

EAST RANGE GIANTS HOUSING COMMITTEE

Proposed Mission Statement

The East Range Giants Housing Committee builds collaborative strength across Aurora, Biwabik, Hoyt Lakes, and the Town of White to intentionally plan for housing development and preservation, helping the communities to access funding and advance new tools to take giant steps forward for housing on the East Range.

Background

The Giants Housing Committee emerged in summer 2023, when the East Range received the opportunity to participate in the Minnesota Housing Partnership's Housing Institute program. Its team of seven participants includes representatives from each of the four communities, St. Louis County, and East Range Joint Powers Board staff. All seven bring strong background in housing and community development and are working with an MHP liaison to move projects forward. The group builds on strong foundations, including a housing study completed in early 2023, a late 2021 housing workshop and follow-up site-related work completed by the Joint Powers Board, and project concepts in each separate community.

With a housing study in place and the East Range Joint Powers Board providing organizational capacity to administer programming across the four communities, the Giants are well-positioned to take major strides forward on housing.

Challenges we will address:

1. **Quality** – The housing stock is older, with frequent need for upgrades to meet the needs of the current market.
2. **Affordability** – Housing costs are increasing, straining communities in need of workforce housing.
3. **Potential Major Project** – The proposed NewRange Copper Nickel project (formerly PolyMet) has the potential to dramatically reshape the local housing market.

Proposed Projects:

1. **Develop local housing trust fund** – This project would pool funding to support workforce development housing on the East Range. It seeks to bring in outside resources to create a fund that can complete meaningful projects.
2. **Creation of an affordable housing rehabilitation fund** – Potentially a subset of the local housing trust fund, this funding would provide support to quickly address smaller-cost renovations that can leave existing East Range housing unattractive or hurt its ability to access traditional financing tools.
3. **Explore senior housing options** – Senior housing is a noted need in the community, with an aging population and some community members trapped in substandard options for their needs because the region lacks options along a spectrum of more supportive housing. A project could better support East Range seniors and free up housing for other community members.