SC 9 - Increasing Landlord Participation in Rental Assistance Programs

Project Lead:
Molly Link, Scott County CDA
mlink@scottcda.org
952.402.9022 ext. 222
www.scottcda.org

Description:
The Scott County Community Development Agency (CDA) is committed to the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agency’s goal of furthering fair housing and ultimately ending homelessness in Scott County. Like many suburban and rural counties, Scott Count has a growing homelessness and affordable housing problem, as well as many socioeconomically vulnerable populations, including the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and large Hispanic/Latino, Russian and Somali immigrant population.

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is the federal government’s primary program to help very low income families and individuals access decent, safe, and affordable housing. Vouchers are administered by local public housing agencies (in Scott County, the CDA serves as the PHA), and program participants can choose any housing that meets the minimum healthy and safety requirements of the program, and where the property owner or manager agrees to accept vouchers. In the current rental market, the number of rental property owners and managers in Scott County that accept Section 8 vouchers is continuing to decrease. Many are choosing to opt out of accepting Section 8 vouchers, or are converting what was once affordable or fair market housing units into luxury units. This trend is further exacerbating the problem of finding affordable housing in an already tight rental market.

This project is focused on discovering the barriers that discourage rental property owners and managers in Scott County from accepting Section 8 vouchers, identifying opportunities to correct misinformation or misperceptions of the program or the people who participate in it, creating a marketing strategy to encourage greater rental property owner and manager participation in the program in the future, and identifying other strategies to increase access to affordable housing in Scott County.

Key Issues, Questions, and Ideas for Exploration:

- For rental property owners and managers in Scott County who currently participate in the Section 8 voucher program, what motivates them to participate? What if any challenges or issues has participation in the program created, and how have they addressed these issues?
- For rental property owners and managers who do not currently participate in the Section 8 voucher program, what are the barriers or concerns—real or perceived—that discourage participation?
For rental property owners and managers who used to participate in the Section 8 voucher program but no longer do, why did they discontinue participation? What would need to happen for them to participate once again?

What are strategies or best practices to educate and engage rental property owners/managers about the program, how it works, and the importance/benefits of the program to the people it serves?

What other programs, policies, initiatives, or strategies can the CDA consider to increase participation of rental property owners/managers in the Section 8 voucher program, as well as maintain involvement from those that already participate?

What other programs, policies, initiatives, or strategies can the CDA consider to assist very low income families to have access to affordable housing in Scott County, particularly in locations with good access to transit and jobs?

How Will Student Work Be Used to Build Community Resiliency?

The CDA’s goal is to use the information gathered by students to retain current property owners who participate in the voucher program, and increase participation among those who currently do not participate, through a coordinated education and marketing campaign. In addition, the CDA will consider other strategies students identify to ensure that very low income families have access to all types and ranges of affordable housing in Scott County.

Existing Plans and Reports:

- Family Housing Fund, Owners/Managers Creating Opportunity: Analysis of Owner/Manager Feedback (2016)
- Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice: Twin Cities Region (2014)
- Addendum to the 2014 Regional AI (2017)
- Appendix to the Addendum to the 2014 Regional AI (2017)
- Governor’s Task Force on Housing, Tenant and Voucher Recommendations: State and Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Plans
  [www.mnhousing.gov/get/MHFA_1040835](http://www.mnhousing.gov/get/MHFA_1040835)

Potential Stakeholders and Partners:

- City rental licensing staff
- SCALE’s Live, Learn, Earn group
- Rental property owners and managers
- Community Action Partnership of Scott, Carver, Dakota Counties
- Housing Coalition/Coordinated Entry program (Dan Lauer-Schumacher, Housing Coordinator, Scott County)
- Scott County Section 8 clients

To learn more about this project or discuss how to integrate it into a UMN course or an individual student project (such as a culminating experience, capstone, master’s project, or independent study), please contact Sarah Tschida or Mike Greco with the Resilient Communities Project at [rcp@umn.edu](mailto:rcp@umn.edu).