Chatham County Housing Committee
2016-17 Focus on Affordable Rental Housing

Meeting Notes

Thursday, November 3rd, 2016
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Dunlap Classroom, Dunlap Building
80 East Street, Pittsboro

In attendance
Committee members: Dennis Streets (Chair), Pamela Baldwin, Larry Cheek, Tim Cunnup, Jim Crawford, Chip Price
Staff: Bryan Gruesbeck (Pittsboro), John Hodges-Copple (TJCOG), Julia Katz (TJCOG), Tansy Long (Chatham County), Renee Paschal (Chatham County), Aspen Romeyn (TJCOG), Bryan Thompson (Siler City)
Guests: Ronald Graham (NC DHHS, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services), Tyran Hill (NC Housing Coalition), Jake Petrosky (LandDesign)

1. Welcome and Introductions
Chair Dennis Streets introduced draft ground rules:
- Agree to share all relevant information that we think will be helpful as we move forward, be as specific as possible, use examples of things that we see
- It’s fine to disagree, but do it in an agreeable way
- Important to take the time to review information ahead of time, come prepared to provide the feedback from your jurisdiction

Members introduced themselves and described why affordable housing is important to them.

2. Committee Charge and Overview
Aspen Romeyn with Triangle J provided an overview of the committee charge, time line, and product. More information can be found in the “Chatham Housing Committee Framework” attachment.

3. Get on the Same Page
Aspen Romeyn reviewed the results of the short survey that committee members and staff filled out prior to the kickoff meeting. She also provided a brief overview of previous affordable housing initiatives in Chatham County. Julia Katz then presented some of the key affordable housing terms and definitions to more completely describe what the term “affordable housing” means.

4. Presentation on Demographics and Housing Need in Chatham
Julia Katz with Triangle J gave a presentation on demographics and housing need in Chatham County, focusing on households making less than 80% of AMI who are renters. The full presentation can be found in the “Chatham County Housing Presentation 11.03.16” attachment. After the discussion, the committee members had a general discussion about further data points they’d like to see, and what they have observed in their communities.
- To better understand context, asked for the proportion of cost-burdened renters as part of the county population overall. Triangle J staff will bring this information to the next meeting.
- The slide on cost-burdened renter households shows a high concentration in the northeast corner of the county. There was a question of if that was students or another population. Mr. Crawford, who lives in that area, said it used to be students but now he sees more families.
- There was some discussion about how to better understand who lives in these areas with high proportions of cost-burdened renters. Triangle J staff will bring information on age of householder by location to the next meeting.
- Mr. Cunnup asked how the Fair Market Rent is set – saying it seems skewed. Triangle J staff explained that it’s set by HUD based on a metro area, which in Chatham’s case includes Orange and Durham Counties. The Fair Market Rent is used to establish how much rent a Section 8 voucher will cover, above and beyond what voucher-holder puts towards rent. Chatham residents benefit because their rents are typically lower than the FMR for the metro area.
- Mr. Crawford noted that Chatham County set up a fund with the Chatham Housing Authority to help voucher-holders cover the security deposit. The fund was started with a $13,000 lump sum up front and will be reimbursed by security deposit refunds when the tenant moves out. The program has been in place for about a year, so he suggested we ask for data on how many households the Housing Authority has been able to serve with the fund.
- Ms. Long asked a general question about the sustainability of this process, and if the product of this committee will be able to transcend politics and turnover on the elected boards. The group agreed that was an important question and agreed to keep it on the table for further discussion at future meetings.
- A few other observations were made about the data presented:
  o There’s a disparity between single-person households and the number of one-bedroom units in the existing housing stock.
  o The proportion of cost-burdened households in Siler City is very high – 61% in south, 48% in north
  o Bennett/Bear Creek township has a high proportion of cost-burdened households too – not where you would expect to see it – we should look into what is happening there.
  o Goldston’s median household income is higher than expected
- There was discussion about how, from a public information perspective, it is important to make the point that everyday people’s incomes don’t match up with housing costs. Mr. Crawford noted that that means other things get squeezed, you don’t take vacations, don’t have kids go on field trips, etc. We’re starting with housing but this is really about how people can raise their family – it’s not about the house, it’s about the family. If we’re successful, we’ll make families sounder. Ms. Baldwin added that it’s the full picture from A to Z, looking at the whole family, because there are people who either pay their rent or can’t eat.
- Mr. Streets noted that, as another point for future discussion, we should continue to think about how we educate the public about our conversations and get public input on the topic. Specifically, what strategies should we use, and do we do it during the process or after the committee’s work concludes? Tansy Long noted that she will post all meeting materials on the County’s webpage as we go. There will be opportunities for input on housing issues during the Chatham County Comprehensive Plan update process. The committee generally felt that they need to continue educating themselves about the issue before they bring anything forward for public input.

5. Discussion of Further Information Needed
The committee had an open discussion about further information they’d like Triangle J staff to gather. In addition, Triangle J is hosting an informal focus group with developers, landlords, and other housing practitioners, and the committee discussed questions they had for the focus group.
- There are developments in other places that include a variety of housing sizes and price points, such as Reedy Fork Ranch estates in Greensboro. Would they do something similar here, and begin with something that includes rental?
- What’s the most important thing that we (a town or county government) can do? Where’s our biggest leverage point? Subsidy, fees, land, etc.
- Largest concern for affordable housing – real estate prices are so high, and they’re only going up. How can we attract investors to come and be a part of the county?
- How many people are on waiting lists for the income-based apartments in Chatham County?
- Ask what we should avoid – what incentives, policies, programs haven’t been helpful?
- Often there are heir properties that are left vacant or come up for rent but only rent through word of mouth. Can we somehow tap into these heir properties to add to the stock of available rentals?
- There may be a need for landlord education about Section 8 vouchers and how they work, may help get more landlords to accept them.
- Even if we get more units, people from neighboring communities could move in, because there is a lack of affordable housing across the Triangle.
- Do developers need water/sewer for all affordable housing projects?
- Are there any models for affordable housing developments that do not require water/sewer access? Shared septic systems, etc.
- Would they be willing to come to Chatham and help answer questions from developers/investors as part of an educational event?
- Are there other stakeholders we should be engaging? The Chatham County Comprehensive Plan will have public input in early spring. Some issues are emerging that are related to housing, including food access and health.

6. Revisit and finalize the charge of the committee

Mr. Streets revisited the charge of the committee, and all agreed that it feels appropriate. There was a quick discussion on ground rules and public comment.
- Want to educate ourselves before we come out to the public. TJCOG can help identify strategies and ways to frame it effectively. If education comes at the end of our process that would be okay, will be an ongoing process and carry through to the next work group.
- Want to be inviting to the public – if we have any member of the public who wants to make a comment, we try to do that on the front end, allow as much as 10 minutes, have them sign in and speak if they wish.
- Generally include clarifying questions as we go through a presentation, and have time for further discussion at the end.

7. Future Meeting Dates

Aspen will send out a Doodle poll to identify the next meeting day and time, but future meetings will generally follow the below framework.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Meeting Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late January – Siler City</td>
<td>Finalize key outcomes and goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>March – Pittsboro</td>
<td>Deep dive on specific priority issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>May – Siler City</td>
<td>Deep dive on specific priority issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>June – Pittsboro</td>
<td>Deep dive on specific priority issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>July – Siler City</td>
<td>Review and refine recommendations</td>
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Next steps: Email Aspen or Julia with any additional thoughts or questions between now and the next meeting, and respond to the Doodle poll to decide on the next meeting date.