

Our Mission & Opportunity

For the past 15 years, Immanuel's mission and ministry has focused a significant amount of time and resources to accompany families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless through Family Promise, the Meadowlark Family Housing Center, the Housing Advocate Network (HAN), Just Neighbors, and Welcome Baskets. The Missoula Interfaith Collaborative (MIC) has been a key partner in organizing and doing this work.

In early 2026, we gathered with MIC to explore joining its Family Housing Initiative (FHI) and the possibility of building 20-30 housing units in our parking lot. The idea was both overwhelming and inspiring, prompting us to consider a **BIG VISION**:

**to seriously create a reality
in which there are
NO houseless families
in Missoula because
we are caring for them now.**

In response to congregational interest, Immanuel's church council directed leaders to pursue further conversations.

Joining a Growing Trend

The ELCA and other denominations are being challenged to look at church property with new eyes and get creative about how we use, manage and finance our land and buildings. Congregations across the United States are experimenting with new models of stewardship, transforming not only their property but their congregations and neighborhoods.

Why Now? Why Immanuel?

For the past decade, Faith Communities have worked through MIC to address major community challenges. The Meadowlark Family Housing Center shows what we can accomplish. In 2025, MIC Partners, including IMLU, identified affordable transitional and permanent housing for families as our next priority with the goal of creating 100-150 units of housing in 5 years.

The reason to consider low-income housing on our property is simple: **to grow our mission and to love our neighbor.**

We have been blessed with land, buildings, and abundance. What if we used those gifts not simply to preserve what we have, but **to create something that helps our mission grow?**

The culture around "church" has changed dramatically over the past 20 years. To be a vibrant, growing congregation, we need **to find new ways to build relationships with people—especially youth and families—**we might not otherwise connect with through traditional ministries.

Imagine welcoming people into our community not because they walked through our church doors first, but because **we chose to build a place where relationships can begin**, and where people encounter the love of Christ through a community that chooses to be present with them.

This is an opportunity for **Immanuel to lead by example**—to use what we have to build relationships, serve our neighbors, and create new pathways for people to experience the community and love of Christ.

**We aren't giving away our mission.
We're building it.**



Family Housing Initiative Engagement & Exploration



The Need

Population growth has outpaced housing construction, driving up prices and rents while wages lag. Missoula's housing crisis is especially difficult for families, with Family Promise and the YWCA citing a lack of affordable transitional and permanent housing as the biggest challenge.

On average each year:

- 110 families come to the Family Housing Center at risk of losing housing.
- 34 families avoid homelessness through prevention programs.
- 76 families enter shelter.
- 38 families obtain stable housing within about 120 days.
- 32 families leave without stable housing, returning to homelessness or an unstable situation.
- 6 families have an unknown outcome.

MIC is partnering with Stepping Stones to begin support for mental health, substance-use, relationships, and strategies to build financial and personal stability.

Key Dates

FHI Engagement Season Launch

October 4 at 10 a.m. Worship

FHI Large Group Engagements

October 4 & 25 at 11:15 a.m.

Small Group, 1-on-1 Conversations: TBA

Report of FHI Engagement Season Results

November 22 at 11:15 a.m.

FAQ's

What kind of housing is it?

The initial proposal is 3 stories with 25-30 units of permanent housing for low-income families supported by Family Promise. A Developer and Architect with MIC have completed a feasibility study and researched zoning. Water, utilities, and sewer can be addressed to handle the project size.

What about other churches and locations?

The FHI is part of the broader goals of MIC and its partners who have been in contact with pastors, leaders, and councils of partner churches, including local ELCA churches. Through IMLU's work for 15 years to focus our mission on at-risk youth and families, we are in a unique position of health and clarity. IMLU is the leading the way in considering this innovative property development.

How will it be funded?

IMLU is partnering with the land, and is not expected to lead fundraising or a capital campaign. In general, a developer would raise the funds through low-interest financing, grants, tax credits, etc. MIC will fund raise from their partners and the wider community. Residents pay rent.

Where will we park?

Everyone will have a place to park. The design will include options for both church and resident parking, meet parking codes, and consider needs, location, and nearby options. The congregation's parking needs will effect cost and amount of units. Underground parking is unlikely due to cost, and less interactions between residents and members.

Who would own it and manage it?

IMLU could own, lease, or sell and contract with someone to manage it (i.e. MHA or ADEA). The Technical Team does not recommend that IMLU manage the housing; they will explore options with a developer.

FAQ's

How will our church interact with this community?

We want to intentionally build intergenerational relationships and create a wider circle of belonging where youth and families feel welcomed, known, and valued. We'll discover opportunities along the way, shaping ministry together with young people, families, and church members. **What could make our new neighbors glad a church is next door?**

Is this related to the Five Valleys Senior Living Project?

No. It's entirely separate. While envisioned primarily for families, some senior living units could be considered.

Who Are the Leaders?

A **"Technical Housing Team"** to work through the practical details of scope, scale, and building alongside MIC, the architects, and the developer whom MIC has vetted.

An **"FHI Engagement Team"** will lead one-on-one, small-group, and congregational conversations to discern whether we are ready and willing to pursue this project. It will require risk, learning, and new ways of being church. Together, we will ask: Is this what God is calling us toward?

Council will assess the feedback and decide whether or not to make a recommendation to be voted on at a future **congregational meeting** which has the legal authority to make a decision.

Development Team: Casey Dunning-MIC; Mike Bouchee-Rocky Mountain Development Group; Colin Lane & Don MacArthur-MMW Architects