

Prairie Pointe

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

updated July 13, 2023

Does Shakopee need this type of affordable housing?

Many families in Shakopee are paying more than they can afford for rent or having a hard time - even with financial assistance - finding something affordable for them. In Shakopee, 85% of workers earn less than \$68,000 which is the average income needed to afford a new home. And two-thirds of workers earn less than is needed to rent an average priced apartment.

What does Beacon mean by “affordable?”

Prairie Pointe is intended to serve families who make 50% or less of the area median income (AMI). Some of the homes will be for families who make 30% or less than the AMI, which is about \$35,000 for a family of four. Rental assistance will be incorporated, creating an opportunity for people who have experienced housing instability or homelessness to rebuild credit and achieve housing stability.

Why does Beacon build homes like Prairie Pointe?

Beacon is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. As a collaborative of congregations united in action our mission is to create homes and advance equitable housing. Our vision is that all people have a home. We believe that stable homes transform lives and communities.

How do you keep your apartment buildings secure?

We are committed to the safety and security of the residents and to being good neighbors. To ensure resident safety, Prairie Pointe will be a controlled-access building with professional property managers and support staff who specialize in working with residents and create a sense of community within the building. Additionally, we work with local partners, including law enforcement, to promote community safety.

Have neighbors had an opportunity to weigh in on Prairie Pointe?

In the challenging early days of COVID, after City and State-declared states of emergency, when Beacon could not proceed with a planned regular neighborhood meeting, Beacon reached out to the City of Shakopee to seek guidance on what the City neighborhood process should be. City staff designed, led, and managed a neighborhood engagement process that included the City providing ordinance-required notice to neighbors within certain radius of the site, and offering City and Beacon staff phone numbers, website for comments, and related materials.

In addition, Beacon sent its own introduction letters and flyered neighboring properties. Per City staff, in response, over 60 comments were received before the 2020 Planning Commission meeting. In addition, Beacon staff engaged directly with neighbors on their comments and suggestions. Additional comments were shared by over 70 area residents ahead of the June City Council meeting along with nearly two hours of neighbors' testimony. The Shakopee mayor noted that he had never seen this amount of feedback, for or against on any proposal that had come before the City. Beacon modified final design and plans for the building based on neighborhood and City feedback.

How have neighbors informed Prairie Pointe's design?

We listen carefully to and are appreciative of the concerns neighbors express to us about a new apartment building appearing in their neighborhood. To respond to expressed neighbors' concerns we added a privacy fence, a mix of evergreen trees, and a fence to the playground for children's safety. Sometimes opposition to affordable housing comes from misinformation and anxieties of what 'might happen.' Beacon works hard to be responsive in design and approach to the building, management, and operations.

What sort of funding does it take to build affordable housing?

Typically federal, state, and local resources are needed to successfully build and deliver affordable housing, and this often takes more than two years to secure. In addition to the public investment, private resources often help cover the costs before construction starts.

Why hasn't construction begun yet?

The process to build affordable housing is a journey that takes a tremendous effort that is not always visible to the community. When the site was secured in 2020, the focus turned to applying for funding that typically comes from a variety of private and public sources. These resources often take more than two years to secure through the various competitive limited opportunities that exist.

Where is Prairie Pointe located?

Prairie Pointe is located at 1760 4th Ave E, Shakopee, Minnesota.

How do we learn more about the building design?

Prairie Pointe will be a three-story building, making efficient use of the land and creating more greenspace for residents and neighbors to enjoy. The additional greenspace allows for a larger play area for young children. The design also enables us to offer a generous community room, activity rooms, and staff office and meeting spaces.

The design will include a sloped roof and high-quality brick, siding and window materials. The exterior color palette will be chosen to complement the surrounding neighborhood. Bay windows, dormers and decorative entrance canopies add interest and detail. A mix of evergreens will provide landscape screening between the south side of the building and adjacent homes. A large front yard with attractive trees, shrubs, lawn, and a rain garden with native plants enhance the front entrance and pedestrian experience. New street trees in the Sarazin Street boulevard will complete the parkway experience along the public sidewalk. A protected children's play area and garden are tucked in the sheltered inside corner of the building, away from the street. The existing fence all along the east lot line and new six-foot privacy fence along the south property line will define the property boundary. Additional new trees in the existing parking lot will add shade and enrich the overall appeal of the site.

What type of services will be provided to the residents of this housing?

Volunteers of America Minnesota and Wisconsin will provide robust on-site services for parents and children to ensure families remain in stable housing. These wrap-around services create supportive housing, working with each family, on a plan to improve access to health, education, employment, parenting, and skills building. Beacon and our service partners (like VOA) have a

demonstrated history of supporting residents to achieve high levels of housing stability. In Beacon's family supportive housing, residents have been especially stable, with those exiting moving into other stable housing in the community.

How are families identified for Prairie Pointe?

Families will be referred to this housing through the suburban metro area waiting list to ensure homes are available to families most in need. After the referral, the family will apply for a lease that clearly states expectations families need to comply with.

Is Prairie Pointe too dense for this neighborhood?

Prairie Pointe, per the City, "complies with the current [guidance] for the site as mixed residential, which allows for densities of 6-30 units/acre." The City's approved plan for Prairie Pointe would permit building for up to 22.5 units per acre. The comprehensive plan and the site's former designation as B-1 would permit more dense development of the site.

Prairie Pointe uses an underutilized site to create critically needed affordable housing for the City of Shakopee.