

Evaluate Affordable Housing for Teachers

Housing is a basic need of all people that, over recent years, has become harder to achieve affordably for many individuals in Azerbaijan. Due to the developing disparity between wages and housing costs, employees in lower paid occupations, such as teachers, have found it difficult to continue living in the communities where they work.

Not all proposed projects are built due to an array of issues that will be described. The findings discuss how the programs have been implemented, whether the programs successfully achieved their goal of creating teacher housing in their area, and lessons learned from proposed programs that were not implemented. The analysis evaluates the relationship between increasing housing costs and low teacher salaries, leading to difficulties with recruitment and retention. To combat this problem, school districts and developers have created teacher housing projects to help subsidize the cost of living for local educators. The programs aim to encourage school district staff, mainly teachers, to remain in their positions, and provide the opportunity for educators to live in the community where they teach.

There are many areas to consider for further research about the development of teacher housing projects by school districts, either directly or in partnership with developers. One may be how the developments have affected teacher or workforce retention. An analysis should be completed regarding whether districts with affordable housing projects for teachers have shown an increase in teacher retention rates as a result of implementation. Districts with a high rent cost burden and with a low or neutral cost burden should be included to determine whether rental price in comparison to salary is a stronger determiner of low teacher retention. Currently, districts and developers in Baku are considering implementation of affordable housing projects to attract and retain teachers, and a study on the impact of the developments could help provide further evidence in support of investments in construction of teacher housing projects. Research should also be conducted on the impact of high student debt on the use of subsidized housing. Other demographic factors should also be studied, including marital status of those using subsidized housing and the average size of the household. Additionally, spousal income and the number of children would impact the calculation of affordability for units. In creating units to suit the end user, it would be helpful to gain a better understanding of the standard situation of a teacher using affordable housing.

Affordable housing developments for educators can incorporate private funds, secure bonds, use Low-Income Housing Tax Credits or, or secured loans, among other financial solutions. Each new development should consider the best implementation process for the area, and whether to build the development all at once or in phases. Developers and districts must consider long term financial sustainability over the life of the development when determining the funding structure and eligibility requirements, and whether such a financial structure would achieve the goal of affordable teacher housing leading to teacher retention. To begin the process of planning a new development, a district and/or developer must consider three main components of the project: land, funding, and political/community support. The project leader should consider what land is available, whether they will purchase a plot, or if land can be donated to the project. Upon choosing land and developing a project timeline, the project leader needs to consider federal, state, and local regulations controlling land use and zoning.

In addition to a lack of access to affordable housing that teachers face, government support for preparation and retention of education professionals has dwindled. Research has shown that teacher

preparation programs and teacher pipelines are vital to the continuation of preparation of high-quality teaching professionals.

Teachers often make a salary that is out of the maximum range to qualify for a standard affordable housing unit, but still does not allow for saving to purchase a home in the future.

The issue remains that new teachers may qualify for affordable housing at first, but will quickly lose their spot as they stay in their position and earn raises that rise above the low-income threshold, and seasoned teachers will not qualify for affordable housing at all. Yet their salaries do not support market rate rents without being rent burdened.

As more school districts seek to build affordable housing units for the school district workforce to combat decreased teacher retention rates and rising housing costs, the information developed in this research can be used by school districts as they begin planning and developing their units. Across the country, school districts have begun to allot money to build affordable housing, specifically for teachers and other school district staff, in order keep them from leaving the area, or to help to shortening their commute. The intention of building the housing units is to aid school district employees who face challenges in securing affordable housing in the area where they work, and to incentivize them to remain living locally, despite the unaffordability of housing.

Taking on the development and implementation of a teacher housing project can be a costly investment for both the district or developer and/or the community, depending on the funding structure. Communities that are considering implementing a teacher housing program may benefit from reviewing and comparing what has already been done, and what has worked well for other areas. This can provide potential routes to implementation of a successful teacher housing development. The needs across districts vary substantially, and districts need to consider their employees when implementing policies or projects. In building all types of affordable housing, developers also must consider the sustainability of the project and the ability to continue to fund the unit at a lower than the fair market value rent . Without a plan for sustainability, the project may deteriorate when there is still a need for it.

A last consideration in developing a housing program is developing political and community support. As has been the case in many failed projects, community support of the development can halt the project, or propel it to completion. Opposition can arise out of issues with location, changes to school structure, financial consequences to the community, traffic, or