



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 15, 2020

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HOUSING NORTH WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Yarrow Brown will lead efforts to advocate for affordable housing in the region

Traverse City, Mich.—Housing North is pleased to announce that Yarrow Brown will join the organization as its new executive director. The long-planned transition will take place as Northern Michigan communities begin to grapple with the economic and housing implications of the Coronavirus pandemic.

“I’m passionate about the mission of Housing North and thrilled to work with our communities to address the long-term housing challenges in our region,” says Brown. “I am also very mindful that I am stepping into this new role during an unprecedented economic disruption, as our communities are beginning to feel the economic fallout from COVID-19. I am ready to begin working with our partners to advocate for the short and long-term housing solutions that will help our region recover and continue to prosper in the future.”

Housing North works with communities and developers to build programs and advocate for policies that address local and regional housing needs. With those housing needs anticipated to increase in the wake of the pandemic crisis, solutions are more important than ever, and Housing North is poised to lead regional and statewide efforts to create those solutions.

Brown is stepping into the role currently held by Sarah Lucas, who has led the organization since it was established in 2018 and is moving outside of the area. “We’ve been planning for my succession since I was hired, so I feel like we’re ready for the next step,” said Lucas. “Yarrow will face new and unexpected challenges, but we’ve built a solid foundation in our first year, and I’m looking forward to seeing Housing North grow and evolve under Yarrow’s leadership.”

Brown brings wide-ranging experience working with land conservancies, nonprofits, and local governments. She has managed complex land protection projects and led outreach and educational efforts. As an independent consultant, Brown partnered on master plans, strategic plans, and watershed planning efforts. Within her own community, she serves on the Cleveland Township Planning Commission in Leelanau County, where she is a vocal advocate for workforce-affordable housing.

Housing North Board President, Kelly Smith of Baker College noted that Brown’s diverse background and familiarity with land use and acquisition make her an ideal candidate to lead a nonprofit focused on the complex issue of housing, especially as Housing North takes steps towards acting in a “housing conservancy” role that will leverage land for housing development.

Creating pathways and partnerships for housing in Northwest Michigan.

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"Land conservancies have many of the same complex challenges that we see in the housing world. And many of the tools that land conservancies use are important to long-term housing solutions," said Smith, citing community land trusts and deed restrictions as important mechanisms that Housing North is exploring in housing affordability initiatives. "As we move into the next phase of Housing North's growth, I'm confident Yarrow will build and strengthen relationships that support the organization's goals and mission."

Brown will begin work on May 4, but Lucas will continue to provide assistance to ensure a smooth transition.

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NOTE to Media: Images may be available upon request by e-mailing Sarah Lucas at sarah@housingnorth.org and stating preferences for resolution (300 dpi?), file format (.tif? .jpg?) and file size (1MB or less?).

Housing North builds awareness, influences policy, and expands capacity so communities can create housing solutions that meet their unique needs.

The 501c3 nonprofit was organized in 2018 by a cross-sector group of regional housing partners to overcome the communications, policy, and financial barriers that stand in the way of housing solutions. It's governed by a ten-county Board of Directors that represent business; philanthropy; local, county, and tribal government; workforce development; and housing agencies. Housing North activities are supported by partners including Rotary Charities of Traverse City, the Frey Foundation, and Networks Northwest. More information is available online at www.housingnorth.org.

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