

Nov 10, 2011

City of Rapid City
300 Sixth Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57701
Phone: (605) 394-4110
FAX: (605) 394-6793

Lemmon Ave “Neighborhood of Choice Project” background:

The 706 Lemmon Avenue property was a vacant and blighted house located in North Rapid City. Using the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) passed down from congress’s stimulus program HERA (Housing and Economic Recovery Act) NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources demolished the structure and landscaped the property into a community garden for the neighborhood.

NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources has been working with the residents of Lemmon Avenue to establish a “Neighborhood of Choice” over the past two years, originally asked by the Rapid City Police Department to bring our services to this neighborhood. Since that time we have partnered with the City of Rapid City, its officials, local corporations and nonprofits to make the revitalization of Lemmon Avenue a reality. For the last two years block club has been addressing the needs of their neighborhood to which they have had many successes. For example, the block club recruited volunteers and painted three homes on Lemmon Avenue for the “Paint the Town” event each year. The residents are also continuing to work hard on many other important projects that will make this neighborhood stronger and more united. These projects are focused on ways to decrease crime by including improved lighting and fencing options. NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources has also partnered with Black Hills Power each of the previous two years on a winterization project where they are involved in helping three deserving homeowners winterize their homes. The winterization includes insulating windows, doors, and water heaters to conserve on the heating costs for the residents.

NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources selected to create a “Neighborhood of Choice” in the Lemmon Avenue neighborhood to help lower crime by helping establish community involvement and community pride. We plan to continue helping the residents transform this neighborhood from its current state, into a neighborhood that workforce families **choose** to live in. At the present time, the neighborhood has had many problems with crime and gang related activity. The purpose of the “Neighborhood of Choice” is to create opportunities for the residents. NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources provides access to resources including the “Neighborhood Stabilization Program” to help in building a more sustainable neighborhood safe for families to live in.

Description of Request:

NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources is respectfully requesting the City of Rapid City to accept the deed for the land on 706 Lemmon Ave for public use as a community garden and in exchange for the deed to the property located on 820 Lemmon Ave. The City of Rapid City would be agreeing to comply with the “Neighborhood Stabilization Program” restrictions not to rebuild a home on 706 Lemmon Ave for the fifteen year restriction timeframe. The City of Rapid City is currently incurring the cost watering the community garden. NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources has been and will continue to be involved with every aspect of the resident’s community garden. At this point the project has been a very successful model, which has brought many residents together. The residents have learned and are continuing to learn how to grow fruits and vegetables as well as making headway on the goals they set out to accomplish: bringing neighbors together and making their community safer.

NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources has helped manage the garden, helping to assign plots, making sure the garden is being cared for, and organizing other aspects of the garden. At this point, the residents have taken over more of these duties and it has become resident run garden. The residents will also be asked to create a set of bylaws about the garden, for example what can and can not be grown there and when the garden must be winterized.

Project Proposal for 820 Lemmon Ave:

The proposed plan for 820 Lemmon Ave is currently in a research and development stage. NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources plans to take the existing structure and use it as a “Green Project”. We will partner with Black Hills Power and Light and Fred Thurston Architecture to train and educate contractors and the public on “Sustainable Green Building Practices”. NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources plans to follow all building code throughout the process as well as work closely with the cities building inspectors. We will also verify that the structure is out of the flood plain by hiring an engineering firm to confirm. NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources feels that simply building affordable housing for low-income residents is not enough. Our organization understands the nature of complex, overlapping social, economic, and environmental problems and we are committed to responding to them in a holistic manner. A sustainable green building practice provides the necessary structure to respond to these problems and ultimately build healthier, more efficient, and environmentally sustainable housing and community.

Green building is defined as a process that creates buildings and supporting infrastructure that:

- Minimizes the use of resources,
- Reduces harmful effects on the environment, and
- Provides healthier environments for the residents and families.

An affordable green building definition builds off the existing definition by adding that green building practices should not create undue cost burden for low-income residents. Among the most common green techniques being used by NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources are:

- Compact fluorescent lighting,
- ENERGY STAR appliances,
- Low flow fixtures and dual flush toilets,
- Environmentally preferable products,
- Local sources for materials,
- Recycling construction materials and minimizing site waste,
- Homeowner awareness education, and
- Use of other green building: Geo-thermal, solar panels, etc....

Some of the challenges for NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources are:

- Access to an affordability of certain green products and systems,
- Staff and contractor access and capacity,
- Federal, state, and local government regulations,
- Qualifying for certain green affordable funding programs, and
- Homebuyer awareness

Even with these challenges present, we are incorporating as many feasible green aspects as possible in our affordable housing projects. NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources is committed to the individual, organizational, community, and global benefits of building green.

Green building practices have numerous direct and indirect benefits at all levels of geography, including global, regional, community, and individual. At a global level, green building practices help protect and conserve natural resources by reducing demand for and improving utilization of virgin materials. Reduced demand for energy through more energy efficient practices can help stem climate change.

At a regional and community levels, green-built housing can help increase local economic growth by encouraging use of local and regional materials, which keeps money and tax dollars in the community. In addition, using of green practices can help protect and preserve open space, increase transportation options, reduce solid

waste, minimize strain on local infrastructure, improve management of storm water, and reduce water pollution, improve air quality, and enhance community well-being by planning for growth.

For individuals, green housing can provide residents long-term cost savings through efficiencies incorporated in the design of the home. Besides decreased financial costs, green build houses offer a healthier and more comfortable indoor environment for families.

Green building can be challenging due to the higher initial capital costs, contractor capacity and access, added complexity, local regulations, and lack of understanding and familiarity with green products, systems, and the development process. Although there are challenges, many local building codes in Rapid City already require certain green practices such as water efficiency standards, protection of environmentally sensitive lands, durable materials, and others. Thus, that is the reason it is so important that we use this project to educate contractors, individuals, and other agencies on the best building practices, so that we can move forward to build an environmentally conscious building community.

NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources is committed to creating sustainable affordable housing in Rapid City and Western South Dakota. It is important to educate contractors, the public and other agencies on the best green build practices, so we can move forward to foster an environmentally conscious building community, NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources is therefore respectfully requesting the City of Rapid City to accept the deed for the land on 706 Lemmon Ave for public use as a community garden in exchange for the deed to the property located on 820 Lemmon Ave.

Respectfully submitted,

Josh Christiansen
Deputy Executive Director
NeighborWorks® Dakota Home Resources
605-578-1401 phn
605-578-1405 fax