

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## Speaker: Housing could make or break future of Greater Des Moines' economy

Greater Des Moines' low unemployment rate and reasonable cost of living make it an attractive place to live, but this balance can be precarious and not without future risks, especially when it comes to housing.



**Maya Brennan**

So says Maya Brennan, a researcher for the Urban Institute and editor of the *How Housing Matters* website, who is the next speaker in The Tomorrow Plan Speaker Series. Her talk, which is part of the Annual Housing Symposium put on by the Polk County Housing Trust Fund during Affordable Housing Week, starts at 9 a.m. Wednesday, April 5, at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, 909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines.

“Without a supportive policy landscape, the decision of millennials and others to stay in or come to Des Moines can have unexpected consequences – boosting property values only for those already bought in, while closing the door on other essential members of the workforce,” Brennan says. “Choosing to focus on planning for the right mix of housing, before the market is too hot, is a discussion the region's leaders and municipalities will want to have sooner rather than later to ensure the region continues to be economically strong and a place all people can thrive.”

This is an especially timely discussion for the Des Moines metro, which the U.S. Census Bureau says is the fastest growing region in the Midwest. While exciting, the region needs to be careful to avoid population growth becoming too much of a good thing, says Eric Burmeister, executive director of the Polk County Housing Trust Fund: Is it good news if we don't have the right mix of housing options for those who will be living and working here?

“If we are going to continue to enjoy the success of our region, then housing needs to be part of economic development,” Burmeister says, noting that regional leaders have identified housing as a critical area of focus in plans such as Capital Crossroads 2.0 and The Tomorrow Plan. “This symposium sets the stage for much-needed insights, discussions and future planning.”

Following her keynote remarks, Brennan will moderate a panel of local officials working to address housing issues in their communities and across the state. They include: Matt Anderson, Assistant City Manager, City of Des Moines; Russ Behrens, City Manager, City of Grinnell; Sam Erickson, Chief Operating Officer, Community Housing Initiatives; and Carolann Jensen, Chief Programs Officer, Iowa Finance Authority.

For more information on the housing symposium or to RSVP, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/housing-matters-for-iowas-economy-tickets-32533016127>. The Tomorrow Plan Speaker Series is an implementation strategy of The Tomorrow Plan, a forward-thinking plan for the sustainable development of the Greater Des Moines region over the next 40 years.

## ABOUT THE PARTNERS



**The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)** acts as a regional forum to ensure coordination between the public and local, state, and federal agencies in regard to planning issues and to prepare transportation plans and programs. The MPO develops both long- and short-range multimodal transportation plans, selects and approves projects for federal funding based upon regional priorities, and develops methods to reduce traffic congestion.



**The Polk County Housing Trust Fund** is the comprehensive planning, advocacy, and funding organization for affordable housing in Polk County, Iowa. Focused around these three core activities, the Housing Trust Fund is responsible for crafting the community strategic plan for affordable housing and leading its implementation. It is also tasked with helping the community understand the need for and benefits of adequate affordable housing. Finally, the organization is responsible for allocating community funds aimed at increasing and preserving the inventory of affordable units in the County and improving the lives of the people who live in them.

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## AFFORDABLE HOUSING WEEK: APRIL 3-8

### **April 4, 8-11 a.m. – 4th Annual Educational Event for Iowa Landlords**

Are you a property manager or landlord? Know someone who should attend? Learn more about renting to low-income households and what resources are available to help. Along with our partners Primary Health Care and the Polk County Continuum of Care, we'll also host a panel discussion with area property managers and facilitate a conversation about how nonprofits and HOsd property managers can work together.

### **April 5, 8:30-11 a.m. – Housing Matters for Iowa's Economy**

Join us for our third annual free symposium to learn more about how affordable housing can support economic development initiatives. Urban Institute's Maya Brennan, principal investigator for How Housing Matters, will discuss national trends in housing and economic development, and a panel of local experts will share their insights on how developers and economic development leaders can collaborate for greater impact.

### **April 7, 9-11:30 a.m. – Downtown Affordable Housing Walking Tour**

To celebrate the recent release of Capital Crossroads 2.0, this spring's tour will focus on Capital Crossroads efforts and future plans to make downtown a better place to live, work, and play -- including affordable housing options for the people who make downtown work. While we'll be riding DART's free D-Line shuttle service for part of the tour, please wear your walking shoes for this up-close and personal view of downtown housing.

### **April 8, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. – Can I Be Your Neighbor Design Challenge**

This program in its fifth year offers area high school students the opportunity to design affordable homes for a chance at scholarships provided by ASK Studio and the Home Builders Association of Greater Des Moines. Come check out the students' designs and hear finalists present their work at the Pappajohn Center, 1200 Grand Ave in Downtown Des Moines.