

NEWS RELEASE

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Habitat's Aim to Solve Affordable Housing

Alexandria, MN (November 20, 2023) – At the November 16, 2023, Board Meeting, the Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County Board of Directors approved a new five-year strategic plan. The plan encapsulates the theme “We build, engage and serve together for all.” Through this strategic plan, Habitat will address the critical need for affordable housing in Douglas County.

Highlights of the plan include:

- Increasing affordable homeownership opportunities and pathways to homeownership
- Stabilizing and preserving housing for seniors
- Optimizing the ReStore for future growth
- Educating the community while creating meaningful partnerships through advocacy.

One key component of the plan includes the recent purchase of land for the Summer Meadows development. Located in a highly desirable neighborhood in Alexandria, the development will allow 42 homes to be built over the next 10 years, with four to five homes built each year. This will be the first affordable housing development in Alexandria since 2002, serving homeowners earning 80% or below of the area median income for Douglas County.

Infrastructure – water, sewer, and roadway – will be installed beginning in the spring of 2024. Above-ground construction will start in the fall of 2024. Sidewalks will exist on both sides of the street with trees to enhance the interconnectedness of neighborhoods allowing easy access to bike trails and a buffer of native plantings. One side of the property is located next to an existing park.

The homes of Summer Meadows will feature two-, three-, and four-bedroom homes ranging in size from 1,000 to 1,400 square feet utilizing five different house plans that include two-stall garages. Homes will be built slab-on-grade with in-floor heat to optimize energy efficiency and upgraded exteriors with stone veneer and porches.

In support of this project, the Alexandria City Council approved TIF financing for 26 years at the November 13, 2023, meeting. “We’re thrilled the city has chosen to support our efforts to create affordable homeownership opportunities through this development,” stated Lori Anderson, Habitat’s Executive Director.

The 2023 Alexandria Housing Study Update stated a goal of producing 8 to 10 very affordable homes per year will help address the demand for affordable housing. The study states, “Habitat for Humanity has also been active in building homes for people that would generally not have other options for home ownership. ...Habitat is well positioned to offer affordable ownership options in the future.” The Summer Meadows development provides an ongoing opportunity to build affordable homes.

To better prepare people to become eligible for Habitat's affordable housing program, the strategic plan includes a goal to implement an Almost Home program. Many applicants are not approved because of financial issues such as inadequate income or a high debt-to-income level. The Almost Home program will give them the boost needed to become successful homeowners by helping them find the right balance between finances, debt, and income. Future homebuyers learn how to save for a home even with a low income.

With a 26-year proven track record of building strength, stability, and independence through shelter in Douglas County, the Almost Home Program will allow Habitat to continue to empower people to build a better future for themselves and their families by educating them for success and by purchasing their homes with an affordable mortgage.

Habitat is built on the vision that everyone deserves a decent place to live. Homeownership is directly linked to healthier lives, continuing education, a viable workforce, and generational wealth. A family that has this fundamental core in place becomes a stronger, more effective force for positive change in their own lives and in their community.

Since 1997, Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County has built or improved 84 homes, with five more currently in production. Additionally, 74 homeowners have been served through the Aging in Place program, with 10 projects currently in progress. We celebrate the hundreds of adults and children already in improved housing because of Habitat. Still, there are hundreds more in our community without adequate housing.

"Our strategic plan for the next five years is based on our commitment to build more, serve more, and engage more people. It's that simple," said Anderson. "We are grateful for the steadfast support of our mission from this community. Because of your support, whether financially, on the build site, shopping in, or donating to the ReStore, Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County is ranked #7 out of 428 small affiliates in the nation for housing production. This work would not be possible without your support."

Tony Loosbrock, Habitat's Board Chair added, "We have much to celebrate at Habitat with the many successful homeowners we've had the privilege to help throughout the years. Our focus on the future, as demonstrated in this strategic plan, is important to recognize and provides a sense of pride in how we can continue to strengthen this community. Like a home provides a strong foundation for success, Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County has a strong foundation to build upon. With the continued support of our amazing community, we will further our mission and deepen our positive impact in the communities we serve."

Like our future homeowners, Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County is dreaming big and courageously broadening our horizons in pursuit of finding ways to serve more people. Homeownership is a life-changing opportunity, and it's impossible without you: a community that believes we can do better. For more information on how you can support Habitat, please contact Lori at 320-762-4255.

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About Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County

Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County has been an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International since 1997 and has built or renovated 84 houses and completed 74 Aging in Place projects throughout Douglas County. Habitat works in partnership with people in need to build or renovate affordable housing. Homebuyers are selected according to established criteria: need for housing, ability to partner with Habitat, and ability to pay. They purchase the homes from Habitat with affordable mortgages. Tax-deductible donations of money, land, and materials are provided by individuals, organizations, churches, foundations, and businesses. Habitat is an equal housing opportunity. For more information on how to support Habitat or get involved contact the affiliate at 320.762.4255, e-mail at info@hfhdouglascounty.org, or the website at hfhdouglascounty.org