

+++++++INTRODUCTION+++++++

While urban economic growth has positively affected many residents of Indianapolis, it has also displaced or financially strained many of our middle and low income families. Since 2010, 50 new housing complexes have been built in downtown Indianapolis. Of those complexes, most one bedroom apartments start at \$1,300 per month¹. The majority of residents within these complexes make \$80,000 per year or higher². Given that Indianapolis Public Schools starting salary is half of that, few teachers, if any, can afford to live within the Center Township³. Of the teachers who do choose to live within the limits of Circle City, they must sacrifice either safety or savings.

Great teachers are scarce. Safe and affordable housing is scarce. Indianapolis can address both of these challenges with thoughtful, research-based initiatives. By securing safe, affordable housing for teachers, we believe that Indianapolis will have more schools and communities that thrive.

The Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellows are a diverse group of teachers from many school districts, charter schools, and innovation schools in Indianapolis. We have personally felt tension as we advance in our careers and aim to secure safe and affordable housing.

Our proposal for teacher housing is modeled after work done in several cities across the country that have renovated and restored buildings to create teacher housing using public-private partnerships. In Philadelphia, its new teacher village was fully rented six months prior to completion⁴. That success helped convince Baltimore to create a similar project. Baltimore opened subsidized apartments for new teachers, Miller's Court, in a previously abandoned plant building. Not only did it provide housing to teachers significantly below market rate but it also included useful amenities such as a copy center⁵. This housing has helped to spark development in the surrounding area.

Schools have also had success with district-owned housing. Santa Clara Unified School district provided 70 units of subsidized housing to teachers and is already planning to open a second, 100-unit, complex to open in 2020⁶. Although the complex has a seven-year residency limit, there is a 30-person waiting list. Another initiative, in Dare County, North Carolina had 36 subsidized units for teachers⁷. A survey done after the housing initiative "found that affordable housing was the biggest factor in teachers' desire to continue working in the region."⁸

Great teachers deserve great housing options. Indianapolis can leverage lessons learned from other communities who are doing this well in order to attract and retain effective teachers in the city.

Emanuel Harper, Herron High School

My first year teaching, I earned \$32,000. Taxes took one third of that, my apartment took another. This caused unbelievable stress. In the midst of first year teaching tribulations, I struggled to pay my bills and purchase necessary items for my classroom.

These stress factors were compounded by my commute. The only apartment I could afford was 25 minutes away from my school. As I drove home, I thought about how I could have used that time lesson planning, grading, or participating in activities I enjoy. This commute also prevented me from attending many after-school events. I felt disconnected from the students I served each day.

Through networking, I met an administrator who worked to find affordable housing for her employees. I now live in the same community as my students. We share similar experiences with the cultural backdrop of downtown Indianapolis. This has reinforced my belief that it is foundational for teachers to have a connection to the people, culture, and institutions that surround the students and schools they serve.

+++++++RECOMMENDATIONS+++++++

Rationale: Great teachers support their communities. Providing teachers with affordable options allows teachers to not only have safe, affordable and convenient housing, but also the opportunity to truly be involved in their community.

1: Partner with organizations such as NearIndy and the Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership (INHP) to offer affordable homeownership and leasing options.

- + Teacher feedback indicates that affordable housing options, for both lease and purchase, are important factors in retention decisions. Teachers in their first four years of teaching often receive incomes far below what can secure quality housing in the open market. Community partnerships with organizations such as Near East Area Renewal (NEAR) would help offer affordable options to teachers while also continuing to develop Indianapolis communities. This program could provide opportunities to both teachers within Indianapolis Public Schools and/or local charter schools.
- + Teachers who participate in the homeownership program could be asked to commit to longer contracts (five years). This would provide school districts with another incentive that can be utilized to attract and retain great teachers.

Kelsey Pison, Clarence Farrington Elementary

I am a second grade teacher in Indianapolis Public Schools on the West side. I have struggled greatly to find housing. When my husband and I married, we looked for housing that was both affordable and within proximity to my job. During my first year in IPS, I was in the lowest pay bracket on the salary schedule. My husband, a medical student, had no income and mounting student loans.

With just my salary, our housing options were severely limited. Our apartment ended up being in a high-crime area. We were optimistic about our housing, but after just five months, our apartment was burgled. While the property theft was upsetting, the loss of security in our home was detrimental to our well-being. We made the decision to end our lease early, thus triggering extra fines. After that, we moved in with my parents, far from my school. After six months of saving everything we could, we were able to move into a new apartment. We are now in a much safer neighborhood, but also spend hundreds of dollars above our housing budget.

I wish we had the opportunity to purchase a home at an affordable price within proximity to my job. We would have had less financial and mental stress if affordable, safe housing had been an option during my time as a new teacher in the district.

Rationale: A housing community for teachers would decrease the stress of a lengthy commute while increasing opportunities for life balance and community involvement. Communal work spaces in a “teacher village” would help teachers feel less isolated in their own work and strengthen the overall educational quality for students as teachers develop with feedback and collaboration with their peers.

2: Develop an affordable-housing “teacher village,” a community of teachers that would encourage educational collaboration and contribute to the revitalization of the city.

- + A housing initiative where teachers live near other teachers would increase a sense of belonging. The area should be close to local schools so teachers can be more actively involved in their schools by attending sporting events and after-school activities. Relationships thus would be more readily established with students and families outside of school.
- + The design of the “teacher village” should include communal meeting spaces and work spaces for professional growth opportunities in order for teachers from different schools to work together.
- + The “teacher village” could also include partnerships with local businesses such as a coffee shops, grocery stores, fitness centers, restaurants, etc. to create a desirable community that would develop a stronger work-life balance for teachers and families.

+++++++CONCLUSION+++++++

Affordable and safe housing options for teachers near the schools and communities they serve benefit teachers, students, school districts, and communities. Initiatives such as Apartment Complex Structures and “teacher villages” not only offer these housing options, they also bring about a sense of community among teachers and allow a connection with the communities they serve.

Removing barriers to affordable, safe homes near schools will allow teachers to live more balanced lives while continuing to serve our students with excellence. In light of the unique housing limitations of Indianapolis and the success of teacher villages in similar communities, our recommendations serve as sensible solutions for the housing challenges for teachers.

+++++++ **2016-2017 TEACH PLUS POLICY FELLOWS** ++++++

Becky Maiki
Kirby Selle
Maddie Denton
Natalie Hines
Meg Amarante
Kelsey Pison
Ryan Little

+++++++ **TEACH PLUS STAFF** ++++++

Elsie Owolo, Indiana Policy Manager
Anna Smith, Teach Plus Indiana Summer Fellow

+++++ **ENDNOTES** +++++

¹ Bartner, Amy. (2016). More Can Afford Downtown Indy Rents Than Others Nationwide. Indy Star. Retrieved from www.indystar.com/story/life/2016/07/09/who-can-afford-live-new-downtown-apartment/86809224

² See Endnote 1

³ Indianapolis Public Schools Teacher Salary Schedule. (2017). Indianapolis Public Schools. Retrieved from www.myips.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=44580&dataid=24556&FileName=2016-2017%20Teacher%20Salary%20Schedule.pdf

⁴ Oxford Mills Apartment Complex. Retrieved from theoxfordmills.com

⁵ Miller's Court Apartment Complex. Retrieved from Millerscourt.com

⁶ Palomino, Joaquín. (2016). Teacher Housing Helps Educators Stay Put Amid Silicon Valley Boom. San Francisco Chronicle. Retrieved from www.sfchronicle.com/education/article/Teacher-housing-helps-educators-stay-put-amid-7463584.php

⁷ Ball, Julie. (2015). Teacher Job Offer Comes with Perk — A Place to Live. Citizen-Times. Retrieved from www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2015/06/30/teacher-job-offer-comes-perk-place-live/29499961

⁸ See Endnote 6

TEACHPLUS.ORG