

Simply Home—Affordable Housing Creates Good Neighbors (Photo/Art Exhibit)

[Click here to watch the synopsis video for the entry.](#)

Objectives and Need: Kentucky Housing Corporation’s (KHC) executive management team challenged our three-member communications and marketing team with designing a portable photo exhibit, as a part of an overarching strategy, to respond to a need to build awareness and transform attitudes about affordable housing and showcase why affordable housing matters with real faces of affordable housing. Affordable housing is about creating good neighbors, building strong communities, and simply bringing everyone home.

The widening affordability gap has changed the face of those in most need of affordable housing across the United States and, specifically, in Kentucky. The report from Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies, *The State of the Nation’s Housing 2018*, which found that while the housing market has improved in many areas, there is an increasing number of low- and moderate-income families who lack access to affordable housing and homeownership is becoming less affordable. In higher-cost housing markets, typically in urban areas, it makes living close to work more difficult for our workforce.

Shelter is a basic human need for everyone. Having quality, stable housing is the foundation for all other successful life outcomes. Affordable housing is family housing, workforce housing, and senior housing. Affordable housing creates jobs and strengthens communities.

Families and those in the workforce need stable, safe, quality affordable housing close to jobs, schools, and other services in their communities. Seniors need homes with support services or be able to age in place, so they can thrive in their golden years. Adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings removes blight in communities and creates unique places to call home and strengthens communities.

How did we do this and why this should win?

Creating the Concept:

[Simply Home—Affordable housing creates good neighbors](#) was created to:

1. Connect viewers with real people like themselves, families, or friends who have benefitted and are living successfully in affordable housing through colorful photos by staff and partners. Photos focused on: families, workforce, seniors, and communities.
2. Help housing partners advocate for the development and preservation of affordable homes.
3. Re-frame how public and policy-makers view affordable housing in their community.

This remarkable 24x36-foot photo and art exhibit, launched at the 2018 Kentucky Affordable Housing Conference in August, includes photos taken by KHC staff and housing partners, art created by KHC staff, and was designed with calls of action of support to:

- Be a good neighbor.
- Partner with others in your community to create holistic housing solutions that will strengthen and sustain both families and communities.
- Join the campaign on social media: #SimplyHome and #FacesOfAffordableHousing.

- Bring the Simply Home Exhibit to your community for up to 30 days.

The Design Challenge:

The team had less than six months to create the exhibit in time to launch at the state-wide Kentucky Affordable Housing Conference (KAHC). Once the team designed the initial concept and flow of the exhibit, the team conducted field research to learn about options that could be used to display photos and artwork. However, much of what was found for panels either had to be hand-build or was manufactured for more permanent exhibits and weighing more than 80-pounds per panel. Then, help was sought with a local vendor that creates commercial fixtures to manufacture more light-weight panels that would be easier to transport. Photographs were printed on lighter-weight metal for the durability and longevity of the exhibit pieces.

The exhibit structure includes 20, 36x80-inch panels, three 8-foot photo columns, a large view finder showing photos of community as a visual-interest piece, and over 50 photos and art pieces created by staff and housing partners to create the following four sections: Our Families, Our Workforce, Our Seniors, Our Communities—innovative housing that transforms communities. The exhibit included a little history and current housing needs assessment information. The exhibit is also interactive, so there are three areas to be participative:

1. Voting jars with Simply Home wooden tokens (that can serve as business cards promoting the exhibit) to vote on “What do families need most to have an affordable home?” Access to fresh food, healthcare, or jobs?
2. A drawing station where children can draw and post their art on what it means to have a home, and others can write-in what it means to have an affordable home.
3. Selfie-photo frame where attendees can join the social media campaign: #SimplyHome and #FacesOfAffordableHousing.

Virtual Exhibit: The virtual exhibit was created to help expand the visibility for this exhibit, which can be fully viewed online at www.kyhousing.org/SimplyHome.

Organizations may help us champion affordable housing by requesting the Simply Home exhibit for showings in their community. Potential venues include civic organizations, libraries, museums, and other places that can accommodate the 24x36-foot exhibit with an additional 4-feet for accessibility requirements.

Requesting a Reservation: Community partners and interested parties can [request a reservation](#) and coordinate arrangements, by contact KHC via the contact form on KHC’s website. KHC staff will deliver and set up the exhibit onsite, free of charge, as a service to the Commonwealth. We also provide guidance on branding and marketing templates to support event planning, if needed.

Budget: The total budget was \$38,643.88.

The [Exhibit Materials Production Plan](#) for project planning and project management lists costs of \$25,697.19, for the exhibit panels, view finder, and freight.

Costs also included:

- 97 metal prints for \$4,700.

- 500 wooden tokens for \$269 (also serve as business cards).
- Moving and storage crates to protect the investment for \$7,977.69.
- Travel costs, ancillary costs for small exhibit staging items and supplies, staff time to curate the exhibit/virtual exhibit, collecting images and stories over time, along with the paintings are not included in total costs above.

Outcomes: The exhibit launched at the KAHC with nearly 500 conference attendees to generate buzz and requests for setup, and the audiences are growing as local universities and other companies and organizations bring the exhibit to their towns. It truly is a masterpiece that is worth seeing in person. Our goal continues to get the exhibit out in communities where it can influence community members, potential partners to help with holistic housing (medical professionals, community organizations, homeless services, lenders, business owners, education professionals/organizations), and any local government and business leaders that can influence the discussion around affordable housing and make positive impacts on Kentucky.

It is also generating interest about the importance of affordable housing with college-aged students who may serve as future advocates for housing and public policy. To date, the exhibit has been set up at two different conferences held at the Lexington Convention Center, Northern Kentucky University, and Morehead State University. In April, it was displayed at the Housing Management Conference in Louisville, Kentucky and will then go to Eastern Kentucky University mid-May through mid-June.

Just days before submitting this entry, the Kentucky Historical Society has requested a six-month+ install at the Old Kentucky Capitol building in the summer of 2020, bringing in more housing partners, weaving in more history, and creating programming for students and families about the importance of housing to citizenship and empowerment. This would also be free of charge to the public, and this opportunity will significantly expand the outreach and impact of this exhibit, especially with the tours from schools across the state.

Replicable: This exhibit as a model is replicable. To make the most of the investment, the exhibit structure could be repurposed to transform content for future use. Documentation on the production plan, installation guide, and exhibit brochure accompany this entry to replicate the project full scale.

“Success starts at home,” said KHC Executive Director, Edwin King. “Having a home is essential to being able to sleep and restore, to work and earn a good salary, to support a family, to focus on your education, to support good nutrition, and, overall, to live more successfully. A home can truly be transformative in breaking the cycle of poverty.”

Visual Aids and Documentation

[Simply Home Website](#)

[Exhibit Materials Production Plan](#)

[Installation Guide](#)

[Simply Home Blog Post](#)

[Simply Home Press Release](#)

[Venue Activity](#)

[Simply Home Brochure](#)