

Multifaith Housing Initiative -- Ottawa

A presentation from the Poverty Working Group of the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa to the Housing Workshop, CUC ACM 2011. Ottawa First has been a key partner in a new Multifaith Housing Initiative that now has purchased and operates 43 units of affordable housing.

Some questions for presenters in Housing Session at ACM May 21, 2011

1. For which target population was/is your housing initiative developed?
Those with incomes of less than the 20th income percentile (about \$33,000). In fact, there are tenants with incomes of less than \$20K.
2. How large is this project? How many housing units?
10 units of the 119 one-bedroom condos were purchased by MHI to rent to low income households.
3. How and when did this initiative get started?
In 2003, St John the Evangelist Anglican Church decided to sell its parking lot to a developer who committed to build affordable condominiums. The developer agreed that some of the units (the number to be determined by MHI) would be sold to MHI for rental.
4. Who are your partners in this development?
The partnership was with the developer (Teron Inc), St John's Church, and three levels of government.
Is there a lead organization?
The developer assumed responsibility for the full development once the developer purchased the land.
5. How did you acquire the land for the development?
The developer not MHI purchased the land.
6. What are your sources of funding?

\$900K from 3 levels of government; \$350K mortgage; \$50K donations; \$200K loans.

7. What was your experience with NIMBYISM?
Because the development was a condo, there were only a small number of questions raised about the proposed rental units within the condo. However, since the development was completed, some owners believe falsely that any issues that arise in the condo are caused by tenants. Since the tenants are in different parts of the condo, most owners do not even know who are renters and who are owners.
8. What are your ongoing operating successes and challenges?
Successes - the building and units are lovely - only one of the 10 units has turned over in 3 years. There have been a small number of deficiencies by the builder but overall we have had very few repairs. The development won a CMHC award. Challenges - getting our voice heard by the condo owners. For example, the condo board wants to increase the condo fees to cover the costs of services that could be handled by volunteers. A condo that was to be affordable to the 40th income percentile is no longer so because the condo value has increased rapidly. The original price range was \$150K to \$208K. Condos are now selling for \$300K.
9. Is this your first housing project and would you do it again?
This was MHI's second housing project but the first of this type. The first was the purchase of existing affordable housing. Assuming a suitable level of government funding was available, MHI would definitely do this again. However, MHI would build in time and additional costs for delays. In terms of operating costs, the forecast operating costs were quite a bit lower than actual and so these would also be increased in order to have a more accurate assessment of financial viability.