

Date: November 25, 2008

To: Participants in the November 13th meeting on the topic of Affordable Housing

From: Linda Beitz, Facilitator and Dean Bloch, Town Planner and Selectboard Assistant

Re: Documentation from meeting

Thank you, once again, for your active participation in the conversation on November 13th. Your willingness to attend and offer your perceptions and ideas on the topic of affordable housing in Charlotte went far to achieve the meeting goal of having a productive dialogue.

Included for your review and consideration are the following:

1. **A list of participants**
2. **Participant responses to each activity as documented on the flip chart pages.**
3. **An analysis of the above into categories that can potentially ease the use of this information in future work on the topic.**
4. **A request for your feedback**
5. **A process suggestion to move forward**

PARTICIPANTS

Selectboard members: Charles Russell, Jenny Cole, Winslow Ladue

Planning Commissioners: Jeff McDonald, Jim Donovan, Linda Radimer, Peter Joslin, Ellie Russell, John Owen

Conservation Commissioners: Linda Hamilton, Trafton Crandall, Bob Hyams, Suzy Hodgson, Holly Sullivan

Affordable Housing Trust Committee Members: John Owen, Ellie Russell, Carrie Spear

Charlotte Land Trust Members: Frances Foster, Kate Lampton, Marty Illick, Jane Lawliss

Staff: Dean Bloch

Facilitator: Linda Beitz

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES as documented on the flip chart pages by activity

Question #1—“Why, in your opinion, has affordable housing been difficult to achieve in Charlotte?”

1. Lot size—5 acres & prices
2. Lack of septic (and cost) and cost of land
3. Lack of strong demand
4. Natural forces aren't working—services and infrastructure aren't here
5. No market incentive
6. Lack of interest in taking advantage of resources
7. NIMBY—Town center, Burns property
8. Attractiveness and good schools
9. Concern that affordable housing takes away resale value
10. There are a lot of things that are difficult to achieve
11. People are protective of privacy and rural character—don't like “density”
12. Affordable housing may require higher # of units than people are willing to accept
13. People don't understand the need and who benefits
14. Fear of having affordable housing
15. Permit process adds to cost
16. Not enough time to make incentives and regulations widely known and factored into plans
17. Lack of higher density—difficulty in getting scale (# of units)
18. Affordable = low income (perception)
19. 5 acre zoning and taxes
20. Loss of agriculture → loss of affordable housing (& jobs, i.e. “working landscape”)
21. Return on investment—not there

22. Not enough “bang for buck” for non-profits & public financing. Scale.
23. People don’t want density, even in villages
24. The economy→less development; also development process is difficult
25. Lack of supply of money to make affordable housing feasible
26. Lack of realistic goal & scale—how much do we want in 5 years?
27. Popular culture—bigger is better, status symbol, fear, personal values
28. Economics
29. Not enough critical mass of support
30. Fear of change
31. No Affordable Housing Trust to move it forward like the Charlotte Land Trust
32. Stigma, associations
33. Demand? Proximity to jobs (or lack thereof)—lack of infrastructure, support services.

Open Discussion

1. Distinction between what’s needed (as per study) and what is being built
2. Regulations don’t match our town because they require them to make them “work.”
3. How to change the ratio between high end—low end building
4. Over a 10 year period, affordable housing “low”
5. Could be a lot of confusion about what is affordable housing, and the jobs that fit that income level.
6. How are we stimulating/revitalizing small scale agriculture? To integrate with affordable housing?
7. How to frame the conversation quantitatively
8. Affordable housing for people who do not need “services”
9. Perception of what is density
10. What are the “right” incentives?
11. Re-use of existing housing

Brainstorming

1. East Charlotte—tastefully done, in-character, etc.
2. Work with what we’ve got
3. Revise regulations so non-contiguous PRDs require affordable component
4. Brochure or literature to educate public on “who” is an affordable housing customer-market this.
5. Research other communities’ efforts
6. Support the Selectboard in purchasing an option on an existing dwelling that could b purchased by Habitat for Humanity
7. Selectboard create an entity to carry forward the projects that get generated
8. Setting a realistic goal that the town can work towards
9. Ask voters to approve a sizeable increase in funding to support affordable housing within community accepted parameters
10. Education
11. VHCB model (connect funding for housing and conservation)
12. Separate housing and conservation funding
13. Move Burns project forward as an ideal model
14. Name a committee made up of representatives of this group
15. Public education campaign
16. Update the data from the Kennedy report, and look at other towns’ data/experience
17. Re-open examination of Burns property→finish the septic examination
18. Role for Town to play (for example) guaranteeing purchase price. Take a more active role.
19. Proposal for Burns property—complete it.
20. Regional/statewide providers, e.g.: Champlain Housing Trust, etc: (1) establish closer relationship, (2) rely on their expertise

What Next?

1. Continue dialogue
2. Dialogue to facilitate participation with those who oppose
3. Article(s) for Town Meeting that will facilitate discussion
4. Offer a suggestion (or action item) at Town Meeting

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES GROUPED BY CATEGORIES

Two separate sets of categories were created to sort the previous list of comments and ideas.

The first set was used to sort comments made during the Structured Go-Around when participants answered the question: “Why, in your opinion has affordable housing been difficult to achieve in Charlotte?”

Merged with this were comments made during the Open Discussion that followed the go-around.

If appropriate, a comment may appear in more than one category.

- *Cost and Market Issues*
- *Perceptions Affecting Desirability*
- *Factors Affecting Feasibility*
- *Regulatory/Management Support*

Cost and Market Issues

- Lack of septic (and cost) and cost of land
- Permit process adds to cost
- 5 acre zoning and cost
- The economy – less development; also development process is difficult
- Lack of supply of money to make affordable housing feasible
- Economics
- How to frame the conversation quantitatively
- What are the “right” incentives?
- Return on investment not there
- Lack of strong demand
- No market incentive
- Lack of interest in taking advantage of resources
- People don’t understand the need and who benefits
- Loss of agriculture – loss of affordable housing (and jobs, i.e., “working landscape”)
- Not enough “bang for buck” for non-profits and public financing
- Demand? Proximity to job (or lack thereof); lack of infrastructure, support services
- Distinction between what’s needed (as per Kennedy study conducted) and what is being built
- How to change the ratio between high end – low end building
- Over a 10 year period, affordable housing “low”
- How are we stimulating/revitalizing small scale agriculture – to integrate with affordable housing?

Perceptions Affecting Desirability

- NIMBY “not in my backyard” – Town center and Burns property
- Attractiveness and good schools
- Concern that affordable housing takes away resale value
- People are protective of privacy and rural character – don’t like “density”
- Fear of having affordable housing
- Affordable = low income (and perception that it creates problems)

- People don't want density, even in villages
- Popular culture – bigger is better, status symbol, fear, personal values
- Affordable housing may require higher # of units than people are willing to accept
- Not enough critical mass of support
- Fear of change
- Stigma, associations
- Could be a lot of confusion about what is affordable housing and the jobs that fit that income level
- Perception of what is density
- What are the “right” incentives?
- Affordable housing for people who do not need “services”

Factors Affecting Feasibility

- There are a lot of things that are difficult to achieve (about affordable housing)
- Affordable housing may require higher # of units than people are willing to accept
- Not enough time to make incentives and regulations widely known and factored into plans
- Lack of higher density – difficulty in getting scale (#of units)
- Lack of supply of money to make affordable housing feasible
- Natural forces aren't working – services and infrastructure aren't there
- Demand? Proximity to jobs (or lack thereof) – lack of infrastructure, support services
- Re-use of existing housing
- Not enough “bang for buck” for non-profits and public financing

Regulatory/Management Support

- Lot size – 5 acres and prices
- 5 acre zoning and taxes
- The economy- less development; also development process is difficult
- Lack of realistic goal and scale- how much do we want in 5 years?
- No Affordable Housing Trust to move it forward like the Charlotte Land Trust
- Regulations don't match our town because they require them to make them (#) “work”
- How to frame the conversation quantitatively?

The second set of categories was created to sort the information generated during the Brainstorming and Next Steps activities. The category names the group most likely to consider taking action on the idea. In some cases, an idea was put under more than one group because it seemed reasonable to be considered by two or more groups, e.g., “continue the dialogue.”

For Planning Commission consideration ...

- Revise regulations so non-contiguous PRDs require affordable component
- Research other communities' efforts
- Setting a realistic goal that the town can work towards
- Continue dialogue

For Selectboard consideration ...

- Support the Selectboard in purchasing an option on an existing dwelling that could b purchased by Habitat for Humanity
- Selectboard create an entity to carry forward the projects that get generated
- Ask voters to approve a sizeable increase in funding to support affordable housing within community accepted parameters

- VHCB model (connect funding for housing and conservation) separate housing and conservation funding
- Move Burns project forward as an ideal model
- Name a committee made up of representatives of this group
- Re-open examination of Burns property → finish the septic examination
- Role for Town to play (for example) guaranteeing purchase price. Take a more active role.
- Proposal for Burns property—complete it.
- Regional/statewide providers, e.g.: Champlain Housing Trust, etc: (1) establish closer relationship, (2) rely on their expertise
- Article(s) for Town Meeting that will facilitate discussion
- Offer a suggestion (or action item) at Town Meeting
- Separate housing and conservation funding
- Continue dialogue

For Affordable Housing Committee consideration ...

- Brochure or literature to educate public on “who” is an affordable housing customer-market this.
- Research other communities’ efforts
- Setting a realistic goal that the town can work towards
- Education
- Public education campaign
- Update the data from the Kennedy report, and look at other towns’ data/experience
- Regional/statewide providers, e.g.: Champlain Housing Trust, etc: (1) establish closer relationship, (2) rely on their expertise
- Dialogue to facilitate participation with those who oppose
- Continue dialogue

For All groups to consider ...

- East Charlotte—tastefully done, in character, etc.
- Name a committee made up of representatives of this group
- Work with what we’ve got
- Continue dialogue

A REQUEST FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

Your response to the following questions would be appreciated.

Please let Dean know your thoughts by Monday, December 15th. dean@townofcharlotte.com

1. Do you have any reactions to the categories used for organizing the meeting information?
2. Would you personally be interested in participating in a future dialogue on this topic?

A PROCESS SUGGESTION TO MOVE FORWARD

The Planning Commission and the Selectboard meet jointly prior to the end of year to review this document and discuss how its content might foster ideas for ways to move forward toward achieving the goal of making affordable housing a reality in the town.

Thank you!