

WORKFORCE HOUSING COALITION (WHC)

COMMUNITY UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2009

Brief History

Workforce Housing Summit: In April of 2007, the initial Affordable Housing Summit was held to address the workforce housing shortage in Transylvania County. The Workforce Housing Coalition (WHC) of Transylvania County was organized with the following five committees: Land, Construction, Government, Finance, and Communications & Education.

Workforce Housing Director: In December of 2007, a program Director was hired by United Way to lead the community effort in developing workforce housing. The primary role of this position was to coordinate WHC committee initiatives and to be a face out to the community in all WHC activities.

Progress since November 2008 report

A working partnership agreement was signed by the Workforce Housing Coalition, Wesley Community Development Corporation, United Way of Transylvania County, Western Carolina Community Action, and St. Timothy United Methodist Church in April. This self-help program will enable the building of energy efficient, affordable homes for families earning less than 80% of the area median income. The first home under this partnership is under construction. The intent is to begin building up to 5 more homes under this program in the next 12 months.

The original five committees were condensed into three working committees: Land & Construction; Government, and Communications and Education. The activities and progress of each committee are highlighted below:

Communications and Education: A Homebuyer's Education Seminar has been scheduled for January 2010.

- Three-session program to be put on by OnTrack at the Transylvania County Library. All basic information on how to buy a home will be covered, including credit score requirements and how to improve it, current financing options available, what to look for in a new home, and how to participate in the new Wesley Home self-help program.
- Sponsored by United Way, Wells Fargo Bank, Transylvania County, & Transylvania Regional Hospital.

Land, Design and Construction Committee: A Transylvania County Community Land Trust has been established.

- The Land and Construction Committee identified the price of land in our county as one of the major problems in the building of affordable housing. As a result, they have focused primarily on the creation of a community land trust in partnership with the Transylvania County Board of Education. This vehicle will allow an entity to buy and hold land for the future development of affordable housing.
- North Carolina recently passed legislation enabling the school system and local governments to convey land held by them into the Community Land Trust
- The first board meeting of the Transylvania County Community Land Trust was held in August; bylaws were adopted, officers elected and committees appointed.
- Community Home Trust staff will provide training for the Board in late September.
- The City of Brevard Planning Department is sponsoring a visit by Robert Dowling, Executive Director, Community Home Trust, who will be visiting the CLT Board on August 29.
- Legal agreements will be finalized between the Transylvania Board of Education and Transylvania County Community Land Trust as soon as possible.
- Construction will start on the first teacher housing this fall.
- Letters were sent out to landowners in the county soliciting interest in the donation or sale of land to the community land trust for the development of workforce housing. Several indications of interest have been received and are being pursued.

Government Committee

- On August 18, WHC met with the Brevard City Planner and representatives from Renova to begin discussions on how the 5% affordable housing requirement for the Davidson River Development will be met. This requirement could be met through the inclusion of affordable homes in the development process, by funds put into a housing trust fund, or by land put into the community land trust.
- The Brevard city planning department is developing a recommendation on affordable housing, which will be presented to the Brevard City Council for consideration.

Current Workforce Housing Issues/Progress

- The housing market has changed dramatically, given the mortgage/economic crisis of the last 12 months. The most significant need for affordable housing continues to be in the \$100 - \$125,000 price range.
- As of August 2009, there were 15 homes available for purchase between \$100,000 and \$125,000; 47 homes available for purchase from \$125,000 - \$150,000; 81 homes from \$150,000 - \$200,000. 69 of these homes had 1-2 bedrooms; 74 had 3 bedrooms or more. This data does not include mobile homes for sale.
- The WHC Director has interviewed 37 families this year who are interested in qualifying for help in purchasing an affordable home in Transylvania County. He referred candidates needing to improve their credit scores before they can be considered for a USDA mortgage (more than 75% are in this category) to the On-Track credit improvement program. Clients have also been referred to the WCCA Self-Sufficiency and Savings Plus programs to help them learn to establish a household budget and save for a home down payment if needed.
- To date five (5) families have met the requirements and submitted mortgage applications to the USDA. If approved they will be eligible for the next homes in our county to be built by Wesley.

Future Activities (next 12 months) of Workforce Housing Coalition

- Continue to focus on the development of housing under \$150,000 on infill lots.
- Continue to focus on attaining affordable land for WHC development
- Establish procedures for making the community land trust operative. This will be important as a mechanism to hold donated land, or land purchased by a housing entity at some point in the future.
- Continue a public awareness campaign about
 1. what the problems are in the workforce housing arena today
 2. what individuals can do **now** to ready themselves for home ownership
 3. what part credit plays in purchasing a new home
 4. what types of homes are available now in the market and what types of homes buyers should consider at various income levels
 5. what specific types of financing and buyer assistance are currently available in the market at various income levels

SUMMARY

The problem of access to affordable, desirable workforce housing is multi-faceted and must be addressed from many different directions. The WHC will continue to work on all aspects of the problem with the different segments of our community who **must** come together to address this issue critical to the healthy growth of Transylvania County.

For more information, if you are interested in participating on one of the committees, if you believe you may qualify to participate in the Wesley program, or if you own or know of available land in the county, please call Don Rogers at the United Way office (828) 883-8822.