*October 2024 IFF article on All In's Theory of Action and Change*

# Going All In to Create Affordable, Inclusive Housing Options for People with Disabilities in Central Ohio




**This past June, more than 40 disability housing allies and innovators representing 30 organizations and agencies in Central Ohio gathered in Columbus days before the 25th anniversary of the Olmstead Decision (Olmstead)—a landmark ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that codified the housing rights of those with disabilities.**

**The timing for the gathering was fitting, as the group was there to participate in a visioning session convened by local nonprofit All Inclusive Living (All In) designed to help realize a future in which more residents with disabilities in Central Ohio have the opportunity to live in quality, accessible housing that enables them to fully participate in their communities.**

Despite Olmstead enabling tens of thousands of Americans with disabilities to transition from nursing homes, mental health facilities, and other institutional settings to community living, its promise **remains unfulfilled** for far too many people. That's due in large part to the scarcity of accessible, affordable housing in communities across the country, including those in Central Ohio, where population growth has contributed to a severe **housing shortage**. Through its work, All In hopes to shift the paradigm in the region by marshaling the human capital and resources needed to meaningfully increase the supply of affordable, disability-inclusive housing.

Established in 2015 by a group of parents of children with autism concerned about the lack of supports available for their children once they reached adulthood, All In's founders began meeting regularly, undertaking research, and speaking to experts in search of

actionable solutions to create better futures for their children. Focused initially on creating an ecosystem of support for young adults with autism, All In determined over time that catalyzing the development of affordable, inclusive housing in the region was the challenge the organization was best equipped to take on, and that its work should focus more broadly on the housing needs of all people with disabilities.

Through this learning process, All In became fluent in the principles of **asset-based community development** and began building relationships with fellow nonprofits, government agencies, researchers, architects, and others with the specialized expertise needed to contribute to the development of new, accessible housing options in Central Ohio. The organization also held a series of public meetings and undertook market research designed to broaden the range of input it considered as it began articulating how to contribute to the expansion of quality housing for individuals with disabilities in the region. It settled on an inclusive housing concept that aims to serve not only adults with disabilities but older adults and families as well, and in a community setting with programming designed to encourage neighborly connections and reduce social isolation, which is a particular issue for adults with disabilities and older adults.

To continue refining its approach, All In engaged IFF's Real Estate Solutions team in Ohio at the beginning of 2024 to craft and facilitate visioning sessions with the organization's board of directors and community stakeholders to develop a formal **theory of change**. Supported by a grant from **The Columbus Foundation**, the engagement also included an analysis conducted by IFF designed to map the stakeholder ecosystem the organization must navigate to realize its goal to increase the availability of affordable, multi-family housing developments in Central Ohio that are age- and ability-inclusive and set aside a meaningful percentage of deeply affordable units for adults with disabilities. By bringing IFF into the process, All In sought to leverage the experience of a partner with deep expertise in affordable housing development that was also well versed in the needs of people with disabilities and able to help the organization engage local stakeholders best equipped to support its work.

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"We were generally clear on our mission and goals, but we needed to go through a deliberate process to test our assumptions and to bring more disability and housing stakeholders into the conversation so we could engage and learn from them," says Mark Dunham, All In's Executive Director. "While we'd done quite a bit of outreach, partnering with IFF enabled us to convene allies and thought leaders in a way that helped us go deeper in examining how our work can effect change and identifying the steps we need to take to get there."

To accomplish this, IFF first worked with several members of All In's board to identify local stakeholders aligned with the vision for inclusive housing in the region. Eight individuals representing a cross section of local disability and housing stakeholders were then interviewed, helping to guide planning efforts for the visioning session with a larger group of leaders and advocates.

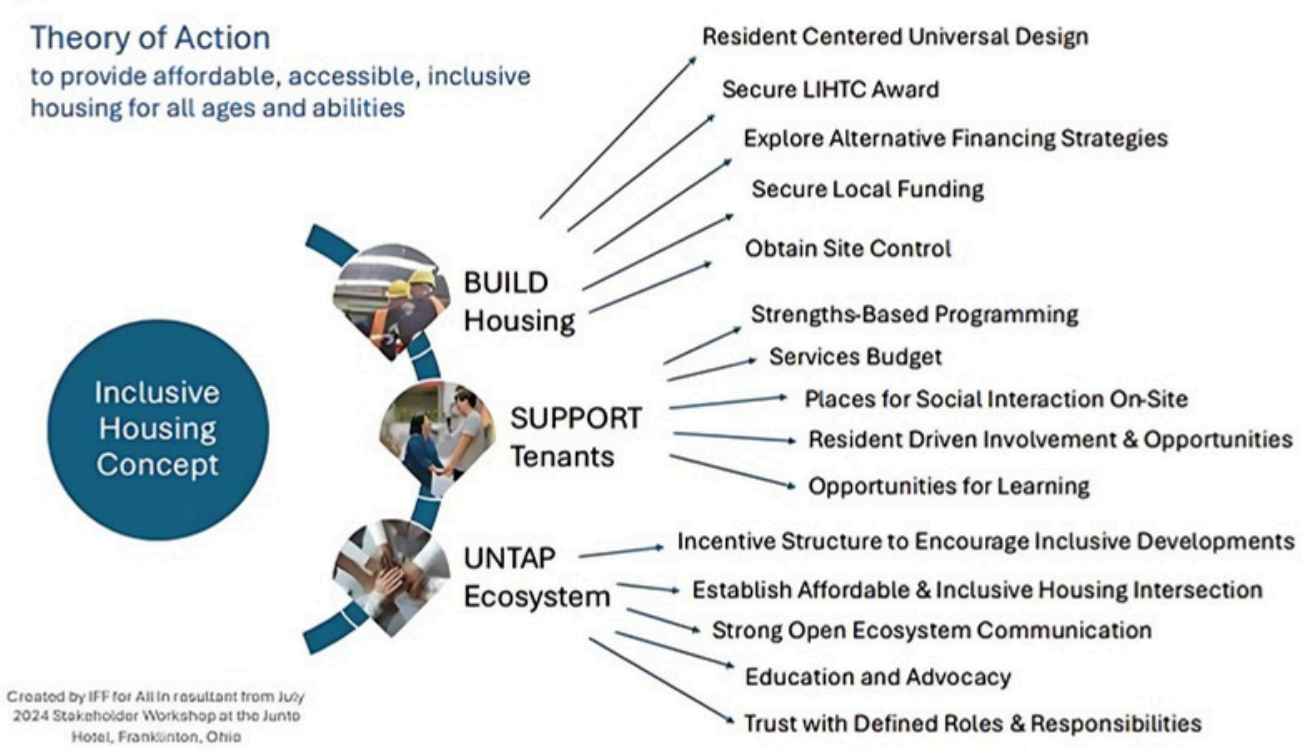
Following these initial conversations, IFF facilitated sessions with All In's full board to explore and better understand the context of All In's work and to set the stage to engage the full group of stakeholders identified during the mapping exercise to craft the organization's theory of change. This also included time spent examining the affordable housing development process and roles and responsibilities during a typical development project supported by Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs), and a guided self-assessment to determine All In's operational and programmatic readiness to act on its theory of change to achieve its goals.

With this preparation completed, All In and IFF welcomed the full group of stakeholders – nonprofit leaders, private and public sector housing allies, disability and housing experts, among other participants – to the plenary visioning session on June 17 in Columbus. Over the course of the half-day session at The Junto hotel, the group explored the combination of factors that impede the development of affordable, inclusive housing; brainstormed strategies to overcome barriers to the creation and successful leasing of such housing to adults with disabilities; identified the supportive services needed by residents and how to best orchestrate their delivery; and asked session participants to consider the role they and their organizations could play in creating a high-functioning, disability-inclusive housing ecosystem in the region.

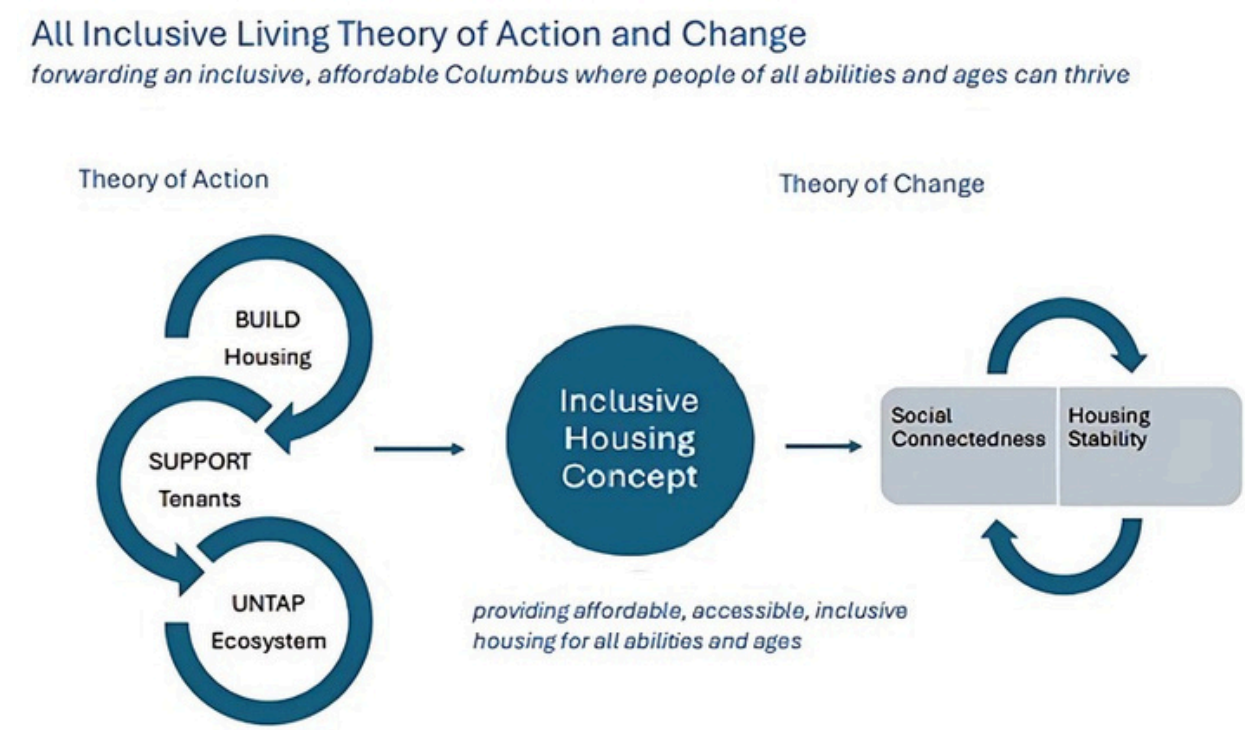



**More than 40 disability housing allies and innovators assembled in Columbus for the June 17 visioning session convened by All In and facilitated by IFF.**

Out of these discussions emerged a variety of actionable insights for All In to finalize its theory of change and the steps the organization can take next to advance its mission. This includes developing a full strategic plan that positions the organization as both a co-developer of inclusive housing and a convener to help bring the right mix of partners together to expand the supply of such housing in the region, holistically supporting residents through programming and service coordination, and untapping resources to enhance the housing ecosystem.




**All In's theory of action articulates the organization's specific goals and the elements and strategies needed to achieve them.**




**All In's theory of change captures the critical impact the organization seeks to have in increasing housing stability and social connectedness.**

"What this process illuminated for us is not only the opportunity, but the necessity of working collaboratively with all the other players in this space to achieve collective impact on the scale this challenge demands," says Dunham. "We've encountered a lot of enthusiasm through this visioning work, and we're intent on leveraging that to help catalyze systems change."

As All In takes the learnings from the visioning session and applies them to its strategic planning process, the organization is also moving forward with plans for its first development project to create the type of affordable, inclusive housing for residents with disabilities it hopes to see developed in the region at scale. In recognition of the organization's model and the broader need for such housing options in Central Ohio, All In and its development partner **TFG Housing Resources (TFGHR)** were recently selected by the **Corporation for Supportive Housing** to participate in its Ohio Supportive Housing Institute and receive technical assistance with an upcoming LIHTC application to help finance the project. If successful, the project could serve as a model for other organizations with the capacity and interest in developing similar multifamily communities.

"With an articulated theory of change in hand that grounds our work, we're in a strong position to move forward with our first project with TFGHR and to also help expand these types of housing options," says Dunham. "Columbus is a great city that really prides itself on being at the vanguard of progress and innovation; this work is about bringing a specific kind of housing innovation to the region that will improve the lives of people of all abilities and ages."

## All In: In a Nutshell

**What:** Founded by a group of parents of children with disabilities concerned about the lack of supports for their kids as they transitioned to adulthood, All Inclusive Living is creating the framework in Central Ohio needed to catalyze the development of affordable, multi-family housing developments that are age- and ability-inclusive and set aside a meaningful percentage of deeply affordable units for adults with disabilities to reduce housing instability and social isolation.

**Sector:** Housing and Universal Access

**Location:** Columbus, OH

**IFF Support:** Facilitation of visioning work to develop the nonprofit's theory of change and stakeholder mapping to help All Inclusive Housing build a network of housing and disability experts required to advance its mission

**IFF Staff Leads:** Kelly Clarke, managing director of consulting – facility planning; Meg Slifcak, director of Real Estate Solutions – Ohio