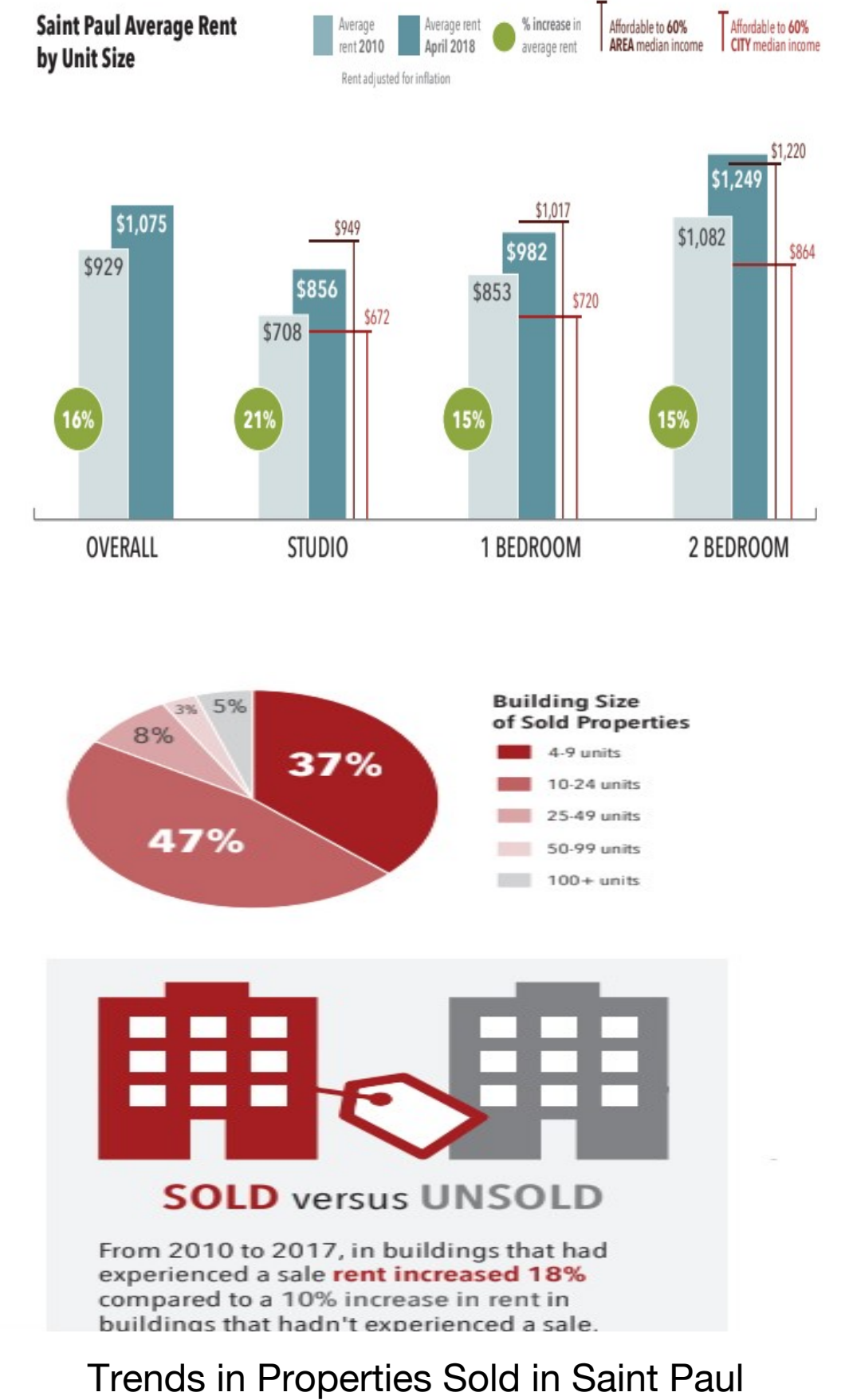


YOUNG LEADER VISION PROJECT

FINAL REPORT AND FINDINGS

VISION

- Every ten years, the seven-county metropolitan area engages in a ten-year comprehensive planning process. This process can last two years or more and must include at least six months of public input. This comprehensive planning process guides cities policies on how they will accommodate growth.
- Even though the comprehensive planning process happens every ten years, many voices are excluded, namely renters and marginalized populations which includes young people and people of color.
- Before this project, I believed that the responsibility of learning how government works, and the comprehensive planning process fell largely on people. A person must actively seek information to educate themselves. However, upon completion of this project, I have since changed my vision to believe that many of the barriers that the public faces in accessing information about critical processes, such as the comprehensive planning process, were in fact created by the government and done so intentionally.
- My vision for the future of the region is one in which government entities such as the Metropolitan Council and local municipal governments, are more transparent about the comprehensive planning process. Public hearings must be accessible to as many people as possible and made available in multiple mediums. Essentially, public policy must be created that focuses on the recipients using their voices from the beginning until end.



ACTION

SYSTEMS

First and foremost, elected officials need to have strong political will, even if it means going against powerful business interests, and a small group of well organized, predominantly white affluent homeowners. Cities and municipalities across the board need to strike single-family zoning ordinances from the books, as well as other exclusionary zoning policies. Further, when it comes to interagency government work, transparency must be of utmost importance. When policymakers make decisions, they must start from the place of consulting the community first and all throughout. In doing so, government must make concerted efforts to reach out to communities that have been historically excluded.

COMMUNITY

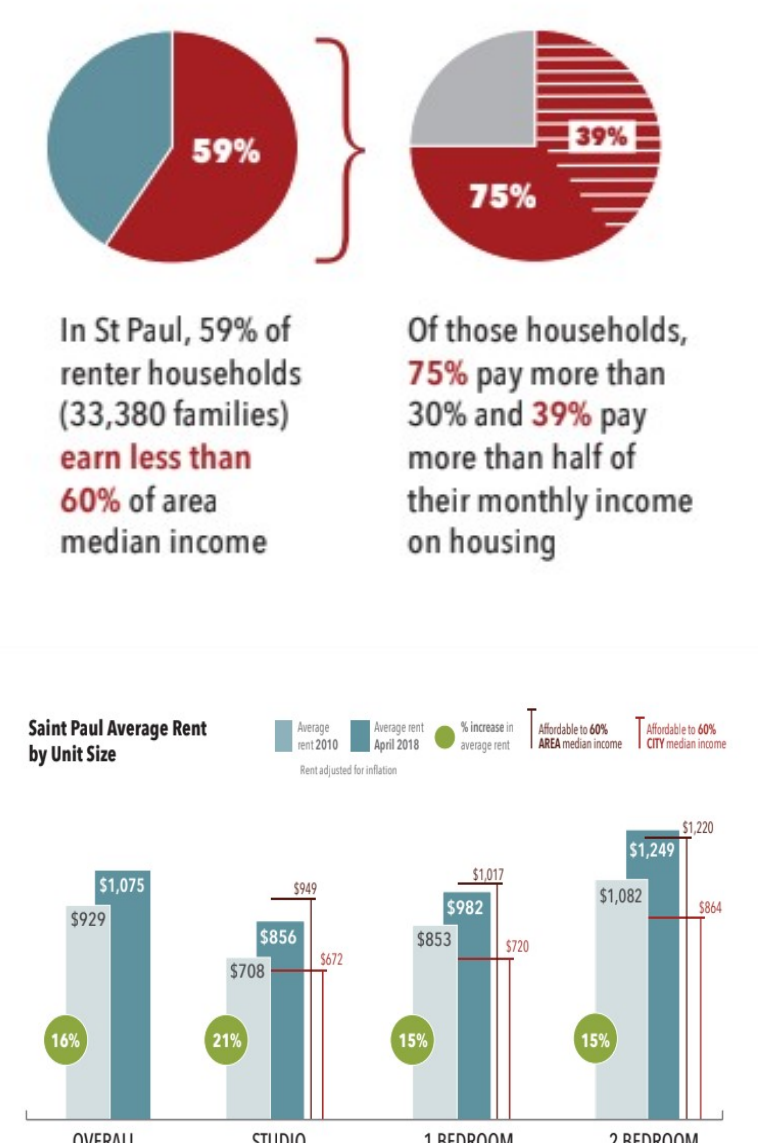
The community can help impact elected officials' efforts to create more affordable housing by launching social media campaigns, lobbying policymakers in person, showing up and testifying at public hearings, writing letters of support and joining coalitions. One of the boldest and most powerful tools community members have are their stories. If they don't share their stories, then policymakers are oblivious to their concerns. It's one thing for policy-makers to pass evidence-based policies, but for that to happen it is critical that community members engage their community leaders by sharing their stories, so that the policies passed reflect their voices and concerns.

BUSINESS

Private enterprises and non-profit businesses can lead the way when it comes to building more affordable housing by developing housing that aligns with what houses in an area look like. This means that any housing that built is accessible and sustainable. However, for private enterprises and non-profit businesses to develop affordable housing reflective of community values, there needs to be significant reduction in government red tape that hinders progress. As movement is made on affordable housing, it is critical that the private-public partnership between government and private enterprise is socially conscious and does not become predatory. Serving people must be the motive and not profit.

INSIGHTS

- The most surprising thing that I learned throughout this entire project is the utter lack of communication amongst and within government agencies. The bureaucracy is strong and provides for good governance; however, as a result of this, one agency may be restricted by the actions of another. An example of this is how powerful the Met Council is, but also very limited in their scope by state statute. The Met Council cannot compel cities to prioritize affordable housing even though the Metro area is in the midst of a growing housing crisis. By government bureaucracies' own doing, the complex intricate webs of rules and regulations creates seemingly unsolvable problems for the government.
- This project affirmed my previous beliefs that government works slowly, and sometimes will only work in the best interest of the people they serve if pressure is put on the government by external forces. The frustrations I experienced, along with government officials and non-profit leaders, reflect a much larger problem- the set-up American political system, namely money in politics. Government inaction on some issues are due to powerful interests influencing elected officials which makes their seats vulnerable come reelection time.



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