Ferry County Community Health Improvement Plan

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Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Process

Framework

The Ferry County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) process was based on Results Based Accountability (RBA) with some adaptations. This framework for planning was developed by Mark Friedman and described in the books *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough* and *Turning Curves.* This framework was used in Ferry County to identify indicators to track progress over time for the selected population level goal statement, develop strategies to work towards impacting the population results, and brainstorm and choose programs to help reach the population level goal statement.

During the Ferry County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which was completed in February 2023, a workgroup was formed with members who live and work in Ferry County. These individuals were familiar with the varying issues Ferry County residents face and worked together to determine the greatest needs of Ferry County. Upon completing of the CHNA, the members of this group were invited to work on the corresponding CHIP.

Choosing Data Indicators

From the CHNA, three priorities emerged: transportation, housing, and mistrust in healthcare & public health. Prior to setting the overarching goal statement, data related to these three topic areas were presented to the workgroup to provide additional background information on the identified issues, help choose a focus area, and begin a discussion about relevant progress metrics for the CHIP work. From these data, the workgroup discussed which were most relevant to the needs identified in Ferry County and a ranking system was subsequently used to determine to what degree the datasets were appropriate to measure progress related to the corresponding topics, based on the following powers:

- Communication Power – Is the indicator easily understandable by the public?
- Proxy Power – Does the indicator help define the goal statement, and can the indicator be a proxy for other measures related to the goal statement?
- Data Power – Is there high-quality data on a timely basis?

Using this process, two indicators were selected. Both related to housing, therefore housing was selected as the issue of focus for the Ferry County CHIP. The two indicators selected were:

1. Number of apartment housing
2. Housing cost burden

Defining the Population Level Goal Statement

After selecting housing as the priority issue through the indicator discussion, the workgroup further narrowed the focus for the CHIP. Given the broad nature of addressing the housing issue in Ferry County and the finite resources available to address it, the workgroup determined that the most important aspects were safety and sustainability of housing in Ferry County. Therefore, the population level goal statement chosen was:

Residents and potential residents, including temporary residents, in Ferry County have access to and awareness of safe and sustainable* housing.

*The word "sustainable" is meant to encompass aspects of affordability, sanitation, accessibility, security, and capacity for internet/phone connection.

The Story Behind the Curve

To determine the story behind the data or "curve", the group was asked to consider what makes access to housing a significant issue in Ferry County. The four areas of consideration were:

- Knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs.
- Social and environmental determinants of health.
- Policies and systems.
- Inequities or "isms".

Through the group's discussion and brainstorming exercise, the following ideas were brought forward:

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs

- There is inconsistent communication about availability in Ferry County.
- Available housing is often found on "who you know" basis.
- Belief that current residents do not want housing to expand near them or impact their direct surroundings, i.e. "not in my backyard".
- Recognition of the high costs for new construction.
- Understanding that there are a small number of local building contractors.
- Recognition that the cost of homeowner insurance is increasing.

Social and Environmental Determinants of Health

- Recognition that there is a lack of housing overall.
- Understanding that some occupied housing is ill-suited to living.
- Poverty.

Policies and Systems

- Recognition that Ferry County is a remote area for development.
- Agencies and organizations struggle to hire qualified applicants with limited housing options available for incoming employees.
- There is a lack of clear cross-community communication channels.
- Emphasized the housing need in the Republic area, although the issue is across the county.
- Minimal road and transportation infrastructure inhibits access to housing.
- Currently available housing is purchased at high prices.
- Property taxes are increasing.
- Zoning and infrastructure add barriers to building new housing.
- Having a minimal number of public water and sewer systems inhibits the ability to build new housing, especially outside city limits.
- There is a new statewide accessory dwelling unit law designed to increase rental units.

Inequities or "isms"

- There is low socioeconomic status across the county.
- Perceived high prevalence of "not in my backyard" mentality, especially related to building multi-unit housing in Ferry County.

Determining Strategies

Strategies to increase access to reasonable housing were identified during the CHNA. Through discussions at the three CHIP meetings, the workgroup further brainstormed and refined strategies to impact the overarching goal that everyone has access to and awareness of safe and sustainable housing.

Conversations centered on these two aspects; therefore, the strategies chosen by the workgroup were:

1. Increase available housing options for everyone in Ferry County.
2. Centralize communication and information pertaining to available housing.

Identifying Programs within Each Strategy

Upon defining the strategies, the workgroup considered several potential programs to positively affect the corresponding strategies. The workgroup brainstormed a list of programs by considering:

- Existing but currently under-utilized or under-funded programs.
- Research or evidence-based programs.
- Low cost or no cost programs.
- Off-the-wall programs.
- Programs which might work but require more information.

To narrow the possible programs, ranked-choice voting was used to subsequently determine the program of focus within each strategy. When ranking the program ideas, workgroup members were asked to consider the feasibility for the program's success through partnerships and county/community buy in; values of the program as related to the overall goal statement; specific and realistic expectations of change over the next 3 years; and leverage to create change through the program within the county.

The list of brainstormed programs corresponding with each strategy can be seen in ranked order below and in Figure 1:

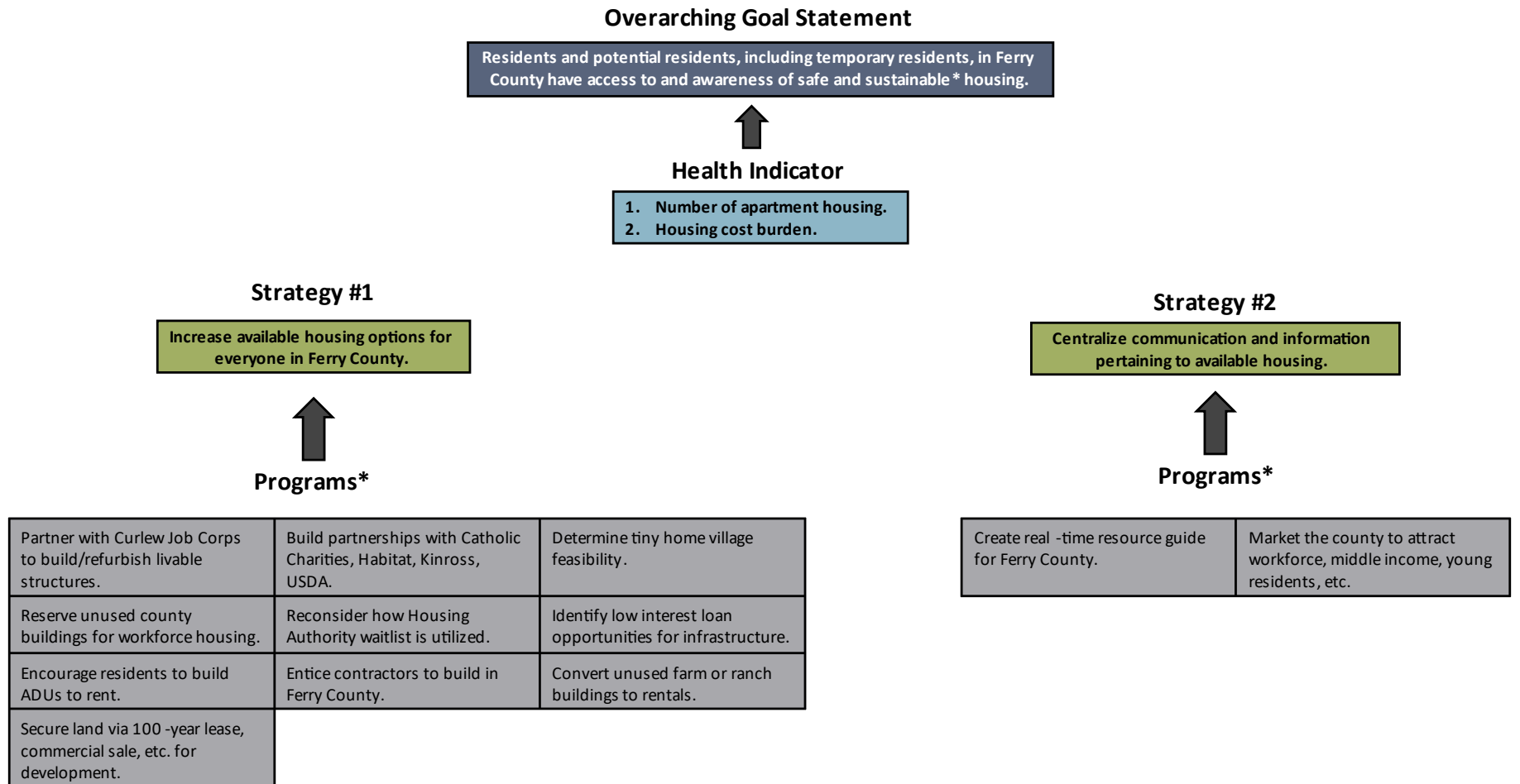### Increase Available Housing Options for Everyone in Ferry County

1. Partner with the Curlew Job Corps to build and/or refurbish livable structures in Ferry County.
2. Build partnerships with organizations/agencies committed to increasing housing, such as Catholic Charities, Habitat for Humanity, US Department of Agriculture, Kinross etc.
3. Conduct feasibility study for tiny home village in Ferry County.
4. Work with the county to reserve unused/vacated county buildings for workforce housing.
5. Reconsider how the Housing Authority waitlist is utilized and structured in Ferry County to potentially allow for need-based decisions versus on a first-come first-served basis.
6. Identify low-interest loans for homeowner infrastructure (septic systems, wells, etc.).
7. Encourage residents to build accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to increase rental availability.
8. Explore ways to entice contractors to build in Ferry County.
9. Encourage property owners to convert unused farm or ranch buildings to livable rental units.
10. Secure land via 100-year leases, commercial sale, etc. for development.

Centralize Communication and Information Pertaining to Available Housing

1. Create a real-time resource guide inclusive of housing opportunities, community services, etc.
2. Market Ferry County to non-residents in state and beyond to attract workforce, middle income, young residents, etc.

Figure 1.

Ferry County Community Health Improvement Plan Outline

Overarching Goal Statement

Residents and potential residents, including temporary residents, in Ferry County have access to and awareness of safe and sustainable* housing.

Health Indicator

1. Number of apartment housing.
2. Housing cost burden.

Strategy #1

Increase available housing options for everyone in Ferry County.

Programs*

Partner with Curlew Job Corps to build/refurbish livable structures.	Build partnerships with Catholic Charities, Habitat, Kinross, USDA.	Determine tiny home village feasibility.
Reserve unused county buildings for workforce housing.	Reconsider how Housing Authority waitlist is utilized.	Identify low interest loan opportunities for infrastructure.
Encourage residents to build ADUs to rent.	Entice contractors to build in Ferry County.	Convert unused farm or ranch buildings to rentals.
Secure land via 100 -year lease, commercial sale, etc. for development.		

Strategy #2

Centralize communication and information pertaining to available housing.

Programs*

Create real -time resource guide for Ferry County.	Market the county to attract workforce, middle income, young residents, etc.

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Partners Who May Have a Role to Play

After brainstorming different programs that might work to address the population result, the workgroup brainstormed partners who might be useful in and wish to participate in accomplishing these tasks. More partners may be added, however the initial list identified the following partners:

- Better Health Together
- Catholic Charities
- Colville Confederated Tribes
- Colville Indian Housing Authority
- Curlew Job Corps
- Department of Commerce
- Empire Health Foundation
- Ferry County Commissioners
- Ferry County Health
- Ferry County Public Works
- Ferry County Sunrise
- Habitat for Humanity
- Indian Health Services
- Lake Roosevelt Community Health Center
- Local legislators
- NCW Libraries
- NEW Alliance Counseling
- Northeast Tri County Health District
- Rural Resources
- School districts
- Spokane Teachers Credit Union (STCU)
- Tri County Economic Development District (TEDD)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture

Next Steps

After further research and discussion with partners to determine feasibility, the workgroup will outline action plans for the top ranked program under each strategy. All remaining programs under each strategy will be tabled until either sufficient progress is made on the initially selected programs, or the first program is determined to be impractical due to insurmountable barriers or constraints.

Performance measures will be developed to track program progress within the CHIP context and the CHIP workgroup will continue to meet and provide updates on program progress. The leadership and effort for each program, however, may be assumed by various agencies and organizations within the CHIP workgroup whose missions are related or who have an interest in the program area. CHIP milestones will be shared publicly so those interested can follow the progress and see how their involvement in the community-based process makes a difference.