



## HOUSING BEST PRACTICES TOOLKIT

Project	Rising Village Foundation		
Contact name, mobile, and email	Eric Costanzo eric@southtulsa.org		
City, State	Tulsa, OK		
Partners	South Tulsa Baptist Church, First United Methodist Church of Tulsa		
Funding Timeframe	3-6 months		
Total Funding	Just <\$50,000		
Funders: private donor(s), foundations, local, state, or federal government, etc.	Private donations		
Funding details	Funder	Type: grant, loan, donation, in-kind	Amount   Value
Various gifts	Church members	donations	Just <\$50,000

### 1. Project Summary

The sudden resettlement of Afghans in 2021 quickly overloaded the existing refugee housing systems in Tulsa. Since then, Rising Village has worked with current RAs as well as individual apartment complexes to find better housing solutions that fit each family’s unique needs. When Afghans began resettling in Tulsa, the Pashto ethnic community was lumped into the “majority Afghan culture” and quickly became isolated. Through their partnerships with local churches, Rising Village and STBC established a partnership with a local housing provider where they renovate old properties with the help of volunteers and, in exchange, the housing provider rents to Afghan families at below-market rates. Because these homes are all clustered in a single neighborhood, Rising Village has been able to place Pashto-speaking Afghan families not just in affordable housing, but in community.

### 2. Implementing Organization / Group

Rising Village was founded in 2013 to find creative solutions to help people on the margins rise from dependency to self-sufficiency. The work began with single mothers and orphaned children in seven villages in Ghana, West Africa, but shifted its focus to serving refugees and immigrants in Tulsa, OK in 2018. In cooperation with the local Burmese community and Rising Village’s local faith partners, the RiSE sewing and tailoring enterprise was born to provide refugee and immigrant women with sewing skills, social integration, communication skills, and business skills training.



In 2021, Rising Village began developing new volunteer programming, modeled on World Relief’s Good Neighbor Team co-sponsorship program to help local immigrants and refugees grow towards becoming full participants in the community. Volunteers support refugees with English conversation groups, transportation, childcare, and connections to ESL classes, citizenship classes, social services, and legal services. In close collaboration with South Tulsa Baptist Church, Rising Village has also supported 20 refugee families in securing affordable housing in the Tulsa area.

3. SpecificHousingChallenge(problem statement) | Analysis

a. Affordablehousing situation in your location (town, suburb, city)

A shortage of quality housing is a major issue facing refugee and immigrant work in Tulsa. On a positive note, our RAs, RSS provider, and organizations like ours have been able to find creative solutions and have improved the housing for our refugee families significantly. Housing in Tulsa is 36% cheaper than the national average. With a mortgage rate at 5-6%, 52% of houses in Tulsa are occupied by owners and 48% of houses are occupied by renters. The average rent of an apartment in Tulsa falls between \$700-\$1,000 (50% of apartments in Tulsa fall in this range).

b. Average length of time to find, secure, and prepare safe, affordable housing for client move-in:

If it is a 1- or 2- bedroom, the wait time is usually less than 2 weeks. If larger, it could be 4-6 weeks.

c. Average rents

- o 2-bedroom apartment, townhouse, etc.: \$900-\$1100
- o 3-bedroom apartment, townhouse, etc. \$1000-\$1300
- o Other

4. How did you go from project ideation to implementation, i.e., what were *your top line decision points leading to an actionable plan*? Expand the table as needed or add Gantt charts or other documents about this process if you can.

Decision Points	Steps (research, meetings, negotiations, etc.)	People involved
1. Should we invest funds and work hours into housing we do not own?	a. Initial meeting with owner of properties	Staff, Finance Committee, Lead Volunteers
	b. Assessment by lead volunteers to estimate scope and cost of projects.	
	c. Meeting with finance committee to discuss potential for bringing a proposal.	

2. Do we have the funds available, or can we raise them?	a. Meeting with finance committee to approve fundraising and moving forward with projects.	Staff, Finance Committee
	b. After approval, fundraising commenced through digital and personal outreach.	
3. Do we have the right volunteers to help support families for up to two years?	a. Meeting with staff to finalize lead volunteers and volunteer recruitment.	Staff, Lead Volunteers, Community Partners (best practices)
	b. Meeting with lead volunteers to help identify scope of recruiting and training of volunteers to be good neighbor support teams. Community partners helped develop the guidelines and training modules.	
	c. Recruiting and training volunteers.	
4. Do we want to increase our capacity for housing by utilizing more apartment complexes or multi-family units in a different part of the city?	a. Meeting with staff and board of directors to approve growing into R&P and establishing connections with new housing providers.	Staff, Board of Directors, stakeholders, local housing providers
	b. Meeting with stakeholders over a period of several weeks to evaluate and receive endorsement for R&P and discuss housing challenges.	
	c. Meeting with several apartment complexes and property managers to grow our potential number of accepting housing providers.	

5. Resources needed and steps to acquire each

Resources, e.g., property to buy or rent, materials and workers to renovate	Steps to secure and accomplish each
1. For the houses we renovated we had to purchase materials, fixtures, paint, carpet, etc.	a. We raised the funds
	b. We led our lead volunteers (crew chiefs) find and purchase what was needed.
2. Work with contractors for specialized work.	a. Contact existing or identify new, trustworthy contractors.



	b. Ask them to provide work at reduced or donated cost, which most agreed to and provided.
3. Recruit and utilize volunteers	a.
	b.

6. Outcome(s)

Outcome(s), e.g., an innovation to secure or create affordable housing and a plan/template to share; safe housing for # more newcomers; new stakeholders to help secure housing
1. New housing was created from existing properties that had been uninhabited for years.
2. No added strain was put onto existing housing market. Instead, housing strain was eased a bit as new housing was created that can be used in the future.
3. New relationships were forged with stakeholders, new partners, and a new part of the community.
4. Trust was built that can be used for more cooperation in the future.

7. Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Role(s) in the project and/or all local housing programs
YWCA	RSS Provider/case management/housing specialist
State of Oklahoma	CCP funding for nearly 2 years of rent payments
First Oklahoma Bank	Funding, support for families, housing connections
South Tulsa Baptist Church	Housing renovation, support teams for families
First United Methodist Church	Housing provision, renovation

8. Evaluation

We certainly streamlined the process from the first house to the most recent house. Because things have gone so well, we continue to have new houses offered to us for renovation and refugee resettlement. We believe we can share this model in different parts of the city to help property owners renovate their spaces at little to no cost while also guaranteeing paying tenants through our local R&P and RSS work.