



Phase 3 Interim Report

Dane County Farmworker Housing Planning Project

June 11, 2026 | 5:30 pm

Sift Consulting LLC

Agenda

- Engagement Snapshot through Phase 3
- Overview of Housing Opportunities Labs
- What We've Learned
- Emerging Tensions and Trade-offs
- How Recommendations will be Developed
- (Final) Upcoming Work

Dane County Farmworker Housing Planning Project

Housing Opportunities Labs' Summary for the Phase 3 Interim Report

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

In Phase 3 of Dane County's Farmworker Housing Planning Project, Sift Consulting LLC, in partnership with the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission, convened two Housing Opportunities Labs to leverage the experience and expertise of planning professionals and local land-use decision-makers. Designed to translate community engagement findings into actionable housing strategies, these Labs represent a key shift in the planning process, as the project moves from **community engagement to housing recommendations and implementation design**. Throughout the project, there continues to be an emphasis on identifying key gaps and constraints.

- **Housing Opportunities Lab #1 (February 11, 2026)** focused on surfacing barriers, testing early housing concepts, and identifying what would need to change to make preliminary housing models feasible.
- **Housing Opportunities Lab #2 (March 18, 2026)** built on the foundation established during the first Lab by introducing more defined program concepts and inviting participants to refine, react to, and pressure-test draft housing prototypes.

Both Labs kicked off with a brief presentation to ground the participants in the engagement findings to date. Lab #1 participants were provided a brief summary report of Phase 2 engagement findings as pre-reading. Lab #2 participants were provided a brief FAQ as pre-reading.

Both Labs were designed as interactive working sessions that included full group conversation, small group work, and individual reflection. **These findings from the Labs are not final recommendations.** Rather, they represent early-stage findings, grounded in stakeholder expertise, that will be further refined through subsequent engagement and analysis.

Lab #1: Framing the Challenge and Stress-Testing Possibilities

Participants included representatives from Dane County Human Services Division of Housing Access and Affordability, Dane County Planning and Development, Dane County Zoning, Dane County Towns Association, Village of Windsor, Town of Perry, Town of Black Earth, General Engineering Company, and the nINA Collective.

Participants engaged in the following activities. This structure emphasized surfacing real-world constraints early, particularly related to zoning, political feasibility, and program design.

- A **pre-mortem exercise** to surface risks and possible failure points



Sift Consulting Engagement Snapshot

Focused on

- Farm Owners*
- Ag Support Organizations*
- Land-use Decision Makers
- Housing Advocates

**with particular focus on dairy farm owners and dairy support organizations*

Sift Consulting Engagement Snapshot

Farm owner electronic survey

21 responses from Dane County farm owners

In-depth Interviews

28 total unique voices

7 farm owners

11 ag support organizations

7 land-use decision makers

9 housing advocates

Farm owner focus group

1 focus group with 7 farm owner participants

Housing Opportunities Lab #1

February 11, 2026

10 total participants + 4 facilitators

Housing Opportunities Lab #2

March 18, 2026

17 total participants + 2 facilitators

Housing Opportunities Lab #1

surface barriers, test early housing concepts, and identify what would need to change to make housing feasible

Lab co-designed with Jason Valerius of CARPC and brianna sas-pérez

Participants

- Dane County Human Services Division of Housing Access and Affordability
- Dane County Planning and Development
- Dane County Zoning
- Dane County Towns Association
- Village of Windsor
- Town of Perry
- Town of Black Earth
- General Engineering Company
- nINA Collective

Housing Opportunities Lab #2

*refine, react to, and pressure-test
draft housing prototypes, tenant
eligibility and protections, and
housing attributes*

*Lab co-designed with Jason Valerius of CARPC
and brianna sas-pérez*

Participants

- Dane County Human Services Division of Housing Access and Affordability
- Dane County Planning and Development
- Town of Perry
- Town of Black Earth
- Town of Vienna
- Village of Windsor
- General Engineering Company
- University of Wisconsin–Division of Extension
- UW–Madison School for Workers
- Legal Action of Wisconsin
- nINA Collective
- H&M Custom Services
- Pond Hill Dairy
- Yahara Pride Farms
- Maierfarms

What Were We Trying to Bring Together?

Farmworker Perspective

Leverage the community engagement to explore in more detail housing needs and preferences.

Development Perspective

What is physically and financially feasible?

Community Perspective

What is politically and legally feasible?

The Housing Opportunities Labs were designed to test how the needs and priorities identified through community engagement could realistically be implemented within Dane County's planning, zoning, development, and political contexts.



Key Findings from Housing Labs

**Zoning and regulatory barriers
are foundational constraints.**

***Key Insight:** Relatively
modest housing solutions
remain difficult or impossible
under existing zoning and
development frameworks.*

**Programs that are too restrictive or complex risk
low participation.**

A portfolio of more than one housing approach is advisable.

***Key Insight:** a portfolio of different housing approaches can be responsive to different geographies, farm types, and worker preferences.*

There continue to be many tensions and paradoxes.

1. Employer-provided Housing ↔ Worker Independence

How can housing models uphold accessibility, dignity, and autonomy simultaneously?

2. Proximity to Farms ↔ Access to Community Resources & Assets

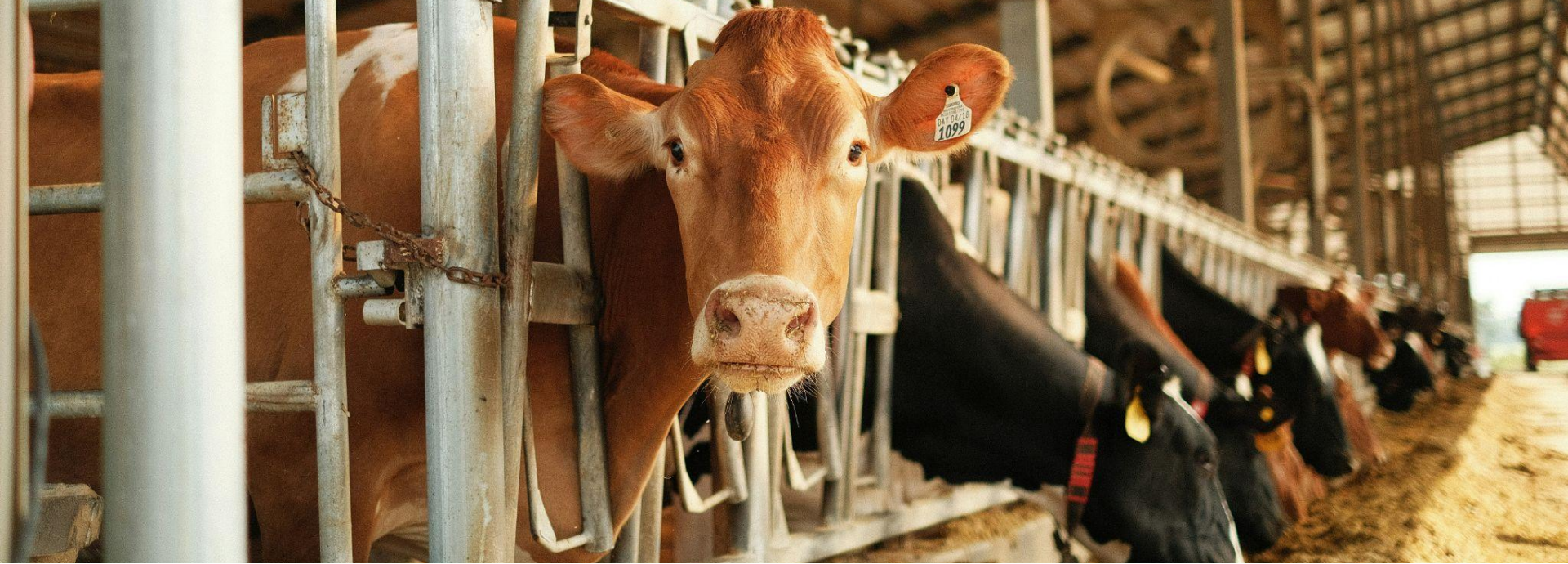
Where should housing be located?

3. Feasibility ↔ Aspiration

What can realistically be built versus what we would ideally like to build?

Housing design and placement should prioritize privacy, flexibility, and the practical needs of farmworkers.

Tenant eligibility and protections remain a point of tension between farm owners and housing advocates.



How Are We Evaluating Housing Models?

Housing strategy is really a process of balancing (sometimes competing) values.

And deciding what tradeoffs are acceptable, for whom, under what conditions, and with what safeguards.



Step 1:

What problem are we trying to solve?

Step 2:

Which housing models best address that problem?

Step 3:

Which ownership/management models best address that problem?

Step 4:

What trade-offs come with those models?

Step 5:

What safeguards can help mitigate those trade-offs?

Example: *Reduce Worker Dependence on Employer-Controlled Housing*

Aligned housing model(s):

- ☐ multi-unit development (12–20 units)
- ☐ dispersed 2–4 unit development

Less aligned housing model(s):

- ▲ Farm-owner forgivable loan program

Aligned ownership/management model(s):

- ☐ non-profit
- ☐ public/private partnerships

Trade-off: May reduce proximity to farms

Mitigation: Combine with transportation planning and strategic siting

Upcoming Work

Complete Case Studies

The Meadows

Farmworker Housing Development
on a New England Dairy

Alternative Housing Systems with
the Lopez Community Land Trust

Senior Farmworker Housing at Half
Moon Bay

Innovative Policy and Zoning

Facilitate 'Loop Backs'

Conduct 1 final farm owner focus
group

In-depth review of Sift's 'interim'
Phase 4 report by 4–6 expert
planners, zoning admins, and
housing advocates

There is no perfect housing model. Every housing strategy involves tradeoffs.

The task is to identify:

- **Which goals are most important,**
- **Which tradeoffs are acceptable,**
- **Who bears those tradeoffs, and**
- **What safeguards can reduce harm.**

The final recommendations will seek to balance housing feasibility, farmworker wellbeing, and program viability.



Thank you! Questions?

Housing Models: Targeted Investment Options

Designed to address a specific problem or population. May not substantially increase overall housing supply.

MODEL: Primary Problem Addressed

- **Farm Owner Forgivable Loan Program:** substandard existing housing
- **Transitional Housing:** housing instability during employment transition and immediate housing crisis
- **Homeownership Pathways:** long-term sustainability, wealth building, worker mobility

Housing Models: Housing Production Models

Designed to create net new housing units.

MODEL: Primary Problem Addressed

- **Multi-unit development:** overall housing shortage
- **Small-scale dispersed housing:** housing shortage + geographic disbursement + blending in to existing neighborhoods
- **Clustered modular housing:** housing shortage + quick deployment + proximity to farms