources, it would also be a great idea to keep physical booklets in these locations so people can take them as they need.			

Objective B.4: Share educational resources to increase knowledge of housing programs.

Strategy (B.4.b)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Provide helpful tips and resources for older adults and seniors about staying in their homes or moving to senior-specific units				
	Examples and Resources: Some residents may be looking to hire a caregiver or transfer to assisted living or other caregiving facilities but do not have adequate information regarding their options. Providing information about physical and mental health, home improvement and rehabilitation opportunities, and contacts for specific issues regarding institutional care options will help to educate older residents about housing options as they age. The American Seniors Housing Association distributes helpful information through www.whereyoulivematters.org. This resource can be used as inspiration for the senior resident emails.			

Strategy (B.4.c)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Evaluate offering free planning services to assist older adults and senior residents in making alternate housing plans as they age				
	Examples and Resources: Events could include workshops with general educational materials like maintenance services, new facilities coming to the area, and other tips. Another helpful measure would be to offer personal counseling for individuals and their caregivers. Resources could include information about selling their house and connecting them with first-time buyers, choosing the next stage on their housing journey, financial planning, and finding service-providers for their unique needs. Pulling from multiple resources will be important to make sure residents are receiving the best options available. Here are a few trusted entities: • Urban Institute • Milken Institute • AARP • US Department of HUD • American Seniors Housing Association • Comfort Keepers			

Objective B.5: Support housing through employment and career education.

Closely related to housing affordability is employment and wages. The current minimum wage in Scott County is $9.86/hour. According to the Living Wage Calculator from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the living wage for an adult is $12.61/hour. The living wage for an adult with 1, 2, or 3 children is $27.55, $32.63, and $41.16 respectively. Working to improve wages will directly increase the range of homes employees are able to afford. Educating businesses on exactly how much it costs to live in Scott County could help address part of the affordability problem.

Strategy (B.5.a)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Consider adopting a county-wide living wage utilizing a calculator provided by MIT				

Examples and Resources: Massachusetts Institute of Technology has identified a living wage for all of Scott County. Staff should review this and other relevant research to determine what they see fit for a liveable wage for folks living in the region. This wage should then be extrapolated and used in educating employers about housing, and to attract employers that pay the living wage. Find it here: https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/27139.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition has created a profile for Scott County that includes detailed data regarding the link in employment and housing. Refer to this link for more information (select for Scott County): https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/minnesota.

Objective B.5: Support housing through employment and career education. (continued)

Strategy (B.5.b)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Develop a county-wide plan to recruit businesses that meet the living wage benchmark				
	Examples and Resources: Staff should use the liveable wage identified by MIT and any other supportive data in their recruiting efforts. This will positively contribute to the housing environment in Scott County over time as we see more and more residents coming into the housing market that are earning a livable wage. In the housing affordability report from the Itasca Project, it is recommended that employers act directly to support their employees through a housing-forward benefits package. Find more from the Itasca Project here: https://www.theitascaproject.com/index.html.			

Strategy (B.5.c)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Evaluate options to support businesses in creating housing-forward benefits packages for their employees				
	Examples and Resources: In the housing affordability report from the Itasca Project, it is recommended that employers act directly to support their employees through a housing-forward benefits package. Not only will this alleviate housing pressures, but it will also make strides toward achieving the existing goal of residents being able to live and work in Scott County. The Itasca Project group drafted what this type of benefits package could look like; it can be found on page 14 on the report: https://www.theitascaproject.com/documents/Itasca%20Housing%20Affordability%20Report_September%202020.pdf.			

Objective B.6: Inform the community about the effects of housing on public services such as police and fire.

An important factor when planning for different types of housing are the effects new developments will have on existing public services. Continuing to record and track these effects will help staff, policy leaders, and residents understand the true impact of different types of housing and better understand current and future implications.

Strategy (B.6.a)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Develop a coordinated plan to collect, update, and share data between communities and service providers				
	Examples and Resources: Utilize the following report (found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HwYOBFJ_k98C6TT99w2o7ryk2CnAGvgo/view) by Wilder Research and nonprofit developers from the Twin Cities to inform and educate community members.			

Objective B.7: Pioneer new partnerships.

Solving housing issues and continuing to provide adequate housing opportunities for all demographics represented across Scott County are ambitious goals. Forming partnerships for collaboration and resource sharing can fill needed staffing, funding, and resource gaps that will propel this Blueprint and other housing initiatives. Rather than duplicating processes and initiatives, efficient partnerships should be formed to address the housing priorities outlined in the Blueprint.

Strategy (B.7.a)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Develop a plan to build partnerships between service providers, nonprofits, schools, and businesses				
	Examples and Resources: Working with existing entities will eliminate duplication and improve the effectiveness of housing initiatives.			

Strategy (B.7.b)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Evaluate other County programs for adapting mobile home rent-to-own programs in Scott County				
	Examples and Resources: Consider the existing rent-to-own program offered by the Dakota County CDA as a model for a similar program for Scott County.			

Strategy (B.7.c)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Create a communication plan with local realtors to support housing priorities outlined in the Housing Blueprint				
	Examples and Resources: SCALE members and community staff should be in regular communication with realtors in order to mutually benefit one another's goals. An overarching plan will be the most efficient method for this.			

Objective B.8: Use social media to keep Scott County communities up to date on activity related to the Housing Blueprint.

Social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook are free, easy to maintain, and effective. SCALE and participating cities should have active profiles for each and engage them regularly. Most people, especially the younger population, will rely on these platforms for information about current events, local news, and offerings from communities.

Strategy (B.8.a)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Create a social media plan to maintain consistent engagement and engage members of the community				
	Examples and Resources: Creating an overarching social media and marketing strategy to share updates and information about the Housing Blueprint and other housing news will be the most effective way to communicate to communities, but individual profiles for city-specific updates would also be helpful and productive.			

Objective B.9: Partner with the Itasca Project.

As an employer-led virtual organization, the Itasca Project is a group that provides fact-based research and disperses data to the region surrounding metrics and steps for "achieving regional economic vitality, quality of life, and prosperity for all."

Strategy (B.9.a)	Potential Partners	Priority	Time	Cost
Engage support and resources provided by Itasca Project and coordinate where appropriate				

Examples and Resources: Partnering with existing forces working to improve existing conditions will save resources, time, and money for SCALE and each city. These types of partnerships will help spur this plan forward and create lasting results.

The Itasca Project is constantly working to provide data and fact-based metrics to improve the Minneapolis-St. Paul region. Learn more at their website: https://www.theitascaproject.com/index.html.