

June 26, 2012



Chester County Housing Options Task Force

Initiative of Landscapes2



Summary and Action Plan

Prepared by: Housing Options Task Force Executive Committee

I. Introduction to the Housing Issue

The Chester County Board of Commissioners adopted *Landscapes2*, the County's Comprehensive Policy Plan, in November of 2009. The Plan puts forth Guiding Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Actions related to the following eleven planning elements.

Land Use	Housing
Natural Resources	Utilities and Infrastructure
Open Space and Greenways	Community Services
Agriculture	Economic Development
Historic Resources	Energy Conservation
Transportation	

Landscapes2 was developed through a process of significant public participation and input. A public survey and multiple focus group meetings were conducted in Phase 1 of Plan development. Phase 2 involved the drafting of the elements and was guided by a steering committee made up of stakeholders representing diverse countywide interests. Phase 3 featured multiple public meetings, an interactive public comment website, and ultimately, the adoption of the plan. Throughout this process, several topics of concern were consistently raised by participants. Housing affordability was the most frequently heard concern during this process. The general consensus was that there is a significant lack of affordable housing countywide.

The high cost of housing has been an issue of concern in Chester County for a number of years. Since 2000, housing costs have risen significantly. The median sales price for a home increased by 66 percent between 2000 and 2007. Rental costs also experienced major increases over that period of time. Since 2007, home sales prices fell somewhat with the economic downturn but essentially leveled off through 2011. The demand for moderately-priced ownership or rental options has not lessened. Shifts in the mortgage industry have made homeownership more difficult even for middle-income households. One impact of the tightening of the mortgage market is an increased demand for rental units. Some households have experienced job losses, and some have lost homes to foreclosure. In the current economic climate, Chester County residents would benefit from a more diverse and affordable housing supply.

Housing is generally considered "affordable" if it costs no more than 30 percent of the household's gross monthly income. For upper-income households, there is not much challenge in finding adequate housing that is affordable. However, for many low to moderate-income, and, to a degree, middle-income, households in the county, it has become an unachievable goal. The Housing element of *Landscapes2* was developed in a large part to address these concerns from a policy and planning perspective. The following *Landscapes2* Housing Goal and Priority Action formed the basis for creation of a Task Force.

Landscapes2 Goal for Housing:

Provide diverse and affordable housing options countywide, consistent with the principles of Smart Growth and sustainability, to meet the needs of all households.

Landscapes2 Priority Action:

Form a county-wide Housing Options Task Force charged with identifying regulatory barriers to affordable housing, and developing strategies for reducing the barriers.

II. The Housing Options Task Force

The charge of the Chester County Planning Commission is to promote implementation of the *Landscapes2* Priority Actions. Creation of the Housing Options Task Force was the first step in implementing the housing element of the Plan. The Planning Commission was joined by the Department of Community Development, the Homebuilders Association of Chester and Delaware Counties, the Suburban West Realtors Association, and the Suburban Realtors Alliance, in a partnership that formed a core group from which the Task Force was developed.

The core group, or “Executive Committee,” hosted the Chester County Affordable Housing Forum in December of 2010. More than 25 stakeholders from around the County gathered to discuss the issue of housing affordability. These stakeholders were invited to join an effort committed to making a tangible impact on this issue in Chester County. From the discussion at the Forum, a series of workshop topics was developed, and many of the stakeholders in attendance agreed to serve on the Task Force. The Executive Committee was retained to provide ongoing staff and administrative support for Task Force efforts.

In support of the Goal and Action described above, the following mission statement for the Housing Options Task Force was adopted:

Support the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the Landscapes2 Plan for Housing and achieve implementation of the Plan Actions through partnership efforts between the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

Formation of the Task Force was the start of a year-long process of inquiry and discussion which was characterized by varied opinions and perspectives related to housing affordability.

III. The Process

The Housing Options Task Force hosted ten monthly workshops from February to November of 2011. Each workshop focused on the study of a specific topic related to housing affordability in Chester County, and was conducted with the goal of developing strategies to implement “on-the-ground” change in housing affordability and diversity countywide.

A brief summary of each workshop is provided below.

(1) February 2011: Low and Moderate-Income Housing
Government Services Center, West Chester

Speakers: Pat Bokovitz, Executive Director
Department of Community Development

Dale Gravett, Executive Director
Housing Authority of the County of Chester

This topic was particularly relevant to the work of the Chester County Department of Community Development, which administers activities funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) entitlement programs – the Community Development Block Grant, the HOME Investment Partnerships, and the Emergency Shelter/Solutions Grant. Community education emerged as the major theme of the Task Force discussion. Other suggested strategies included hosting an annual housing forum, researching best practices, and providing incentives for affordable housing development.

(2) March 2011: Homeless Assistance
The Brandywine Center, Coatesville

Format: Clustering Activity

Word cluster headings used in this exercise included Accessibility, Impediments, At-Risk Groups, Vision/Mobilization, Solutions/Partnerships, Supports to Prevent Homelessness, Continuum of Care, Barriers, Housing Strategies, and Economic/Political Environment. Common themes of the discussion were researching the root causes and preventing homelessness, the need for planning, addressing joblessness, creating partnerships/collaborations, increasing public awareness, and recognizing the new “face of homelessness.”

(3) April 2011: Senior Housing
Westminster Place Senior Apartments, Parkesburg Borough

Speakers: Jim Thomas, Borough Manager
Parkesburg Borough

Michael Carper, Executive Director
Housing Development Corporation of Lancaster County (HDC)

The discussion centered on the partnership between Parkesburg Borough and HDC in developing Westminster Place apartments. The Task Force was very interested in the possibility of using this project as a model for development in other communities. The developer made the points that affordable senior housing is usually welcomed, but affordable family housing often is not. It helps if there is a problem with the site that the project will correct. One negative aspect for the community is that senior housing can put a strain on emergency services. The Task Force suggested that the County develop a model zoning district for affordable senior housing and also consider measures that would allow seniors to “age in place.”

(4) May 2011: General Occupancy Rental
Government Services Center, West Chester

Speaker: George Beer
Delaware Valley Development Company (DVDC)

DVDC develops and manages general occupancy rental properties (units are not reserved for specific populations). The residents are working people and most are already living in the community. Some of the issues that DVDC faces include neighborhood opposition (misconceptions of the prospective tenants, concerns about property values, more school age children), complicated funding scenarios, and density limitations. The Task Force suggested that local officials should be required to attend training, possibly through local municipal planning courses. Also, the County should prepare fiscal impact studies to show that multi-family housing does not have a greater impact on schools than single-family housing. It was agreed that general-occupancy rental is a significant need countywide.

(5) June 2011: Migrant and Immigrant Housing
Government Services Center, West Chester

Speakers: Brant Kucera, Borough Manager
Kennett Square Borough

Chris Alonzo, President
Pietro Mushrooms

Guillermo Rivera
Alliance for Better Housing/Pathstone

The speakers at this workshop noted that there has been significant growth in the immigrant Latino population in southern Chester County. A large majority of workers at Pietro Mushrooms are Latino, and most Latinos in the area are employed in the mushroom industry or in landscaping. Some workers are housed on site but most need to find housing elsewhere. In some cases immigrants are living in substandard conditions. Affordable housing options for the immigrant population are limited. The Task Force suggested a compilation of case studies for successful affordable housing development; a model zoning district for housing diversity and density; an inventory of available property for high density development; and allowance of housing development on site for mushroom or landscape workers.

(6) July 2011: Housing Rehabilitation
Government Services Center, West Chester

Speaker: Jim Ford, Executive Director
Good Works, Inc.

Substandard housing continues to be a generally unrecognized problem in Chester County, related to the incidence of poverty. This issue is of particular concern within the City of Coatesville and other urban centers in the County. Economic conditions have caused an increase in the number of requests for housing rehabilitation assistance. The Task Force discussed the need for assisting people to move out of poverty, the importance of the positive impact of rehabilitation on neighborhoods, and the need for rehabilitation services as part of the affordable housing strategy for the County.

(7) August 2011: Special Needs Housing/Fair Housing
Suburban Realtors Alliance, Malvern

Speakers: Carolyn Johnson
Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania

Catherine Friedman
Handi-Crafters, Inc.

The speakers addressed the need for public acceptance of diverse communities. Incidences of possible housing discrimination have been documented in Chester County. The need for accessible housing will increase with the growth of the senior population. Task Force recommendations included incentives for developers/builders to incorporate “universal design” into home designs; providing tools for developers to use early in the process; and finding

inclusive models that have worked in other places and applying them to Chester County. An important consideration is achieving a balanced diversity of housing in the community.

(8) September 2011: Redevelopment and Infill

Speakers: Pat Bokovitz, Executive Director
Department of Community Development

Sarah Peck, President
Progressive Housing Ventures

The County, through DCD, has funded a number of affordable housing projects that are examples of redevelopment; most are senior housing located within urban centers. Many redevelopment sites have environmental cleanup issues. Affordable multi-family housing can be done as infill. A strategy is needed to develop affordable housing without public money; appropriate density is the key. Affordable housing is easier to accomplish when there is a problem to fix on the site. The Task Force would like to see a density study, possibly of West Chester, to show what high density “feels like.” Also, a community organizer would be helpful, to educate neighbors about a proposed project. There is also a need for affordable housing outside of the urban centers. The task force suggested that an affordable housing advocate is needed. The state should coordinate its review processes with the local reviews. The County could host design charrettes to show how density could work.

(9) October 2011: Green Affordable Housing

The Potter Building at Eagleview, Exton

Speakers: Jim Fuller
The Hankin Group

Tim Henkel
Pennrose Properties

The speakers at this workshop discussed the standards for LEED certification of multi-family housing, the availability of tax credits for solar energy features, and the need for designers/contractors who are knowledgeable about green building technology. The Task Force discussion focused on the green building code that was under development for use by municipalities. Consumers need to be educated about the benefits of green construction. The Task Force concluded that the new senior building at Eagleview could be used as a model for successfully developing affordable housing in the same community as market rate housing.

(10) November 2011: Workforce Housing

The Chester County Economic Development Council, Exton

Speakers: Gary Smith, Executive Director
Chester County Economic Development Council

Erin Smist, Government Affairs Manager
Suburban Realtors Alliance

This workshop focused on the need for housing that serves the county's working individuals and families. The CCEDC had previously explored the area of employer-assisted housing but had not found interested employers in Chester County. Economic challenges have been felt across all sectors. Some employers have staff that cannot find affordable housing near their workplace in the county. Realtors are working on developing an inventory of available publically owned properties. The task force suggested that transit-oriented development is one strategy that could incorporate workforce housing. Chester County needs to be the advocate for affordable housing.

Public Outreach Committee

In April of 2011, a subcommittee of the Task Force was formed to brainstorm ideas for public outreach and advocacy for affordable housing in the County. Public relations and community education are ideas that were discussed by the Task Force at the December 2010 forum and many of the following workshop meetings. The goal of the outreach committee was to create a set of marketing materials that would educate and inform communities about the need for, and benefits of, moderately-priced housing in the county. Many of the ideas discussed by the Public Outreach Committee have been incorporated into the strategies outlined for Goal 1, Education and Advocacy, discussed below.

Financial Institutions Meeting

In October of 2011, the Housing Options Task Force hosted a specialized workshop for Task Force members and representatives from local and regional financial institutions that participate in lending for residential development and/or are providers of home mortgage loans. The discussion at this workshop focused upon the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) and the actions that banks must take in meeting the requirements of the Act. The CRA states that lenders have a responsibility to serve low-income and moderate-income borrowers and census tracts. Lending for affordable housing is part of the CRA rating that a lender receives. The lenders suggested that developers in Chester County work with a consultant and create a loan pool for affordable housing development. Finding donated land is a recommended option to keep development costs down. Also, developers could work with community lenders like the Reinvestment Fund. The Task Force members agreed that more study on the topic of development financing is needed.

IV. Action Plan

The following plan of action reflects the recommendations and findings of the Housing Options Task Force. Actions are presented under five goals, including education and advocacy, information, partnerships, infrastructure and regulation. Together, these actions can champion diversified housing choices in Chester County.

To be successful, these actions must involve partnerships involving a variety of stakeholders. Further, limited resources may not allow all actions to advance simultaneously. As such, each action is assigned who will be responsible for advancing the action, a target timeframe for it to be carried out, and a status of any progress that has been made as of April 2012.

GOAL 1 EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

A common theme heard throughout the Task Force workshops was the need to provide education, and advocate for, the benefits of moderately-priced housing throughout the County. Common misconceptions about affordable housing can create barriers to development that are difficult to overcome. The Task Force identified strategies to be implemented that will support ongoing education and advocacy efforts for removing those barriers and ultimately achieving a greater diversity of housing countywide.

Strategy 1-A: Create a housing advocacy non-profit.

Description: A new non-profit entity will be formed to spearhead the implementation of the Housing Options Task Force Action Plan. This non-profit will develop a strategy for an extensive public outreach campaign for the positive marketing of affordable housing. A trained facilitator will be available to assist developers and municipalities to work together in support of affordable housing development.

Responsibility: Stakeholders; Chester County

Time frame: 1-3 years

Status: Will begin 2012

Resources: Lancaster Housing Opportunity Partnership
<http://lhop.org/>

Strategy 1-B: Create a set of definitions of key terms related to the topic of housing affordability.

Description: The terms and definitions will be used for development of case studies and marketing materials described in Strategies 1-C and 1-D.

Responsibility: Chester County; Stakeholders

Time frame: Immediate

Status: Underway 2012

Resources: Affordable Housing Dictionary <http://www.communitybenefits.org/section.php?id=238>

Strategy 1-C: Develop a series of case studies representing best practices in affordable and workforce housing.

Description: The case studies will address each of the Housing Options Task Force workshop topics and serve as models for development, redevelopment, or maintenance of affordable housing.

Responsibility: Chester County; Stakeholders

Time frame: 1-2 years

Status: Will begin 2012

Resources: <http://casestudies.uli.org/>

Strategy 1-D: Create affordable housing marketing materials.

Description: The case studies (Strategy 1-C) will be incorporated into a marketing campaign targeted to county residents and municipal officials. Additional outreach may include short video clips of residents in need of affordable housing; economic impact studies; and Power Point presentations to municipalities.

Responsibility: Chester County; Stakeholders

Time frame: 1-2 years

Status: Underway

Resources: Lancaster Housing Opportunity Partnership
<http://lhop.org/>

Strategy 1-E: Integrate housing for farm workers and other Latinos into the greater community, with a focus on southern Chester County.

Description: A study of housing options for Latinos and other low-income workers in southern Chester County will be conducted. The study will result in an implementation plan that will address the housing affordability and transportation access issues that are identified.

Responsibility: Chester County; Stakeholders

Time frame: 2-5 years

Status: Underway

Resources: <http://www.pathstone.org/>

Strategy 1-F: Implement the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

Description: Implementation of the Plan will occur through the following five Strategies: 1) Building a Foundation; 2) Prevention; 3) Housing; 4) Staying Housed; and 5) Data. This is the second phase of the County's Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness.

Responsibility: Chester County; Decade to Doorways Leadership Consortium; Stakeholders

Time frame: 5-10 years

Status: Underway

Resources: Chester County "Decade to Doorways" Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness: http://www.chesco.org/ccdcd/lib/ccdcd/2011/decade_to_doorways_final_10_11.pdf

GOAL 2 INFORMATION

As an extension of the Education and Advocacy goal, data and other fact-based information can be used to support efforts by local non-profits and developers to apply for funding for affordable housing activities. Comprehensive studies of housing affordability, substandard housing conditions, and transportation related issues would serve to inform the advocacy efforts described above.

Strategy 2-A: Conduct a countywide housing needs assessment.

Description: The study should quantify the need for housing serving households at various income levels. This documentation will be useful for developers of affordable housing looking to document the need for moderately-priced units.

Responsibility: Chester County; Stakeholders; Municipalities

Time frame: 2-5 years

Status: Requires funding

Resources: Centre County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment:
A Blueprint for Action

<http://www.co.centre.pa.us/planning/housing.asp#blueprint>

Strategy 2 -B: Maintain existing affordable units; identify resources to conduct a countywide study of substandard housing.

Description: Homeowner rehabilitation programs will continue to serve eligible low and moderate-income households in need of home repair assistance. The data from a substandard housing study would support requests for grant funding that is needed to sustain these programs.

Responsibility: Chester County; Stakeholders; Volunteers

Time frame: Ongoing; 2-5 years

Status: Substandard Housing Study requires funding

Resources: <http://www.housingpartnershipcc.com/>

Strategy 2-C: Create a comprehensive affordable housing information resource.

Description: Funding will be identified to support the development and maintenance of a comprehensive housing resource website. Features may include resources for developers, a call-in number, links to best practices, funding opportunities, and an affordable housing locator.

Responsibility: Chester County; Stakeholders (Housing Non-profits)

Time frame: 2-5 years

Status: Requires funding
Resources: www.housingpolicy.org

Strategy 2-D: Study the relationship between transportation and housing affordability.

Description: The Housing and Transportation Affordability Index will be studied for its applicability to Chester County municipalities. In addition, the County will research the impact of various transportation modes on the availability of affordable housing.

Responsibility: Chester County, TMAAC

Time frame: 2-5 years
Status: Requires funding
Resources: Housing and Transportation Affordability Index
<http://htaindex.cnt.org/>

Strategy 2-E: Create an inventory of publicly-owned and available properties.

Description: An inventory of publicly-owned properties available for development (particularly sites in need of remediation) will be assembled and maintained for general use by interested municipalities and developers.

Responsibility: Stakeholders (Realtors)

Time frame: Ongoing
Status: Underway
Resources: <http://parealtorcore.com/>

Strategy 2-F: Share information with municipalities about the Housing Authority of the County of Chester (HACC).

Description: County staff will work with HACC to develop methods of sharing information about the Housing Choice Voucher Program and HACC public housing with landlords, residents and municipal officials.

Responsibility: HACC; Chester County; Municipalities

Time frame: 1 year

Status: Underway
Resources: Housing Authority of the County of Chester
<http://www.haccnet.org/>

GOAL 3 PARTNERSHIPS

The importance of partnerships to address housing affordability in Chester County became apparent throughout the workshop sessions of the Task Force. Public sector, private-sector, and non-profit entities each bring unique and valuable perspectives to the discussion. They also each bring resources that benefit others through collaboration. County government, local realtors, builders, service providers, housing advocates, and others came together to develop this action plan and those partnerships need to continue.

Strategy 3-A: Host and facilitate an annual housing forum.

Description: The December 2010 Housing Forum will become an annual event; perhaps a half-day or full-day. It will be a re-convening of the Task Force and other community stakeholders to review progress, renew partnerships, and recommend an appropriate course of action forward. This forum could also provide an opportunity for updates on the progress of “Decade to Doorways,” the County’s ten year plan to end and prevent homelessness.

Responsibility: Housing Options Task Force

Time frame: 1 year

Status: Target for April 2013

Resources: Chester County Housing Forum, December 2010 http://www.chesco.org/planning/lib/planning/housingtaskforce/forum120710_ppoint.pdf

Strategy 3-B: Maintain public/private partnerships.

Description: The public sector will work with the private and non-profit sectors to build upon the efforts of the Housing Options Task Force and implement the strategies identified within the 2012 Action Plan.

Responsibility: Chester County; Housing Options Task Force; Stakeholders

Time frame: 1 year

Status: Ongoing

Resources: Housing Options Task Force
<http://www.landscapes2.org/HousingTaskForce/>

Strategy 3-C: Provide housing counseling.

Description: Housing agencies will continue to be supported in their efforts to provide homeownership counseling and down payment/closing cost assistance to first-time homebuyers.

Responsibility: Chester County; Stakeholders (Housing non-profits)

Time frame: 1 year

Status: Ongoing

Resources: Housing Partnership of Chester County
<http://www.housingpartnershipcc.com/>
Habitat for Humanity of Chester County
<http://hfhcc.org/>
Open Hearth
<http://openhearthisc.org/>

Strategy 3-D: Link senior housing to services.

Description: Developers will incorporate service delivery into their development plans for affordable senior housing. Services may include public transit, health care, physical fitness programs, and meal programs, among others.

Responsibility: Chester County;
Stakeholders (Affordable housing developers; service providers)
Senior Centers

Time frame: 2-5 years

Status: Requires funding

Resources: Philadelphia Corporation for Aging
<http://www.pcacares.org/>

GOAL 4 INFRASTRUCTURE

Utility and transportation infrastructure are critical to supporting the housing densities often needed for the successful development or redevelopment of affordable housing. Some areas of Chester County are well-served by public infrastructure and other areas are greatly underserved. Rural and agricultural areas are often not appropriate for the extension of

infrastructure. There are, however, areas where growth is targeted that do not have the infrastructure needed to support it. The following strategies attempt to address the infrastructure issues related to affordable housing.

Strategy 4-A: Promote transit-oriented development

Description: The Vision Partnership Program (VPP) and the Community Revitalization Program (CRP) will support transit-oriented development (TOD) plans.

Responsibility: Chester County; Municipalities; Developers

Time frame: Immediate

Status: Will begin 2012

Resources: DVRPC: Transit Oriented Development
<http://www.dvrpc.org/TOD>

Strategy 4-B: Support infrastructure improvements.

Description: Municipalities will work with the County and other municipalities to plan for public sewer and water service or service upgrades, where appropriate.

Responsibility: Municipalities; Public Sewer Authorities; Chester County

Time frame: 2-5 years

Status: Requires funding

Resources: Chester County Community Revitalization Program
http://dsf.chesco.org/ccdcd/lib/ccdcd/2007/crp-guidelines_revisions_2007.pdf

Strategy 4-C: Maintain and expand public transit.

Description: The County will work with local and regional transportation providers to assess the possibility of expanding public transit routes, with a focus on western and southern Chester County.

Responsibility: Chester County; Municipalities;
DVRPC; SEPTA; TMACC; SCCOOT

Time frame: Ongoing / Long Term
Status: Research and planning ongoing; implementation will require funding
Resources: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
<http://www.dvrpc.org>

GOAL 5 REGULATION

The anchor of this action plan, and the basis for making real change in the area of housing affordability in Chester County, is local land use regulation. Creative and innovative solutions and approaches are needed to create communities where adequate housing is available to individuals and families of all income levels. Providing housing options that are located in proximity to employment centers and public transit is now considered “smart growth.” Local planning documents and ordinance regulations will need to factor in flexibility for higher densities, mixed-uses, and mixed-income communities. Traditional Neighborhood Design and Transit-Oriented Development will be important tools for municipalities to use in achieving these smart growth goals.

Strategy 5-A: Distribute affordable units through smart growth development practices.

Description: The County will work with municipalities to plan for the development of affordable housing near employment centers and with access to public transportation, utilizing TND or TOD tools in designated growth areas.

Responsibility: Chester County; Municipalities; Consultants

Time frame: 5-10 years

Status: Will begin 2012

Resources: Smart Growth America

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/issues/housing/>

Strategy 5-B: Promote mixed-income communities with medium to high density housing.

Description: The County will work with municipalities to develop land use regulations that support a greater diversity of housing options that are affordable to individuals and families at a variety of income levels.

Responsibility: Chester County; Municipalities; Affordable housing developers

Time frame: 2-5 years

Status: Underway

Resources: Vision Partnership Program
www.chesco.org/planning/VPP

Strategy 5-C: Provide resources that encourage “visitability” and accessibility and promote universal design.

Description: Advocates for the disabled will share information with municipalities and developers related to accessibility early in the process. Local ordinances can be amended to support accessible/visitable residential design.

Responsibility: Chester County; Stakeholders (disability advocates; architects)

Time frame: 1 year+

Status: Will begin 2012

Resources: VisitAbility in Pennsylvania
http://www.sdhp.org/promoting_visitability_in_pennsy.htm

Strategy 5-D: Develop a model ordinance for senior housing.

Description: The County will develop model ordinance standards to support developers and municipalities working together to create elder-friendly communities.

Responsibility: Chester County

Time frame: 1 year

Status: Underway

Resources: <http://www.seniorresource.com/house.htm>

Strategy 5-E: Simplify the land development approvals process and reduce development costs.

Description: Through projects funded by the Vision Partnership Program, municipalities will review conditional use requirements and amend as needed to support innovative development.

Responsibility: Municipalities; Chester County; Consultants

Time frame: 2-5 years

Status: Will begin 2012
Resources: PA Municipalities Planning Code
<http://mpc.landuselawinpa.com/MPCCode.pdf>

Strategy 5-F: Link County funding to affordable housing.

Description: County grant program guidelines will be revised to provide incentives for municipalities to support affordable housing development.

Responsibility: Chester County

Time frame: 1-2 years
Status: Will begin 2013
Resources: Vision Partnership Program
www.chesco.org/planning/VPP

V. Implementation

This document represents the end of one process and the beginning of another. Implementation of the Action Plan Strategies described above has, in some cases, already begun. With the leadership of the Executive Committee, additional strategies will move forward as resources will allow. Implementation will require existing partnerships to continue and new partnerships to be formed. The County may take the lead on many of the strategies but will be looking to stakeholders and municipalities to support and promote the efforts. In addition, the Public Outreach Committee will reconvene to assess which specific strategies should be pursued in the current year. The particular focus for the subcommittee will be the strategies associated with Goal 1: Education and Advocacy. Those strategies will ultimately be packaged into a community education tool with an emphasis on presentations for municipal officials.

The Action Plan has been designed such that many of the education components, when implemented, will lead to the involvement of additional stakeholders to assist the Task Force with moving forward with other initiatives. There is also an expectation that new strategies will be identified and implemented as appropriate to the goals of the Plan. The Task Force Executive Committee will continue to meet periodically to review progress to date on the Action Plan and to coordinate the continuing efforts of the plan partners.

VI. Conclusion

Landscapes2 has a vision for the future, achieved through a balance between growth and preservation. Part of that balance, in a move toward sustainability, is providing quality, affordable housing options for current and future residents of Chester County. The Housing Options Task Force has studied the issues and created an Action Plan for change. Partnerships between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors will be critical to implementation. Reducing or eliminating the barriers to increased housing diversity requires a multidisciplinary team approach. Ultimately municipal officials and County residents must become participants and be supporters of the changes needed to achieve the goals of the Plan.

The effort to create more housing diversity countywide may be getting additional support from market forces. There are signs that the housing market is slowly shifting. Nationwide the demand is increasing for smaller, more moderately-priced units. In some places in Chester County, plans for the development of owner-occupied units have changed in favor of rentals to meet anticipated market demand. The concept of a mix of uses, which may include moderately-priced rental units built above commercial or office space, is gaining in acceptance with some municipalities. This type of progress is encouraging. There is still, however, a long way to go toward achieving adequate housing diversity for Chester County. The Housing Options Task Force must continue the momentum of the strategies that are already underway and put in motion new initiatives as identified in the Action Plan. Through this process Chester County will advance in its understanding and acceptance of adequate housing options that meet the needs of every resident.

Members of the 2011 Housing Options Task Force

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