

Newton has a diverse inventory of quality housing, including pre-World War II housing; single-family neighborhoods from a number of development periods; duplexes and townhomes; rental development including substantial apartment complexes; and innovative development like Chancery Court in the western part of the city.

~Newton CHAT Study

Housing serves as shelter from the elements, as both object and source of investment, as economic driver and employer, and as an essential part of the fabric of neighborhoods and the community. High quality housing is the life-blood of a strong, lively, and enduring community. Newton is a community with many attractive welcoming neighborhoods, which can offer a variety of housing types to meet the varying needs of the community. However, like all communities, there are some housing issues that must be addressed and can be over-come through a concerted effort. This chapter seeks to provide ways in which housing and neighborhoods can be central to growing Newton's population in the years to come.

In December 2011, a Community Housing Assessment Team (CHAT) Study was conducted through some grant and private funds. The CHAT study examined Newton demographics, growth trends, and current housing stock. In addition, focus group meetings were held to talk about the housing needs of the community.

Housing initiatives and things-to-do found in this comprehensive plan reflect and complement the recommendations of the [Newton Chat Report](#) by Martin H. Shukert (RDG Planning and Design).

As stated earlier, the first strategic objective, identified through community input, is to "Grow Newton's population, focusing on young families." Newton has both an aging population and stagnant population growth. It is interesting to note that around 30% of all owner-occupied houses in Newton are headed by a person 65 and older. By focusing



This chapter will provide focus on:

- Growing Newton's population
- Improving Newton's housing stock
- Creating neighborhood curb appeal
- Focus on housing needs

on housing options desired by young families, Newton will reverse the current demographic and population trends, grow the number of students in Newton's schools, and increase the community's vitality.

Newton's population has remained essentially the same since the 1960's. In 1960, Newton had a population of 15,381. Similarly, Newton's projected population for 2010 was around 15,250. Because of Newton's older population demographics, deaths are projected to exceed births over the next ten years. Therefore, without in-migration, Newton's population will decline moderately over the next ten years or so. (Source: Newton Chat Report).

Newton has adequate capacity to accommodate population growth without experiencing the growing pains that many of the closer-in Des Moines Metro communities are dealing with. There are undeveloped, though platted, residential subdivisions as well as adequate residentially zoned properties that could be easily divided. In addition, there is opportunity to improve Newton's housing stock by removing old, dilapidated housing and assemble nice development lots by combining multiple small lots which would be able to accommodate modern homes. Based on growth trends and the background analysis, it isn't likely that Newton would need to annex any significant pieces of land to accommodate new residential growth. Likewise, the Newton School system's facilities can easily handle additional student enrollment.

Recognizing that housing is a critical element of economic development, the community has rallied to begin addressing gaps in the housing stock. Newton is fortunate to have a non-profit entity, Newton Housing Development Corporation, that focuses on improving housing in Newton. In 2012, the Newton Housing Development Corporation has been working on the twelve recommendations found in the Newton CHAT Report.



The Housing Chapter of this comprehensive plan reflects and compliments the Newton CHAT Report. In addition, the following initiatives and things to do reflect the comments heard from citizens during the public input sessions and survey conducted in the Fall and Winter of 2011-2012.

Housing Initiatives:

Neighborhood Curb Appeal Initiative: Address property maintenance issues, encourage neighborhood pride, and assist citizens who have personal challenges in basic home maintenance.

Things to Do:



- Develop a minimum property maintenance code.
- Focus on the removal of unlivable housing units throughout neighborhoods.
- Start a Neighborhood Association Program to build social capital in the neighborhoods and provide neighborly accountability among homeowners.
- Focus on the revitalization of the Near-Northeast/Emerson Hough neighborhoods.
- Use historic preservation as a means for revitalization of older neighborhoods and growing citizen interaction.

For example, add historic markers in neighborhoods that tell Newton's story. In addition, tap into available grants and tax credit programs to assist owners of historic properties with improvement or repair projects.



Housing Options Initiative: Improve housing options by addressing gaps in housing types and developing niche housing styles.

Things to Do:



- Attract young families through the provision of desired housing and neighborhood styles.



- Encourage the development of student housing and build a college campus atmosphere.

- Develop a plan for Downtown with housing as a key component.

Improving housing options in the Newton Downtown will bring vitality to the area that hasn't been experienced for a long time. In addition, it would increase the value of the Downtown buildings by making the upper stories viable again. Of course, attention should be paid to handicapped accessibility and covered, off-street parking for people living Downtown are two issues that should be addressed.

- Enhance western housing options to support the portion of the Newton population that commutes to Des Moines for employment.

For many young families, the reality is that both parents work outside the home, and in this dynamic, it is often the case that at least one of those adults works in another community. In focusing on drawing young families to Newton, it would likely be beneficial to see housing development toward the western side of Newton to accommodate easy access to I-80 and Des Moines.

- Conduct a housing needs survey of large employers to determine what housing options are not provided for, seek developers to provide those housing options, and provide assistance in overcoming final hurdles for those projects.