

To: David Ellis, Deputy County Manager

From: Alicia Arnold, Housing and Transportation Division Director

Through: Annemarie Maiorano, Deputy Director of Human Services

Date: May 26, 2016

RE: Priority Areas for Additional Investment in Wake County Affordable Housing

On May 6, 2016, Housing and Community Revitalization staff and community providers convened to discuss affordable housing and build upon the Board of Commissioner Worksession held on March 14, 2016. The scope of this meeting was to identify the priority areas, among representative stakeholders, for additional investment in affordable housing in Wake County.

Participants included: *Michelle Mozingo, Wake County Public School System; Larry Jarvis, City of Raleigh; Scott Farmer, North Carolina Housing and Finance Agency; Ann Oshell, Alliance Behavioral Health; Jeanne Tedrow, Passage Home; Debra King, CASA; Mary Jean Seyda, CASA; Gregg Warren, DHIC; Cheryl Dillard, Drucker and Faulk; Shana Overdorf, Partnership to End Homelessness; Kevin Campbell, Habitat for Humanity Wake; Ian Stevens, Monument Real Estate Services*

This memo will outline the consensus priority investment areas and populations as supported by the identified barriers and needs within the community.

Priority Areas

Three priority investment areas emerged from group conversation:

1. Develop new units through community partnership;
2. Maintain and acquire existing properties/complexes; and
3. Provide additional rental assistance through vouchers

The group discussed, at length, the existing barriers including bottlenecks within the housing continuum, rental market strength and clients criminal and/or credit history. The most agreed upon sentiment was the need to preserve and increase the existing affordable housing inventory, while identifying and recruiting additional landlords to participate in rental assistance programs. The group agreed a stratified approach was necessary. Strategies to create additional housing stock included pursuing more advantageous financing options, as well as partnering with private corporations who would benefit from additional housing investments.

Priority Populations

In addition, two population groups appeared as the focus of conversation:

1. Community members with mandated initiatives; and
2. Individuals with the lowest income and the highest need

Behavioral health clients identified through the Department of Justice Olmstead settlement were deemed the highest priority. More than 3,000 placements are mandated by 2020 statewide, and of those, 300 placements have been targeted for Wake County. Equally as important, are those individuals whose instability leads to a consumption of resources (hospitals, jails, EMS, etc.) which negatively impacts the community. The group's discussion focused on providing appropriate supportive services to integrate and stabilize these priority populations, as well as improve client progress through the continuum where applicable. Short term strategies included educating landlords, master leasing and access to a coordinated housing locator working on behalf of all agencies.

In summary, if additional funding were available to Wake County Housing and Community Revitalization it would be invested to increase diversified housing options for identified priority populations. However, a common theme discussed during this worksession was the stagnation of upward mobility, or the inability for people to climb from more intensive and expensive housing services at the bottom of the economic ladder toward greater financial independence and stability at the top, due to a lack of purposeful intentionality in coordinated resources. The need for strategic investments along the housing continuum, combined with supportive services, is deemed necessary to mobilize clients.

As Wake County embarks to provide appropriate resources for the identified populations, it is staff recommendation that it do so with purpose and intent by creating an Affordable Housing Task Force comprised of staff, elected officials and community partners. Furthermore, that this Task Force assist the Housing and Community Revitalization program in developing a comprehensive affordable housing plan that will provide actionable steps to guide future request and deliberate investment of additional resources that will strategically advance the community.

Thank you.