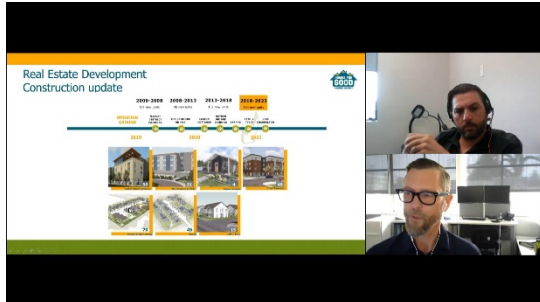


While the recent opening of the Commons at MLK received much public attention, it is only the most recent of several permanent supported housing projects now or soon to open that are operated by Homes for Good, the Lane County Housing Authority, according to Jacob Fox, the Executive Director of Homes for Good who discussed the many agency efforts at the March 4 City Club program.



The Commons at MLK is different from some of the other projects, in that it offers continuous on-site medical and mental health support in an expansion of the “housing first” model which has proved effective in reducing homelessness across the nation. The MLK project will support 51 individuals and does not require that they resolve their mental health or substance abuse issues before being eligible for housing. Besides being an important social step in reducing homelessness, Fox said, the project makes good economic sense. While it will

cost about \$20 thousand annually per resident to provide support, the effort means almost \$50 thousand a year in annual spending will be avoided by the medical, mental health and criminal justice systems.

Other permanent supported housing projects open or planned for the metropolitan area include a similar project on Charnelton Street, the Market District Commons at 5<sup>th</sup> and Oak, the Soreng facility in west Eugene, a project for homeless families at 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Tyler, a project for homeless veterans in Cottage Grove, and a 70-unit project planned for Springfield next to Fred Meyer. In total the agency manages over 650 units in Lane County. In addition, the agency provides rental assistance and supportive services, including weatherization.

When asked about the causes of homelessness, Mr. Fox said the biggest driver is a supply side issue. He said that in-migration added about 50 thousand people seeking homes to the county each year, while only 25 thousand units of housing are being built. He pointed to raising construction costs as a major actor in the relatively low rate of construction. He added, however, that most people who become homeless are not those coming in from other states, but rather the vast majority are local residents who experience issues that result in homelessness. He described the inflow of people becoming homeless as “relatively small.”

He said the agency maintains 40 different waiting lists for housing or housing assistance. The best way to follow them and get on the waiting list is through the agency website <https://www.homesforgood.org/> or by following the agency on the various social media platforms.

Mr. Fox does not anticipate that the agency will be involved in developing the “missing middle” housing contemplated by the recently approved program under Senate Bill 2001. Homes for Good, he said, finds it more efficient to develop larger scale programs, although he said that developing any housing in any way possible is a step to reducing the under supply of housing.



He was asked to distinguish between workforce housing and affordable housing. He responded that the City of Eugene project at the former downtown LCC center, which is designed as work force housing, is planned to serve residents earning between 80 and 100 percent of median income, while affordable housing is designed to serve those earning less than 60 percent of median income.

Finally, he called for development of a publicly supported shelter facility, to supplement the facility at the Eugene Mission, although he acknowledged that creating such a facility would probably require the voters to agree to additional taxes to fund a public shelter.