Hastings Housing Assessment

Hastings, Nebraska
August 2025

RDg
PLANNING ● DESIGN

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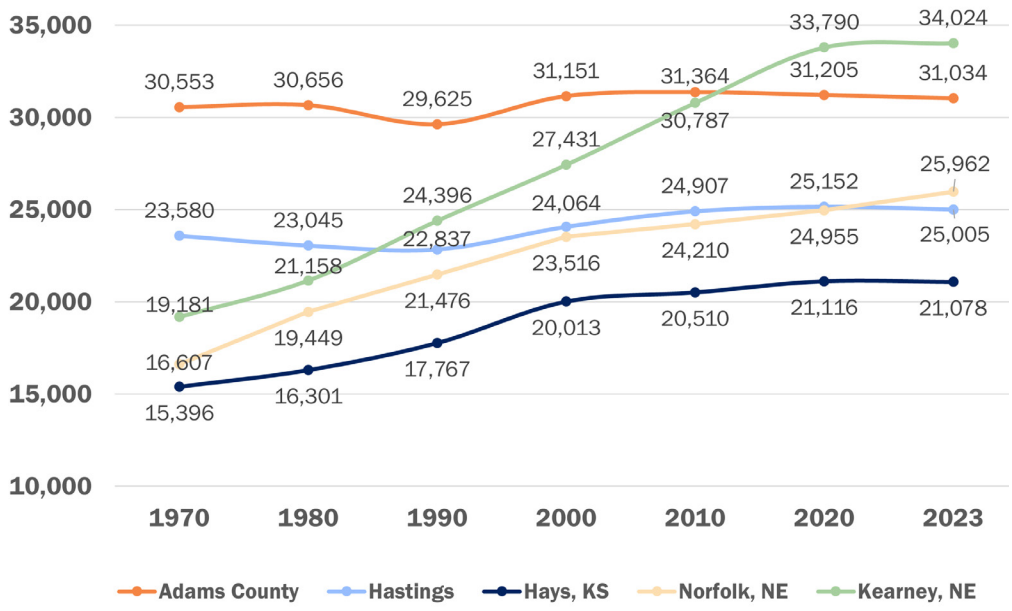
Context

Context

Population Change

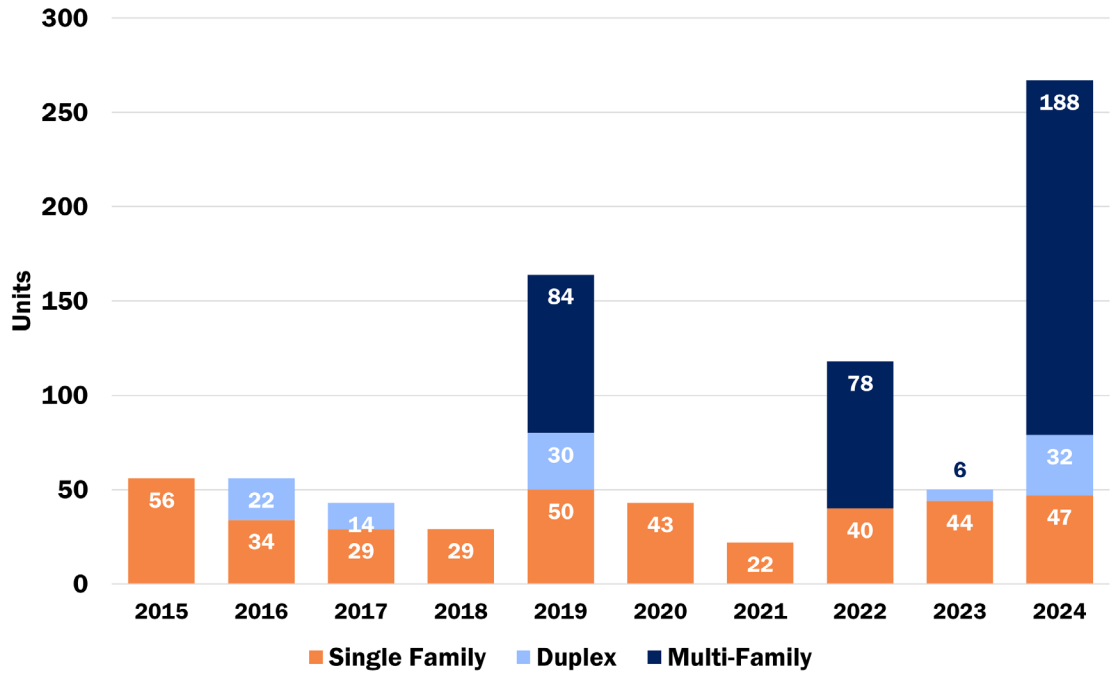
- **Hastings' population has been very stable. Population peaked in 2020, but American Community Survey estimates indicate a declining population between 2020 and 2023.**
  - **The rate of construction and decline in vacancy does not support population loss. Based on natural population change and construction activity, the city is estimated to have grown to 25,689 by 2025.*
- **Between 2000 and 2023, Hastings' population has grown by less than 1%, indicating slow growth, consistent with growth rates of nearby communities such as Kearney, Grand Island, and Norfolk, Nebraska.**



Year	Population	Period Population Change	% Change During Decade	Annual Growth Rate
1990	22,837			
2000	24,064	1,227	5.4%	0.52%
2010	24,907	843	3.5%	0.34%
2020	25,152	245	1.0%	0.10%
2023	25,005	-147	-0.6%	-0.06%
Estimated 2025*	25,689	684	2.7%	**0.42%**
2000-2025		941	6.8%	**0.26%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; RDG Planning & Design

Context



Construction Activity

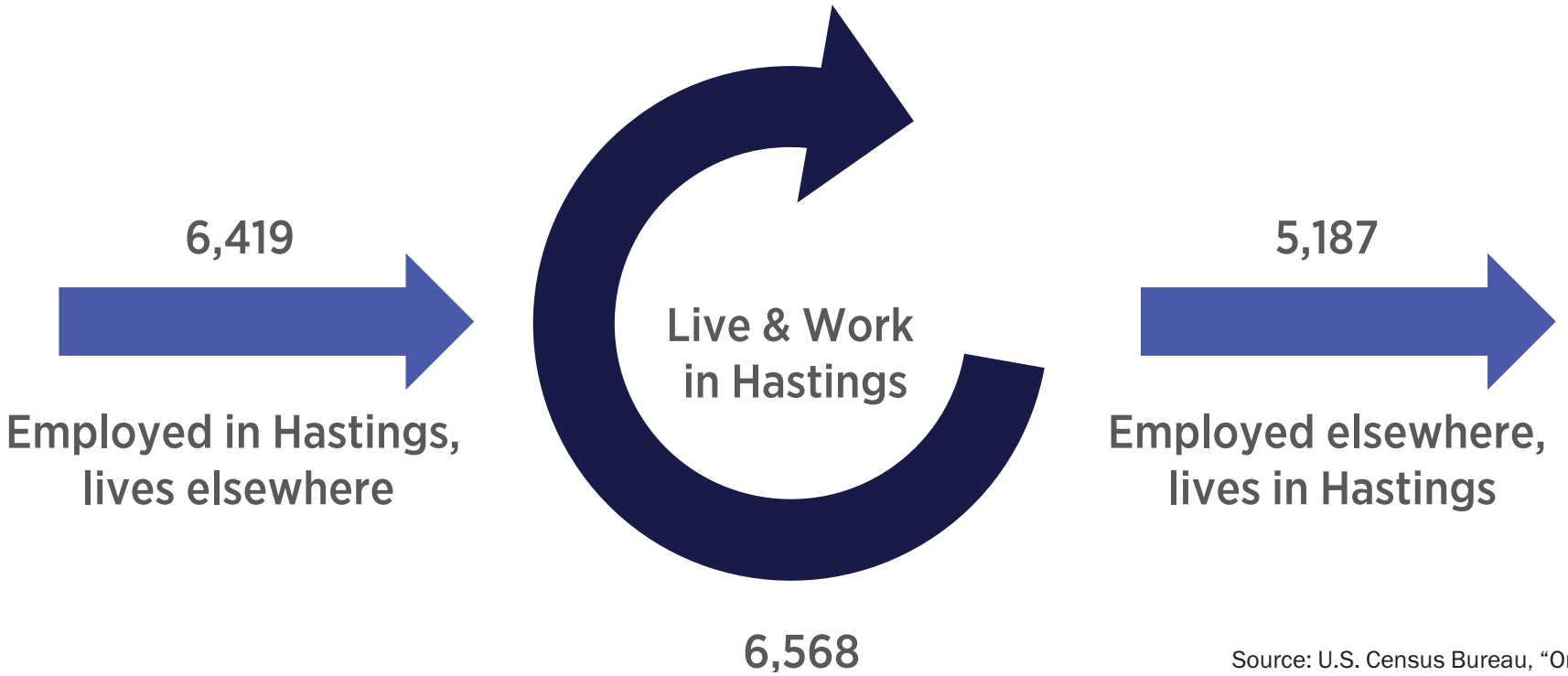
- Hastings has added over 450 units since 2021, including major developments like Pioneer Trail Flats (84 units), Osborne View Estates (30 units), and Hangar 55 Apartments (78 senior units). Two additional projects—Theatre District Flats (54 units) and Elm & 26th Apartments (132 units)—are expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

- In 2026, Hastings expects construction to begin on several new developments including the Lochland Meadows (24 units), Elm Meadows (18 units in the first phase), Cimarron Meadows 13th Addition (2 units), and downtown conversion opportunities.

  › *The projects will provide 80+ units over the next several years.*

Context

Employment and Commuting



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "OnTheMap"

- **While the number of jobs in Hastings has decreased 5.6% since 2013, Hastings has consistently maintained a low unemployment rate - typically ranging between 2% and 4%. This indicates a tight labor market and strong local economy. However, the Nebraska Department of Labor indicates a recent rise in unemployment.**

- **Hastings' labor market has a net inflow of workers. Approximately 6,419 jobs are filled by workers living outside Hastings, 6,568 live and work in Hastings, and 5,187 live in Hastings and work in other communities.**
  - *The inflow of workers matches information shared by stakeholders, many of whom indicated a number of workers commuting from Grand Island.*

Context

Occupancy

- **The Census indicates that the city gained over 500 units since 2010, which aligns with building permit data.**

- **After increases in housing developments between 2017 and 2021, vacancy rates rose slightly and peaked at 8.4% in 2020. Since then, vacancy rates have slowly declined, reaching an estimated 7% in 2023.**

  › *Vacancy rates of 5%-7% are considered optimal – providing enough slack for households to move into and within the market, but not enough vacancy to result in disinvestment.*

- **The 2020 American Community Survey estimated that 37% of vacant units were for rent and 11% were for sale, indicating an active rental market but limited turnover or availability in the for-sale market.**

  › *Interviews with landlords in July of 2025 would indicate that the vacancy rate for rental units is very low. Existing units are generally full or fill quickly. Additionally, new units are filling on pace with expectations.*

	2010	2020	Change
Total Units	10,847	11,279	432
Owner Occupied	6,452 64%	6,451 62%	-1 ▼
Renter Occupied	3,658 36%	3,882 38%	▲ 244
Vacancy Rate	737 6.8%	946 8.4%	▲ 209

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

› *About 35% were identified as "other vacant" which are typically not available for occupancy (either due to renovation, seasonal or recreational use, abandonment, or personal and legal reasons). This is slightly higher than comparable communities and the state.*

Context

Year Built	Total	%
Built 2020 or later	62	1%
Built 2010 to 2019	738	7%
Built 2000 to 2009	766	7%
Built 1990 to 1999	907	8%
Built 1980 to 1989	623	6%
Built 1970 to 1979	1794	16%
Built 1960 to 1969	1316	12%
Built 1950 to 1959	1412	12%
Built 1940 to 1949	1166	10%
Built 1939 or earlier	2519	22%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Year Built

- **45% of the housing stock was built before 1960 and nearly 75% was built before 1980, indicating more maintenance and upgrades may be needed. As of 2023, the median year of homes built in Hastings was 1964, older than the typical home in Adams County (1966) and the state of Nebraska (1976).**

- **While older homes typically require additional updates and maintenance, they can be a crucial source of naturally occurring affordable housing.**
  - *According to the Adams County Assessor in 2021, 21.8% of structures are considered below average quality. Maintenance of these units will be essential to keeping a stock of affordable housing.*
  - *Additional data on housing condition can be found in the city's State required Affordable Housing Action Plan.*

Context

Housing Affordability

	Median Household Income	Median House Value	Value / Income Ratio	Median Contract Rent
Adams County	$56,007	$137,700	2.46	$582
Hastings	$52,747	$127,300	2.41	$588
Kearney, NE	$60,755	$188,800	3.11	$648
Hays, KS	$52,135	$182,100	3.49	$624
Norfolk, NE	$49,280	$155,600	3.16	$575
Grand Island, NE	$56,513	$148,200	2.62	$648
Source: U.S. Census Bureau				

- **An affordable, self-sustaining housing market - one that generates sufficient value or revenue to support new market rate construction - typically has a value to income ratio (V/I) between 2.5 and 3.0.**

- **Ratios over 3.0 indicate there may be some affordability concerns.**
  - *Ratios tend to be higher in communities with large student populations (such as Kearney and Hays) where students can lower the median household income and increase demand for investment properties.*

- **Overall home values remain low compared to other similar sized cities in the region. Note that these values include all homes, even those that have not been on the market in decades.**

- **Newer rental products will require higher rents then the city's existing stock of older rental products.**

Context

Income Distribution and Affordability

- **This analysis evaluates the availability of affordable housing and compares the quantity of housing affordable to each income group.**
- **While the demand for rents below $500 exists, some is off-set by:**
  - *Senior households on fixed incomes that own their homes.*
  - *Students that receiving housing assistance through family support or loans.*
- **It would appear that Hastings has a large supply of homes valued around $200,000, but those homes are filled by individuals that make more than $75,000 and can afford higher value homes.**
  - *Just because a household can afford a higher value home does not mean they will move.*
  - *Housing that fits a households stage of life can incentivize movement in the market.*
- **The new rental units coming online in the next year will fill a gap in the existing market.**

Income Range	Number of Households	Affordable Ownership Range	Number of Owner Units	Affordable Rental Range	Number of Rental Units	Total Affordable Units	Balance
$0-25,000	2,357	>$60,000	534	$0-499	833	1,367	-990
$25,000-49,999	1,990	$60,000-124,999	1,537	$500-999	2,472	4,009	2,019
$50,000-74,999	2,003	$125,000-199,999	1,893	$1,000-1,499	394	2,287	284
$75-99,999	1,231	$200,000-249,999	946	$1,500-1,999	62	1,008	-223
$100-150,000	1,538	$250,000-399,999	1,079	$2,000-2,999	55	1,134	-404
$150,000+	1,398	$400,000+	711	$3000+	-	711	-687

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Context

Predicted vs Actual Population Change 2010-2020

- Despite an out-migration of those in their childbearing years (25-40), Hastings had more children under the age of 14 than predicted. This likely indicates a higher than predicted birth rate.

- Hastings College likely supported the in-migration of 20 to 24-year-olds. Only a small percentage of students stay in the community, resulting in a large out-migration of 25 to 34-year-olds.

- Hastings appears to be an attractive location for retirees ages 65-84. The decline in 85+ could indicated missing housing and services, along with a higher than predicted mortality rate.

	Age Group	2010 Actual	2020 Predicted	2020 Actual	Difference
▲	0 - 15	4,970	4,602	4,950	348
▲	15 - 19	1,902	1,687	2,005	318
▲	20 - 24	2,165	1,533	1,916	383
▼	25 - 34	2,967	4,030	3,197	-833
▼	35 - 44	2,724	2,934	2,866	-68
▼	45 - 54	3,322	2,660	2,528	-132
▲	55 - 64	2,917	3,110	3,119	9
▲	65 - 74	1,748	2,483	2,571	88
▲	75 - 84	1,400	1,206	1,359	153
▼	85+	792	819	641	-178
	Total	**24,907**	**25,064**	**25,152**	**88**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; RDG Planning & Design

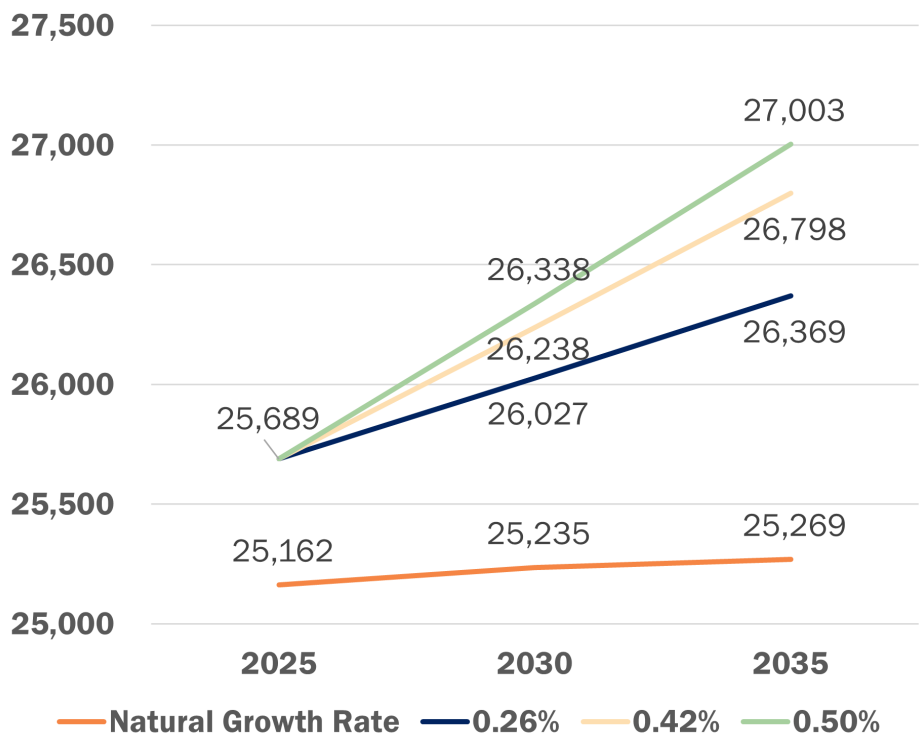
Assessment

Assessment

Population Projection

- Construction activity in the last 5 years has increased while the city has maintained low vacancy rates. Additionally, nearly 50% of the workforce lives outside the city.
  - *These factors would indicate a sustained demand for housing.*
- With nearly 25% of the population over the age of 60, Hastings will need to meet the growing need for retiree housing options and attract new employees as these individuals retire.
- Based on natural birth and death rates, the city's population would likely remain flat over the next ten years.
- If the city maintains recent levels of building activity and continues efforts to retain college graduates and working age adults, the community could maintain a 0.42% growth rate.
- If historic patterns in population change continue (2000 to 2025), the city's growth rate would be closer to 0.26%.

Annual Growth Rate	2025	2030	2035
Natural Growth Rate	25,162	25,235	25,269
0.26%	25,689	26,027	26,369
0.42%	**25,689**	**26,238**	**26,798**
0.50%	25,689	26,338	27,003



Assessment

Demand Projection Process

- The population forecast, recent construction activity and assumptions about people per household were analyzed to generate a ten-year housing demand forecast.
- The distribution of household income was analyzed to understand what types of housing are financially accessible to current and future residents.
- Affordability thresholds were established by aligning income ranges with housing costs to not exceed 30% of adjusted gross income, a standard benchmark for housing affordability.
- These affordability bands were then used to define price targets for new housing, ensuring that future development aligns with the economic realities of the local population.

Assessment

Development Projection

- **The 2023 American Community Survey estimates Hastings has a 7% vacancy rate. However, this includes units that are unavailable because of condition issues or being seasonally occupied. The city's effective vacancy rate is approximately 4%, which is based on units available to rent or purchase.**
  - *A healthy vacancy rate that provides options in the market should be in the 5% to 7% range.*
- **To maintain a 0.42% annual growth by 2035 and increase options in the market, Hastings will need to produce over 900 units over the next 10 years.**
  - *This rate is higher than the past ten years but lower than the last five years.*
  - *Projects under construction or planned for the next year will account for 80+.*

	2025	2030	2035	Total
Population at End of Period	25,689	26,238	26,798	
Household Population at End of Period	24,764	25,293	25,833	
Average People Per Household	2.25	2.25	2.24	
Household Demand at End of Period	10,994	11,266	11,546	
Projected Vacancy Rate	4.2%	4.7%	5.2%	
Unit Needs at End of Period	11,477	11,823	12,180	
Replacement Need (total lost units)		120	100	**220**
Cumulative Need During Period		446	457	**903**
Average Annual Construction		86	91	**90**

Assessment

Development Program	2030	2035	Total
Total Renter Occupied	**223**	**183**	**406**
Less than $500 *<25% AMI*	69	57	126
$500 - $1,000 *25% AMI - 50% AMI*	59	48	106
$1,000 - $1,500 *50% AMI - 80% AMI*	59	48	107
$1,500+ *>80% AMI*	36	30	66
Total Owner Occupied	**223**	**274**	**497**
Less than $200,000 *<80% AMI*	109	134	243
$200,000 - $250,000 *80% - 110% AMI*	34	41	75
$250,000 - $350,000 *110% - 150% AMI*	42	52	94
Over $350,000 *>150% AMI*	38	47	85
Total Need	**446**	**457**	**903**

Area median income (AMI) calculations are based on HUD's 2025 estimates for Adams County median family income (MFI), $91,500 per year.

Development Program

- **This analysis assumes a 50/50 split between owner and renter construction over the next five years, then transitions to 60/40.**
  - *The city's current split is 60/40 but after decades of little to no rental construction the market for new rental will likely remain strong.*
- **New units coming online this year will address some of this demand and allow for move up housing.**
- **New owner-occupied construction will cost more than $250,000, causing demand for lower-cost units to be met either by existing housing units or heavily subsidized construction.**
- **Creating more variety in housing types can motivate households to place their $250,000 or less home on the market.**
- **The same is true in the rental market. Production of new rental units below $1,000 is nearly impossible but these units exist in the Hastings market.**
  - *Affordable rentals will not be fully met by the current supply and some assistance will be needed to meet demand.*

Assessment

55+ Housing Needs

- **The American Community Survey estimates 49% of owner-occupied households are over the age of 55 and just over 31% are over the age of 65.**
  - *Many of the households are living in the homes they raised their families in and the units may no longer meet their stage of life.*
- **Generations in their empty-nester and retirement years are interested in a greater variety of housing options then their parents.**
  - *Much of the demand will include independent living options - low maintenance homes with high amenities.*
- **If a low percentage (2.5% to 5%) of these households can be captured within Adams County, it would generate demand for over 230 units. While this number is beyond 903 units needed to support growth, these units could open up a small number of units in Hastings.**
  - *Hastings market may be larger than Adams County, but this provides a conservative estimate.*

Popular units among those 55 to 75 include:
- Downtown units
- Townhomes
- Duplexes
- Cottage court small lot single-family
- Accessory dwelling units

	2035 Projection (natural change)	People Per Household	Household Demand	Capture Rate	Unit Demand
55-64	3,103	2.00	1,552	5.0%	78
65-74	3,012	1.75	1,721	5.0%	86
75 and Over	3,673	1.25	2,939	2.5%	73
Total 55 and Over	9,789		6,212		237

Source: U.S. Census; RDG Planning &U Design, 2025

Strategic Housing Goals

Challenges & Opportunities

Aging Housing Stock

- Much of the city's housing stock was built before 1980, which provides a great source of naturally affordable housing. Maintenance of this housing is critical.

Aging Population

- Hastings population is aging, creating new demand for housing and workers to replace a retiring workforce that is likely not leaving the community.

Increasing Demand for Supportive Services

- Stakeholders noted a growing demand for supportive services that impact housing security. These include transportation, supportive housing, and mental health care. All of these factors impact housing security.

Market Perception Reset

- The market is beginning to return to "normal" with more houses units for sale and more rental options. Housing levels were at near crisis levels for so long that adjusting to a healthier market may take some time.

Challenges & Opportunities

Commuter Population

- A significant percentage of the workforce commutes into Hastings everyday. Not all of these workers will move to the city but housing options can increase these opportunities.

Non-Profit Developer

- The Housing Development Corporation can be an excellent resource for the community. As a non-profit it can fill gaps where the private market cannot be successful.

For Sale Inventory

- The number of homes for sale is beginning to return to pre-2020 levels but still remains low. Greater housing variety will be needed to entice existing homeowners to move.

Rental Inventory

- For the first time in decades, a substantial number of rental units are being added to the market. These units will slowly fill and meet an important demand; however, greater variety in the types of rental units is still needed.

Strategic Housing Goals

1. Hastings will have the variety of housing necessary to provide options for every stage of life.

2. Community leaders will continue to build partnerships for sharing risks and filling gaps in the housing market.

3. Local barriers will be removed to facilitate more housing variety.

4. Housing quality will be elevated to ensure safe housing for all residents.

5. The supply of housing will continue to increase to provide options for new and current residents.

Directions Forward

Directions Forward

Establish a funding pool to share risk on untested products

- **Housing Trust Fund**
- **Lending Consortium**
- **Housing Development Bonds**
- **Continued leveraging of existing sources**

Directions Forward

Build the capacity of the Housing Development Corporation

Financial and human capital should be provided to the Housing Development Corporation in order to expand programs such as:

- **Purchase rehab resale**
- **Rent to own**
- **Community land trust**

Directions Forward

Accessory Dwelling Unit - Maryville, MO

Update city codes.

Updates should focus on making the following easier to develop:

- **Small lot subdivisions**
- **Cottage courts**
- **Accessory Dwelling Units**
- **Smaller single-family homes**
- **Residential in commercial districts**

Directions Forward

Continue to use funding tools and matching dollars that support housing variety and workforce housing.

Hastings has used a variety of tools to support and encourage more housing construction. This has included TIF and other state and federal programs.
LB 840 is another tool for supporting housing production that is available but not currently used.

Directions Forward

Identify new funding sources to assist with housing reinvestment.

The city's existing housing stock is the best source of affordable housing. Maintaining these units is essential to maintaining a stock of affordable housing. Funding sources could include:

- **LB 840 Dollars**
- **Housing Development Fund**
- **Housing Trust Fund**
- **Federal HOME funds**

Case Study

Lincoln Nebraska

Rental Rehab Housing Improvement Program

The South of Downtown Neighborhood, located near the heart of Lincoln, Nebraska, is the city's most diverse neighborhood. In 2020, the neighborhood's population was 37% people of color, had a median household income of $21,100, and the neighborhood's households were 93% rental. That same year, a field inventory found that 43% of structures in the neighborhood were "deteriorating" or "dilapidated." The Lincoln City Council declared the South of Downtown area as "Extremely Blighted" on January 13, 2020.

Following this declaration, the City of Nebraska and NeighborWorks Lincoln partnered to improve the quality of affordable housing in the South of Downtown neighborhood through the development of a Rental Rehab Housing Improvement Program. The program was funded through the creation of a 20-year TIF district in the area, with no required match from property owners. The goals of the rental rehabilitation program were:

- Keep housing affordable while making long-term improvements in the housing stock
- Rehab 100 units per year for ten years

The program provides a grant of $15,000 per rental unit (apartment or single-family home) to property owners. The grant funding must be used to make structural improvements such as roof or foundation repair, new windows, or upgrades to HVAC systems. In exchange for the grant funding, the owner of the property agrees to keep the unit "affordable" (per HUD's definition of Fair Market Value) for at least 10 years.

When the program launched in August of 2022, it was wildly popular. For its first round of grant funding, over 250 applications, representing over 2,000 units, were received. 107 units were selected, located in eight structures in the South of Downtown neighborhood. The following year, 109 units received funding for structural improvements.

Directions Forward

Proactively extend public utilities to reduce costs for workforce housing or projects that increase the city's mix of housing types.

This may go beyond infrastructure and include site preparation and land assembly.

Partner with affordable housing developers to create additional rental housing for very-low income households.