

Executive Director's Notes

December 11, 2006

This is our last Housing Update for 2006. Thanks to all of you who have supported the Housing Coalition by being a member. Thank you also to all of you who contacted your state legislator in support of the Campaign for Housing Carolina.

I was back in Washington DC last week for the Housing Assistance Council's *Rural Housing Conference*. I spoke on a panel on manufactured housing, specifically on our policy work in the General Assembly. I picked up some great information on Green Building, USDA funding and other topics while getting to meet folks from around the country as well as catch up with the other folks there from NC.

North Carolina Housing News

The Center for Responsible Lending has released a new report on PayDay Lending entitled *Pay Day Lending=Financial Quicksand*. Click [here](#) to access the file from our Research page or click [here](#) to visit CRL's website.

Tomorrow, the **National Low Income Housing Coalition** will release the **2006 Out of Reach** report. I hope to put out an Op-Ed to the state's major papers using the new statistics and attention that ABC's Extreme Home Improvement has generated in the state by choosing a Raleigh family for a new home.

Articles in this Update include: Durham nonprofit gets funding for rehab work, Winston-Salem Housing Authority gets a new director, Davidson County looks raising affordability targets for single-family programs, Goldsboro shelter struggles to re-open, Statesville shelter launches capital campaign for new building, Asheville Habitat welcomes five new owners, Charlotte homelessness exceeds capacity, Rocky Mount starts 10 Year Plan effort, families evicted from mobile home park in Weaverville for Wal-Mart, Charlotte looks at limiting number of renters per unit, and several more.

Membership Survey!!!

We are interested in getting your feedback. Please take the time to complete a short member survey to give us your thoughts on our work, services and conference. This is important information that will help us in our planning and increase our ability to keep the Housing Coalition growing. [Clicking on this link will take you a page on our website that will explain more about the survey.](#) It is a web-based document that should only take you a few minutes to fill out.

National Housing News

It looks like Congress will not undertake any final budget work for 2007 budget before adjourning for Christmas. Continuing resolutions have been passed through the middle of February. Continuing 2006 funding in the form of these continuing resolutions results in actual funding losses for programs because of rising costs for most housing programs.

Please visit our [Federal Housing Budget Update](#) page on our website to see the four Housing Priorities as proposed by the **National Low Income Housing Coalition**. Click [here](#) to view that page to get the latest on HUD, USDA, and especially CDBG funding recommendations.

Annual Housing Conference - Save the Date!

Our **2007 Annual Housing Conference with CICNC** is scheduled for **May 8th & 9th** in **Winston-Salem** again. Please mark your calendars now! As part of the conference planning we will be convening an **Outreach Committee** to assist with planning the workshops offered at the conference. Participation on this committee is open to any member of the Housing Coalition. [If you are interested, please contact John Niffenegger at \[jniff\\(at\\)nchousing.org\]\(mailto:jniff\(at\)nchousing.org\).](#)

Happy Holidays,

Chris Estes
Executive Director

We thank our **Investors' Council** members:

- [Wachovia](#)
- [SunTrust](#)
- [NC Housing Finance Agency](#)
- [Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta](#)
- [RBC Centura](#)
- [Reznick Group](#)
- [BB&T](#)
- [Bank of America](#)
- [Carolina First Bank](#)

[Announcements/Jobs](#)

[Member Spotlight](#)

[This Week's Articles:](#)

House to be made a women's shelter

Council to OK \$138K for nonprofit

The New Leader

More in middle class may get into affordable homes

Next steps planned for Lighthouse

There's hope for Fifth Street's shelter

5 families get new homes through Habitat

Room for Charlotte homeless running low

Area eyes homeless situation

Families evicted from mobile home park

Raleigh 'reality' wasn't, really

How many is too many in a house?

County to revisit trailer rules

FEMA again ordered to restart housing payments

Public housing leaders look to gates for safety

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NC Housing Coalition Member Satisfaction Survey is Online!

In order to better serve you in the future, we have developed a brief member satisfaction survey, available online. The purpose of this survey is to learn more about your perception of and experience with the NC Housing Coalition. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential, and will be used to help us improve our services and better respond to the needs of our members. To take his survey, which should only take a couple of minutes to complete, please click [here](#).

Out of Reach 2006 to be released on December 12

Out of Reach 2006, the **National Low Income Housing Coalition's** annual report that compares rental housing costs and income levels in states, metropolitan areas and counties nationwide, will be released on December 12. A conference call to unveil the report to the media is scheduled for 10 a.m. NLIHC will also host a web chat on KnowledgePlex to discuss the Out of Reach data on December 13 at 2 p.m. Information on logging into the chat is available at www.knowledgeplex.org/xchat.html.

North Carolina Housing Coalition invites you to attend a Fair Housing/ Reasonable Accommodations Training featuring representatives from the NC Justice Center, NC Department of Health and Human Services, and NC Legal Aid.

The training will focus on the rights and responsibilities of tenants with disabilities under federal Fair Housing laws, including Reasonable Accommodations, and NC Landlord-Tenant Law.

This training is **free** and **open to the public**, and targeted to **self advocates** and **service providers**.

- **Winterville (Greenville): January 22, 2007**
- **Fayetteville: January 25, 2007**
- **Winston-Salem: January 29, 2007**
- **Gastonia: January 30, 2007**
- **Asheville: January 31, 2007**
- **Raleigh: February 1, 2007**

Due to room limitations, **registration is required before January 15, 2007**.

For more information, click [here](#).

Impact 2006 – A Legislative Briefing: An Overview of the North Carolina State Budget, Economic Forecast, and Issues Affecting Your Community

Join your colleagues and peers for a legislative briefing. Hear perspectives on the 2006 Short Session and a forecast for the 2007 Long Session.

The **North Carolina Budget & Tax Center** will share its insights on:

- The recently adopted state budget. What will it mean for state and local government services and nonprofit organizations?
- North Carolina's economic future. What are the major issues facing North Carolina's workers? What are the pros and cons of various proposals for improving the economic situation?

Major health and human service issues such as:

- Affordable housing
- Child-care subsidies
- Homelessness, and more

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

Elaine Mejia, Director, NC Budget & Tax Center
Sorien Schmidt, Legislative Director, NC Justice Center
Jill Cox, Government Relations Director, United Way of NC

Charlotte Friday, **December 15 8:30 -11 a.m.**

BellSouth Auditorium
300 S Brevard Street
RSVP (704) 371-6205

Scholarships available for Systems Change Conference

Scholarships to cover Registration Costs are available for persons with disabilities and family members to attend this conference!!!!

EVENT: We Can Get There From Here – 2 Day Conference

LOCATIONS AND DATES:

December 11 -12
Asheville Renaissance
1 Thomas Wolfe Plaza
Asheville, NC 28801
828-252-8211

January 8 – 9

The Royal Banquet and Conference Center
3801 Hillsborough St.
Raleigh, NC 27607

DESCRIPTION:

Facilitated by Michael Kendrick and Dennis Harkins (experts in local, state and national systems change efforts), this event will feature presentations by state officials, the NCCDD, LMEs, advocates, providers and other stakeholders. Small-group activities will alternate with the presentations so participants can create immediate and long-term strategies among people from the same communities, areas or regions of North Carolina. You will also have the opportunity to join in statewide efforts to strengthen our capacity within North Carolina to

deliver services that give people with developmental disabilities the support, security and stability they need. Lunch will be provided on both days.

SPONSOR: North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities

FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO REGISTER: visit www.nc-ddc.org OR contact Cathy Womack at cami@nc.rr.com or 919-518-0963.

TO REQUEST A SCHOLARSHIP: please write the following statement on the registration form: "As a person with a disability, I request a registration scholarship to attend this event." OR "As a family member, I request a registration scholarship to attend this event."

The **Community Reinvestment Association of North Carolina** meets annually with financial institutions to discuss their corporate lending practices. There are several areas of bank activity - lending, services, investments and grants - that we want your opinion of banks performance. Can you take a few moments to share your thoughts? For more information, please contact Richard Brown, Community Organizer, at 919-667-1557 ext 22 or Richard@cra-nc.org, or visit our website at www.cra-nc.org.

Appalachian State University's Energy Center has developed an Affordable Passive Solar Planbook. Also available are 12 sets of full working drawings for free to affordable housing groups. Eight of the plans already built have also completed the Systems Vision program in order to become Energy Star certified.

For more information please contact Lee F. Ball Jr., Building Science Instructor & ASU Energy Center Research Analyst, at:

Department of Technology
Appalachian State University
Kerr Scott Hall
Boone, NC 28608

Phone: 828-262-7289; Fax 828-265-8696; Email: balllf@appstate.edu

Second Draft 2007 Qualified Allocation Plan Available

The Second Draft 2007 Qualified Allocation Plan and three appendices (market study, design and compliance) are now on the **NC Housing Finance Agency** website: <http://www.nchfa.com/Rental/RD2007qap.aspx>.

Also available on the website is the description of major revisions, which covers changes from the First Draft. Please review this document first.

The **2007 preliminary application for Housing Credits** is now available on the **NC Housing Finance Agency** website:
www.nchfa.org/Rental/RTCApp/

The City of Raleigh has an RFQ for the development of an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice available.

Please spread the word. For more information, contact Joseph Rappl at (919) 857-4343 or joseph.rappl@ci.raleigh.nc.us.

DHIC recently opened the application process for an 80 unit mixed-income affordable housing rental community near Davie Street and East Street in downtown Raleigh.

The completion of the Carlton Place community is expected in **January 2007**. Sixty-four of the apartments will be reserved for residents with limited incomes. Carlton Place will provide an attractive and affordable rental housing option for those who want to live in the area. Carlton Place is located two blocks east of Downtown Raleigh in a neighborhood that has been the primary focus of the City of Raleigh's redevelopment efforts over the past 15 years. The Downtown East neighborhood where Carlton Place is located is predominantly residential with supporting uses such as schools and parks. Residents will have access to a wide range of amenities. Downtown Raleigh offers easy access to transportation, restaurants, banks, pharmacies, health care facilities, businesses, educational and entertainment opportunities. DHIC also received a Home Depot Foundation Grant dedicated to incorporating green building features, such as energy star appliances, low VOC carpet and paint, fluorescent light fixtures, long life bulbs and low-flow plumbing fixtures.

As part of the DHHS & NCHFA Targeting Plan, DHIC has partnered with Wake County Human Services (WCHS) to act as the lead agency in the referral process for eight units that have been reserved for individuals/families with a head-of-household who has a disability. Actual rents charged to residents that WCHS refers will be based on a standard where households will be required to pay no more than 30% of gross income for total housing costs, which include rent and utilities. Wake County Human Services (WCHS) will assure that residents of the targeted apartments are offered necessary support services. These clients may have mental health diagnoses, developmental or physical disabilities, or substance abuse disorders, and they may be formerly homeless. WCHS provides and will continue to provide services to these client referrals, including case management, support services such as Community-Based Service and Personal Assistance, vocational services such as ADVP and Supported Employment, supported leisure/recreational/retirement, and residential services.

For more information, please visit the DHIC website listed below:

http://www.dhic.org/apartment_communities/wake_co/carlton_place.html

Support the **NC Housing Coalition** by using www.goodsearch.com when you search the web. Just enter in NC Housing Coalition as your charity of choice, and money from Goodsearch's advertisers will be donated to us without you spending a dime!

JOB OPENINGS

Planner II/Senior Planner

Vacancy #07-090 (Hrss) - Planning Department (Long Range Planning Section) - Normal starting salary range: \$43,035 - \$56,742, with excellent benefits. Title and salary determined by qualifications. This position oversees community development planning and implementation activities for the **Town of Cary**, population 115,000. Performs complex, professional-level duties associated with administering the Town's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement program and various other neighborhood housing and community development programs. Responsibilities include: coordinating CDBG-funded programs; managing housing program initiatives; conducting research; analyzing and presenting data; conducting environmental assessments; meeting and communicating with the general public; maintaining professional relationships with a variety of local, state, and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations; writing and administering grants; and assembling professional level reports and planning documents. Successful applicant should possess thorough knowledge of concepts/theory/principles of housing and community development, land use planning, sociology, demography, economics, data collection, and statistical analyses; strong written and oral communication skills; strong organizational skills; experience working simultaneously on multiple projects; and experience working with diverse populations. Requires any combination of education and experience equivalent to a four-year degree in Urban Planning, Public Administration, or closely related field and four years of progressive planning experience. Master's degree in Planning and AICP certification preferred. Candidates should possess very good computer skills. Must have a valid North Carolina driver's license with a good driving record. To ensure consideration a completed Town of Cary application must be received in Human Resources. APPLY IMMEDIATELY. The position may close without notice.

For more information, visit: <http://www.townofcary.org/depts/jobs/pljobs.htm>

Director of Housing and Development

Housing Assistance Corporation seeks a full-time Director of Housing Development to manage the agency's affordable community, single family and multi-family housing development activities. Responsibilities include analyzing and negotiating real estate acquisitions, developing project concepts and funding sources, scheduling, and managing construction projects from site development to completion. Qualifications include three years experience in real estate development, ability to read engineering drawings and specifications and proficiency with computer software. Salary commensurate with experience.

Please send resume and cover letter to Housing Assistance Corporation, P.O. Box 2057, Hendersonville, NC 28793 or e-mail to homehac@bellsouth.net by November 15.

Commercial Loan Officer

Self-Help, a statewide non-profit, seeks Commercial Loan Officer for Wilmington office. This position involves work with commercial lending team; originating loans, participating in outreach programs, marketing and analyzing loan requests. Bachelor's degree and 4 years small business lending, assistance or management experience are favorable. Strong communication skills required. Spanish fluency a plus. Equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. Competitive non-profit salary plus generous benefits.

Send resume and cover letter to Hiring Manager - Wilmington, PO Box 3619, Durham, NC 27702 or email to hiringmanager@self-help.org. See www.self-help.org for full description. Self-Help is an equal opportunity employer. Women and people of color are encouraged to apply.

END OF ANNOUNCEMENTS/JOB OPENINGS

Please email [John Niffenegger](mailto:John.Niffenegger@self-help.org) any announcements or local news articles you would like to include in our weekly housing updates.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT – COUNTYWIDE CDC

Mission

Countywide Community Development Corporation's mission is to improve the quality of life for residents of Brunswick County and surrounding areas. The Residents of Brunswick County founded, manage and control this community-based organization. Countywide CDC seeks to be an ally and assistant to residents of the community – a resource that can fundamentally transform people's lives.

We believe that "Helping People Help Themselves" produces results that are constant, measurable and real. Throughout the implementation of our programs and projects, we seek to change essentially the mindset of the entire community. Countywide CDC breeds the concepts of self-sufficiency, sound money management, homeownership, wealth building, pride, hope and life back into the communities we serve.

Our organization is inclusive and continues to develop self-help strategies that seek to build human, educational and economic assets for the underserved, underrepresented, low wealth, needy and minority Residents of Brunswick and surrounding counties.

Programs and Projects

Countywide CDC **Home Ownership Preparation and Education (HOPE)** Program is the key to breaking the generational cycle of poverty and lack. This is a 24-hour course taught over 10 weeks coupled with 10 hours of one on one counseling. This program has four goals: 1) Educate the participant in financial literacy and predatory lending; 2) Instruct the client in crediting and budgeting; 3) Assist the client in obtaining a mortgage and maintaining their home; and 4) Instill the concept of creating wealth for themselves and their children. The certificate that each participant obtains can be used to qualify for a number of down payment assistance programs.

We have designed the HOPE Program in conjunction with the **Individual Development Account Program (IDA)**. In this program for every dollar a client saves at our financial partner bank, a funding organization matches that dollar 1:1 or 2:1. This enables residents to obtain the down payment needed on most home mortgages. These funds are restricted and can only be used towards the purchase of a home. We require a commitment of the participants, class attendance and the desire to purchase a home. At the close of the class, each participant in the program is asked to search out another participant and mentor him or her through the program. Often times it is another family member. This helps to break the generational cycle of poverty and lack.

Project Uplift is a Basic Construction Training Program for participants from 18-44 years of age, low income and lacking in skills to earn a living wage. The participants take 256 hours of class room, on the job training and life skills. The training is in the residential construction and boat building disciplines. They also receive financial literacy training, one on one and group counseling employability and basics skills along with assistance for referrals to meet their other needs. After training, each participant works with our staff and partners in the private sector to either further their training or acquire employment.

Countywide CDC joined NC Housing Coalition because of the access to current relevant information and the ability to impact housing issues on the state level that directly affect our region, as well as the support that we receive in assisting us in educating and advocating locally for our residents.

If you are interested in becoming a Member Spotlight or know of such an organization, please email [John Niffenegger](#).

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

City of Durham Department of Neighborhood Improvement Services

Ken Maness

Michele Sager

Tarboro Savings Bank, SSB

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

THIS WEEK'S ARTICLES

House to be made a women's shelter

A temporary place to stay, until residents can support themselves

The Charlotte Observer
Erica Beshears
November 26, 2006

Women and children with no place to stay will soon have a home in the Lake Norman area.

The Hope House Foundation is working to renovate a house on Northcross Drive in Huntersville. Organizers want the house to open by the second quarter of 2007.

Hope House won't be a homeless shelter; instead it will offer transitional housing to women and their children for about six months until they can support themselves. It will target people who live from Exit 23 in Huntersville to Exit 42 in Troutman.

Co-founder Don King gave one example of the kind of situations that might lead women to the home. He told of a woman who recently contacted him whose husband left her in debt and with no credit. Even though the woman has a steady job, she has no place to go, he said.

King and Dr. Lee Beth Lindquist founded the nonprofit Hope House Foundation. In 2004, the group bought a 4,000-square-foot ranch-style house on a four-acre lot in Huntersville. Last year, it housed a Katrina refugee family.

The family moved back home about the same time the group got its building permit to begin renovations, King said.

The plan is to renovate the house to create six bedrooms that can house up to 12 adults. Hope House volunteers also plan to turn the garage into a playroom for children, and to turn part of the basement into a library or quiet room.

"It's got such a feeling of peacefulness," King said of the spacious lot with plenty of trees, a rarity in north Mecklenburg.

Eventually, the group would like to have a playground, a garden for meditation and perhaps a vegetable garden in the back. "It's not going to be a free ride here," King said.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

Council to OK \$138K for nonprofit

The Durham Herald-Sun
Ray Gronberg
November 26, 2006

DURHAM -- City Council members are poised to approve a \$138,000 grant to a local nonprofit that intends to use the money to buy five run-down houses so it can rehabilitate them and rent them out to low- and moderate-income families.

The nonprofit, Rebuild Durham Inc., will have to raise the money for the rehab work on its own, city officials said.

"It is a realistic program," Shepherd Smith, a program specialist in the Community Development Department, said when council members questioned whether the average of \$27,600 that's available for each property would go as far as the nonprofit hopes.

Council members were willing to go along, but urged Smith to encourage the nonprofit to consider buying surplus lots from the city, rather than just looking for old houses.

"I like to save old houses, but in all candor, some of these are not worth saving," Councilman Eugene Brown said, noting that rehab work on some houses would involve the removal of lead-based paint, an expensive proposition. "That's why I think we need to be careful."

Rebuild Durham has been around since 1999 and has received infusions of cash from the city before. When it was just starting out, the council loaned it slightly more than \$500,000 to buy and renovate 12 houses.

The \$138,000 the city now figures on channeling to the nonprofit comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and would be in the form of an outright grant, not a loan. Officials intend to release the money parcel-by-parcel, handing it over only after the group has identified a target property and specified exactly what it would have to do to bring it up to code.

Unlike groups like Habitat for Humanity, Rebuild Durham is trying to serve the rental market. Creating home-ownership opportunities isn't part of its game, Smith and Deputy City Manager Wanda Page said.

The group targets vacant and boarded-up houses, which aren't in short supply in certain parts of Durham.

Typically, the lots it buys are worth more than the houses. For the money, "The expectation is it'll be a piece of property that will require significant investment to bring it up to the level [necessary] to be occupied by a resident," Page said.

Council members are scheduled to formally approve the grant on Dec. 4. They reviewed the application during a work session last week.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

The New Leader

Winston-Salem Journal
November 28, 2006

Larry Woods, the new executive director of the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem, should bring innovation and experience in reform to the job. He'll need those qualifications and more, as well as the support of his board and staff, as he takes the helm of an agency that must continue its strong steps toward reform.

By the time the former director, Reid Lawrence, resigned under fire last fall, there had been revelation after revelation of mismanagement, and federal officials had taken over major

purchasing decisions for the authority. Since then, there's been significant change for the better.

An expanded board has made solid progress in improving financial accountability and turning the authority around, but much work remains to be done. And the work - that of providing optimum affordable housing - is crucial.

Woods, who starts work next week, takes on that challenge. He is 56, grew up in public housing, and has held top-level positions in housing agencies in New York, Philadelphia and other cities.

He will come here from his job as the deputy executive director of the Wilmington Housing Authority in Delaware, where he was part of a regime change designed to clean house.

This will be Woods' first shot at leading a housing authority. His supporters say he's up to the job.

Woods' boss in Wilmington, Frederick Purnell, recently told the Journal's Bertrand M. Gutierrez that Woods "is the gasoline who makes the truck run," a man who has a record of getting things done.

Board members at the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem like Woods' experience with construction and development projects. The local authority has been tackling such projects, with good reason.

As Woods noted, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is sending less money to housing authorities, and they have to become more self-sufficient. "We need to frame it into a business model with a social conscience," he said.

He got that right. And he clearly wants to make it a responsible business model, one that is trusted by HUD and the public. The local authority has a lot of hard workers, and they've been doing their best in challenging times. So has the expanded board.

Now, both the employees and the board should support Woods as he opens a new chapter for the authority.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

More in middle class may get into affordable homes

Some designated units going vacant because of current income limits

The Charlotte Observer
Dan Tierney
November 30, 2006

With the average income in the county steadily rising, Davidson officials are considering changing the qualifications for affordable housing to lure more people to the town.

The town's current ordinance, written in 2005, designates "low income" as between 50 percent and 80 percent of the county's area median income. However, that limited range excludes many people who want to live in Davidson, leaving housing units unused.

Town Manager Leamon Brice suggested at a work session Tuesday that the range should move to between 60 percent and 120 percent to meet the incomes of police officers, teachers and others who want a house but couldn't normally afford to live in Davidson. The range for very low-income housing would remain about the same as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"We've got to create a bigger denominator of people who qualify," said commissioner Margo Williams.

The area median income for 2006 was \$64,400, meaning the total household income must be lower than \$52,000 to qualify for low-income housing.

"I think we've had our range too low," Brice said. "It hasn't matched the rise in income."

The town is also considering instituting a marketing plan to get the word out about affordable housing in Davidson to potential homebuyers, and possibly take away the stigma that surrounds the name "affordable housing."

Marsha Webster, executive director of the Davidson Housing Coalition, said she often refers to the housing units as "workforce housing" to stop people from thinking of run-down, graffiti-covered houses that often comes to mind when they picture affordable housing.

"There is a way to do affordable housing and keep it affordable, but still make it beautiful," Webster said.

Davidson ordinances require that 12.5 percent of housing in the town qualify as affordable.

Affordable housing is broken down into three levels: very low income (less than 50 percent of area median income), low income (between 50 percent and 80 percent of AMI) and moderate income (between 80 percent and 120 percent of AMI).

Developers currently have many options in choosing how much of each level they want to build. Developers can also submit a payment in lieu of very low-income housing in certain areas of Davidson.

Brice wants to reformulate the ordinance to give developers specific requirements for what they have to build. The payment-in-lieu-of-money may also stay set aside for the specific type of housing it replaces under the possible ordinance changes.

Brice and Dawn Blobaum, the assistant town manager, will draft the changes and put them before the town board at a future board meeting.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

Next steps planned for Lighthouse

Goldsboro News-Argus
Matt Whittle
November 29, 2006

The news that The Lighthouse of Wayne County closed its doors Tuesday caught many of the organization's funders by surprise and might worsen the domestic violence shelter's already precarious financial condition.

The Lighthouse Board of Directors has not released a budget or any other fiscal information, but in its statement Tuesday, the organization's uncertain financial outlook was cited as the reason for closing.

The problems began earlier this year when it was discovered that there were unpaid payroll taxes in recent years.

The amount of those back taxes has not been released, but board member Cindy Sanford said the money has been paid and that the organization is working with the IRS on a payment schedule for the penalties and interest charges.

That discovery, though, led to the closing of The Lighthouse's administrative offices and thrift store for two weeks in mid-October and an organizational restructuring that began with the resignation of executive director Cheryl Seronick on Oct. 19.

That plan is still being ironed out.

"We're still investigating," Mrs. Sanford said. "Operations will have to change, but I certainly hope The Lighthouse will be able to reopen.

"It's so unfortunate that it's a service the county needs, but it is. We have a lot of people who are working to help us. Nobody wants to see us fail."

One of those people who has been volunteering to help the organization is former Goldsboro city manager Richard Slozak.

He thinks closing the safehouse was really the board's only option.

"They need to know the depth and the breadth of their financial situation, and I think it was difficult to do that while dealing with the day-to-day operations," Slozak said.

Part of the problem, he noted, is that at least four of the board's nine members have joined only in the last year.

"They've got an excellent board now, but it's difficult to keep up with operations and find out what the problems are, especially since they all work," Slozak said. "I think this is a step in the right direction. I think the people there are trying to be responsible for what's going on."

Unfortunately, he continued, he doesn't think the organization will be able to reopen without making some changes.

"They need to find out first how bad the problem is and how to solve it. Then they'll have to look at their options, which may range in scope from closing to reopening with a change in scope.

"I'm not familiar with all their problems, and I haven't seen their books, but from what I understand, I don't think they'll be able to reopen with the broad scope they have now."

The organization's problems, though, have led The Lighthouse's funders to begin examining how their money is being spent.

Funding from the United Way of Wayne County was already withheld in November and now, director Steve Parr said, December's likely will be as well.

"We do not have a plan or a budget (from The Lighthouse)," Parr said.

Because of the organization's problems, he explained, a new plan will be necessary in order for it to receive any future funding.

The United Way's new fiscal year will begin in January. At that point, it will make its next round of funding decisions. If The Lighthouse has a new plan by then, he continued, it will be treated like any other organization.

"We're just going to see what plan they come forward with and just like any other funding request, we'll be anxious to see what they present to us," Parr said. "I think they obviously have challenges they have to address. We have to put our faith that the board volunteers are making the best decisions for the long term future of the organization.

"Right now we're just going to have to wait and see."

Other funders also are stuck in a wait-and-see mode.

Michael Leach, an emergency shelter grant program coordinator in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Office of Economic Opportunity, said they had not received any prior notification of The Lighthouse closing and that the future of its \$10,651 grant would depend on when it reopens.

"As I understand it, they have to be operable at least six consecutive months of the fiscal year," he said. "If they're not operating they would have to reimburse the state (the \$2,252 already spent)."

The N.C. Governor's Crime Commission is another agency waiting to see whether The Lighthouse will reopen.

It is scheduled to provide about \$52,000 in reimbursement grants over the next two years. So far, about \$10,000 has been released, but the money is dependent on The Lighthouse matching 20 percent.

"We know it's the nature of nonprofits to have some turmoil so we're not surprised by this. We want them to spend the money," Barry Bryant, a victims program planner said. "We don't want to send it back to Washington (D.C.). If they're not going to spend their money, though, we'll offer it to another agency.

"But we don't want to jump the gun."

So for now, he continued, the commission will wait and see how things go. He also noted that The Lighthouse's problems should not affect any other county grants.

"Our biggest concern is related to the lack of services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault," Bryant said.

Women and families at the safehouse when it closed Tuesday morning were taken to shelters in surrounding counties and people needing such services in the future should call the county Department of Social Services -- at least until a more permanent solution can be put in place.

Right now, Wayne County Manager Lee Smith said, social services and Eastpointe Mental Health have agreed to assist the county in placing victims in nearby shelters. He also said that the \$30,000 earmarked by the county for The Lighthouse has not been released yet.

"Our main interest in Lighthouse is the safehouse for domestic violence victims," Smith said. "That is our No. 1 priority and we just want to make sure nobody falls between the cracks.

"We're doing something basically on a temporary basis until we can figure out something more permanent. We want to make sure nobody is in harm's way and that we get them someplace safe."

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

There's hope for Fifth Street's shelter

Statesville Record & Landmark
Chyna Broadnax
November 29, 2006

The cat's out of the bag.

What was probably one of the worst kept secrets in Statesville is now common knowledge.

For nearly two years, Fifth Street Ministries Executive Directors Patti and Gary West have been talking about building a new facility, but a time frame was never set.

Now that the United Way of Iredell County's campaign blackout period is over, Fifth Street officials are free to get the ball rolling. The shelter is one of the 24 agencies assisted by the United Way.

The directors have announced they will began a capital campaign for their new building called "Hope for Tomorrow" in the spring.

According to Gary West, they plan to raise between \$4 million and \$4.5 million for the new 30,000-square-foot facility.

"This building is falling apart," he said. "We have a lot of leaks, wall damage and because it was a school building there was a lot of wear and tear."

For the 2005-2006 fiscal year, the shelter served 832 people within the emergency, night and women's shelter, the Open Door Clinic treated 4,236 people and the Soup Kitchen served 57,166 meals.

This is the largest capital campaign in the shelter's history.

"We want to have enough money to do it and do it right," West said.

The existing building will be demolished while the new L-shaped facility will be erected at the rear of the property.

The plans call for additional parking and more attractive landscaping outside and more rooms inside.

The goal is to equip the new facility with newer furniture to better accommodate its residents.

With the new building will come more requirements and a stronger structure that residents will benefit from.

"We will have more security, a safer, cleaner and more hospitable place to live," West said.

The shelter is currently housed in the former Avery Sherrill School. The shelter has been on there for 14 years.

West said there is a tremendous need for the new space.

He said the facility is far beyond repair, saying renovations would be more costly.

The Wests are very familiar with engaging in capital campaigns. In past years they've raised money to purchase the existing building and raised funds to build My Sister's House.

They have been in the silent campaign phase for the new shelter for nearly six months, organizing committees, creating plans and preparing for the project.

"We've just basically been getting our ducks in a row," West said.

Next comes the tough part, soliciting funds from various corporations, churches and individual contributors, and applying for grants.

The campaign will be spearheaded by former board of directors member, volunteer and retired Brig. Gen. William D. Lackey.

"He just has a keen interest and experience working with us and in campaigns," Gary said.

Lackey is active in the Rotary Club and headed up the Hospice of Iredell County's fundraising committee.

"I've been involved long enough to know that this new building will do much to improve the lives of Statesville's impoverished and bring badly needed services to the community as a whole," Lackey said in a news release.

"The building was a god-send when we first moved our programs to the school facility, but Avery Sherrill was not built to house the numbers of people who come through there 24 hours a day, 365 days a year," he added. "It is falling down around us and we must build something safer and more efficient for those in need."

List of Services include:

Soup Kitchen - two hot meals are provided each day for anyone needing a meal. Noon soup kitchen-11:00 AM-11:30 AM; evening-5:30p.m.-6:00p.m., 7 days a week. Eligibility: No geographic limitations but mainly Iredell County.

Open Door Clinic

Offers free medical, dental and pharmacy services provided to persons lacking access to primary care. Call 704838-1234. Fax: 704878-2080 Eligibility: No geographical limitations

Night and Emergency Shelter

Emergency Shelter - provides seven nights shelter with extensions considered for persons seeking employment and housing. Provides interagency advocacy, three meals daily, phone services, limited transportation, and laundry and shower facilities. Eligibility: Homeless; must have referral from other agency, Information and Referral, Department of Social Services, or law enforcement agency.

Night Shelter - provides shelter for long-term homeless; breakfast is available; showers and laundry facility are provided.

My Sister's House

provides up to three months safe sanctuary for victims of abuse, including family abuse and sexual assault. Shelter guests given access to telephone, laundry, and cooking facility. Provides individual counseling and support groups for adults and children as well as peer support; interagency advocacy. Confidentiality assured. Court advocacy and accompaniment. Services also provided for victims that are not shelter guests. Court advocacy, support groups, counseling services, interagency advocacy, etc. Hospital accompaniment for victims. 24 hour crisis and information line - 704-872-3403.

Molly McKay Children's Center

After-school tutorial program during the school year and enrichment program during summer months. Open to shelter guests and neighborhood children ages 5 and up.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

5 families get new homes through Habitat

Asheville Citizen-Times
Alsy Acevedo
December 1, 2006 12:15 am

ASHEVILLE — Maria Gherasim was so excited to get the keys to her family's first house, she could only express it in her native language, Moldovan.

"She never thought we would have our own house," said her daughter Alina, 17, who served as an interpreter. "Thanks for all your support. God bless you all."

The eight members of the Gherasim family have lived in a small duplex for three years, but in the coming weeks, they will finally move to a new house with four bedrooms and two bathrooms.

"This is the kitchen and the dining room. My parents' bedroom is behind this wall," said Costantine Gherasim, 18, while giving a tour of the house built on Warren Haynes Drive through Habitat for Humanity and with funding from The Grove Park Inn.

The rain didn't drown the enthusiasm of dozens of people who gathered Thursday to share the joy of the five families who got the keys to their homes in Enka Hills, where Habitat for Humanity plans to build 55 houses over four years on 16.5 acres.

The Gherasim, Holloway, de la Paz, Hilty and Seidman families will be the first to move to the neighborhood.

Habitat for Humanity picked families by taking into consideration the number of people living together, the safety of the neighborhood and the challenges they face, said Michelle Kaiser, family selection coordinator.

"They also have to be able to pay for the mortgage, which is \$418 to \$472 a month, be willing to repair their credit and complete the 450 hours of sweat equity," Kaiser said.

Juanita Holloway reapplied for the program after repairing her credit and finding a stable job that will help her carry out the responsibilities of owning a home.

"It wasn't a difficult process, it was a learning experience that I had to go through," said Holloway, who will move to her new house with her husband and four children.

"Keys unlock things," said Lewis Kraus, Habitat for Humanity's executive director. "But these keys unlock more than a front door."

Parents have progressed in their careers and sent their children to college in the 23 years Habitat for Humanity has provided housing for families in Buncombe County, Kraus said.

"It's almost like winning the \$74 million lottery," Holloway said.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

Room for Charlotte homeless running low

Estimates of those in need rising as some shelters report having to turn people away

The Charlotte Observer
Fred Kelly
December 3, 2006

Thirty minutes before the Emergency Winter Shelter opens its doors, the line of homeless men stretches around the building.

Only the first 120 will get a bed. The rest get the floor.

It's the latest sign of the growing homelessness problem in Charlotte.

Three other local shelters have announced in recent months they're so crowded they're turning people away.

And new estimates suggest there are as many as 8,000 homeless in Charlotte on a given night, compared with the 5,000 previously believed.

Meanwhile, a new study on the problem urges leaders to put the homeless into affordable housing instead of shelters. Last week, a coalition of social service agencies endorsed the plan and voted to forward it to city and county leaders.

Already, however, there is skepticism about whether the plan can work, social workers say, because there is not enough affordable housing, and elected officials may not be able to find the money needed.

"This is a crisis," said Mecklenburg County commissioner Jennifer Roberts. "If we have a really cold winter, it's going to be tough on a lot of people."

Growing problem

County officials identified homelessness as a priority in 2000 and commissioned a study that found 4,600 to 5,100 homeless people in Mecklenburg. In response, officials assigned a task force to find ways to reduce homelessness.

The effort helped produce several initiatives, including the creation of the Emergency Winter Shelter and a financial assistance program to help poor families rent apartments and houses.

But the moves failed to stem homelessness, said Carol Morris, a planning consultant who conducted the 2000 study.

There are more homeless now, Morris said, because the supply of housing affordable to the poorest residents is shrinking.

Fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Charlotte is \$719 a month. But the working poor, those who make close to minimum wage, can afford only \$250 to \$400 a month, Morris said.

A 2005 city report showed Charlotte needs more than 11,000 affordable housing units for families earning less than \$16,000 a year.

The city, the report states, would need to spend nearly \$800 million over the next 10 years just to cut the shortage in half.

At the Uptown Men's Shelter, there's a two-week waiting list. Last week, the 200-bed facility housed 255 people, including many who slept on the floor.

"Two months ago we had a guy die in here," said Bill Newnan, executive director. "No one should have to die homeless."

A new strategy

The new plan calls for nonprofit and government agencies to create 2,500 affordable rental units and provide support services, such as drug and domestic-violence counseling.

Supporters say similar strategies have reduced homelessness in other cities nationwide, such as New York, Denver and San Francisco.

But some local social workers were reluctant to endorse the plan because they felt it should focus more on the chronically homeless. Anyone who spends more than a year without a permanent home is considered chronically homeless. Such people account for roughly 15 percent of the homeless population in Charlotte.

Philip Mangano, head of the federal U.S. Interagency Council on Homeless, said cities should put most resources toward chronic homelessness. Many among the chronically homeless, Mangano said, suffer from mental illness and drug addiction.

"We have a spiritual and moral obligation to first help those at the greatest risk for death," he said.

Who pays?

City and county leaders, social workers say, haven't done enough to solve the problem. "We don't have a high-profile champion who can rally money," said Peter Safir, assistant to the county manager and incoming president of the Homeless Services Network.

Morris, the researcher, said homelessness is "not priority for our decision-makers."

City and county officials disagree. The county gives \$1.2 million to social agencies that serve the homeless. The city has approved \$45 million over the past five years to create affordable housing.

"Not many cities have made an effort like that for this issue," Mayor Pat McCrory said. "(Social outreach agencies) have to be realistic about what we can afford."

Shelters crowded

Last week, Ronald Brice was among at least 50 men who stood in line for more than an hour to get inside the Emergency Winter Shelter.

Brice said he has been homeless since he was released from prison earlier this year. His job as day-laborer, he said, doesn't pay enough for him to rent an apartment or house.

Brice tries to get to the shelter before its opens so he'll get a bed instead of sleeping on the floor. As many as 70 to 80 men sleep on the floor each night.

"They run out of (blankets) and towels," Brice said. "How come they don't build another shelter?"

Winter shelter manager John White said he has not turned away anyone this year, but space is becoming tighter. Recently, as many as 189 people have showed up and crowding likely will worsen as winter approaches, White said.

"The other night we had a family show up that wanted something to eat," White said. "We never used to see that. It just keeps getting worse."

How to Help

The Emergency Winter Shelter, 3410 Statesville Avenue in Charlotte, needs blankets, towels and clothes. To donate, call (704) 333-2608.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

Area eyes homeless situation

Rocky Mount Telegram
Justin Boulmay
December 02, 2006

Members of the community will meet next week to begin formulating a plan to end homelessness.

Several county officials and business and community leaders have been invited to a 10 a.m. Friday meeting at City Hall to form a committee that will develop a 10-year plan to end homelessness, said Chris Battle, executive director of United Community Ministries.

"It is a plan that's basically been adopted across the country," he said.

The committee will look at how other communities around the country have developed their own plans, Battle said.

The biggest challenge would be finding a business leader to head the effort, Battle said. People already know that groups such as his are working to deal with homelessness, but if more businesses dedicated themselves to the effort, that might encourage more people to get involved.

"Just going on the models of other counties in North Carolina who have done their plans, the key component is having a business leader ... lead the charge," he said.

That's not the only thing the plan needs in order to be effective, Nash County Social Services Director Laura O'Neal said. Affordable housing, job training and substance abuse all are issues that will have to be tackled.

"We're going to need funding," she said. "We're going to need everybody's cooperation and support to identify where the problems are that keep us from being able to eliminate this problem."

Later, she said, "It's just going to have to be a holistic approach in ending homelessness, from my point of view."

Representatives from the N.C. Interagency Council on Homelessness will help the committee when it develops a plan, Battle said.

"I really don't know right now what to expect, but I know we won't be going into this with blinders on," he said.

Ending homelessness is something the community can accomplish, O'Neal said, but it's something that has to be accomplished by working together.

"I think until the community comes together with a real commitment to attack that problem ... those problems will never be resolved, whether it be homelessness or any other social issues," she said.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

Families evicted from mobile home park

Shopping center plans put residents in a jam

Asheville Citizen-Times
John Boyle and Mark Barrett
December 5, 2006

Weaverville — Residents of the Mountain Terrace mobile home park — the site of a planned shopping center that will contain a Wal-Mart Supercenter — received notice late last week that they've got 180 days to "vacate and remove" their homes.

And that leaves some of them who are faced with a moving bill of \$1,800 or more wondering what they will do.

"It's kind of like the residents in here don't matter," said Janet Hyatt, who has lived in the park for two years and almost has her mobile home paid for. "No one cares. I have to leave my home here. I can't afford to move it. I'll just have to walk away from it and leave it."

About 50 homes remain in the park, which is just off future Interstate 26. Hyatt, 43, says many of the residents are older and live on fixed incomes, and some of the homes are older and can't be moved to other parks because of restrictions on age.

It has appeared likely for some time that tenants would have to go, but Hyatt said she discounted rumors about the property's potential development.

Town Council approved a hotly debated rezoning in November 2005 to make way for the center, planned to have roughly half a million square feet of retail space. Developers said at the time of that decision that the mobile home park would be leveled to make way for the project, to be called Northridge Commons.

Wal-Mart's plans to locate in the center came to light in October. Developer Harris, Murr & Vermillion's Web site says a Lowe's home improvement center will also be an anchor tenant, although a Harris, Murr official declined to confirm that.

Change is coming

Steve Yelverton, a principal at the Charlotte-based development company, said developers closed on the property about two weeks ago and sent a notice to tenants about a week ago.

"We want to give them plenty of time to find somewhere to move," he said.

Developers have gotten inquiries from residents in recent months, Yelverton said.

Until now, "We've not been able to give them a real good time frame because we just didn't know" when work would begin, Yelverton said.

The notice Hyatt received, dated Nov. 28, says the owner "intends to convert the park to another use that requires the removal of your manufactured home. As such, within 180 days of giving this notice, you are required to vacate and remove your manufactured home from the park."

If the homes are not removed, the owner reserves its "rights and remedies to enforce the removal of your manufactured home," the notice states.

Yelverton said Monday that Harris, Murr is assessing the situation, including offering help to residents as appropriate.

"We're just trying to get a handle on just who is still in the park and who is not," he said. "Certainly, we committed to the Town Council that we would (work with residents), and we're going to do that."

Grading work on some of the 86-acre site — which includes properties other than the mobile home park — should begin this spring, Yelverton said. Developers hope to open the shopping center in summer 2008, he said.

Tough transition

Some residents have already moved their homes, but Hyatt said rumors have abounded about the property being sold for years so she thought it was safe to stay. She lives in her 21-year-old home with her grown daughter, who goes to school and works, and a son, who works two jobs.

"My mom was so excited because she can finally have her own home," said the daughter, Brandie Hyatt, 20.

Janet Hyatt bought the home in January 2005 and remodeled it.

"We've redone the floors, we put showers in, we put sinks in, we've painted," said Janet Hyatt, who makes \$9.75 an hour as a full-time certified nursing assistant and takes three nursing classes at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College. "We've put everything we had in here — every extra penny we had we put into this mobile home, and now we're just going to have to walk off and leave it. We're going to be right back where we started."

Her neighbors Clarence and Joyce Roberts, who are both disabled, say they have another park to move their 1968 trailer to. But like Hyatt, they lack the funds to pay for it. Their trailer is paid for.

"I think it's pretty sorry they won't help us out none," said Clarence Roberts, 60. "When we moved in here we thought we were set till the end of our days."

Hyatt says she and other residents continue to pay their \$180 monthly rent and water fees. She's hoping the park's owners will help residents pay the moving bills.

"If they don't help us move these homes, they're going to have to shoulder the expense of disposing of them," Hyatt said. "And would it not be easier and more kind-hearted to help us move instead of making us homeless?"

How mobile?

There has been a trend nationally in conversion of mobile home parks to other uses as property becomes more valuable. Affordable housing advocates are concerned about trends here, said Philippe Ross, executive director of the Affordable Housing Coalition of Asheville & Buncombe County.

Kevin Wilson, co-owner of Wilson Enterprises Inc., which moves mobile homes, says moving rates for single-wide mobile homes start at \$1,800 and can reach \$2,500 if a bulldozer or other heavy equipment is required.

"You can get into a lot of extra expenses, depending on where it's going," Wilson said. "I have done them up to \$3,500."

Many mobile home parks will not accept homes of more than a certain age. The condition of some homes makes them difficult to move, and tenants often simply can't afford the expense, Ross said.

For those reasons, "Mobile homes often aren't mobile," he said.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

Raleigh 'reality' wasn't, really

Local advocates see different world

The News & Observer
Ryan Teague Beckwith, Staff Writer
December 9, 2006

The phrase "reality television" has always been something of a contradiction, and "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" is no different.

Local affordable housing advocates say that the popular TV show is about as similar to their daily lives as an episode of "Survivor" is to a family vacation on the Outer Banks.

As the show wraps up a whirlwind of filming in Raleigh's Mordecai neighborhood, advocates said they noticed a few major differences from the real world:

Most affordable housing projects take more than a week. They are usually done with low-interest loans or government grants, not as gifts. And the homeowners are often personally involved.

They also pointed out a few minor differences, such as those tight T-shirts that show off the crew's physiques so much better than the usual coveralls.

"I've never seen them on one of our sites," said Gregg Warren, president of affordable housing builder DHIC. "Usually, they're just wearing some Carhartts."

Members of a local nonprofit saw some differences up close.

The Wake chapter of Habitat for Humanity worked with the "Extreme Makeover" crew during the demolition on Poplar Street. But the demands of television kept them from salvaging as much as they typically do.

Habitat workers had hoped to remove hardwood floors from the home, which was built in 1932. But producers wanted to tear down the house in a spectacle involving demolition derby cars and hundreds of volunteers.

Still, Habitat president Woody Yates said, they were able to remove kitchen cabinets, trim and other pieces to sell at Habitat's ReUse Center, a 42,000-square-foot warehouse of recycled home furnishings in North Raleigh.

"We were very pleased with the project," he said.

Nationally, Habitat already has a relationship with the show, naming one of its stars as a spokeswoman this year. And its annual blitzes, in which volunteers build as many as 20 affordable houses locally, have a similar pace to "Makeover."

Even then, Habitat homebuyers are required to contribute 250 hours of work and pay a zero-interest monthly mortgage for 20 years. The family on the Raleigh "Makeover" spent the week on a Disney World vacation while their house was being rebuilt.

Construction also takes longer and costs more than on TV.

Most affordable housing is built by nonprofit developers with low-interest loans backed by city bonds or the state's Housing Trust Fund, which gives away more than \$3 million a year. Very little is done strictly as a gift, as on "Makeover."

Projects usually involve buildings apartments or several houses, not rebuilding one family's home, though the state funds an urgent repair program.

Even then, **Chris Estes**, executive director of the **N.C. Housing Coalition**, said that the repairs are much less glamorous than the extras -- such as an elevator and a sunroom -- built for the "Makeover" house.

"These are usually just to keep the homeowners safe, things like improving ventilation or repairing holes in the roof or the walls," he said. "It's really basic stuff just so they can continue living in the home."

Still, he said he doesn't take it too personally.

"It's entertainment," he said. "I don't know that it would be that exciting to watch someone build a nice quality, appropriately sized three-bedroom affordable house."

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

How many is too many in a house?

Charlotte considers whether to set tougher restrictions for the number of people who occupy a home

The Charlotte Observer
Fred Kelly
December 10, 2006

Charlotte officials want to set stricter limits on how many people can live together, following complaints from residents upset by crowded homes in their neighborhoods.

On Monday, a City Council committee will hear details of a proposed ordinance based on house size. For example, the rule would allow no more than seven residents in a 1,000-square-foot home, down from the current cap of 11 people.

Neither the existing nor the proposed ordinance includes language about extended relatives or large nuclear families.

Opponents of similar changes made around the country say they unfairly target immigrants, particularly Hispanics who live together so they can afford rent.

Charlotte's proposal follows recent action by Gaston County commissioners to limit the number of people who live in rental homes as part of a resolution intended to fight illegal immigration.

"This is something they want to do to squeeze the immigrants," said Maudia Melendez, a member of a Charlotte panel studying illegal immigration. "It's a way to push them out."

But city and Mecklenburg County administrators who formed an internal study group and a citizen task force said the new rules are consistent with limits in other North Carolina communities such as Raleigh, Winston-Salem and Greensboro.

"This is not about illegal immigration," said Katrina Young, city planning coordinator. "It's about quality of life."

The issue surfaced two years ago when neighborhood leaders began urging the city to restrict the number of relatives who can live in a home.

About 2,500 Charlotte households have seven or more people living in them, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

The city receives about a dozen crowded housing complaints a year, said Walter Abernethy, city code enforcement manager.

It is unclear, he said, how the proposed rules would affect large nuclear or extended families. Current rules do not limit how many relatives can live in a home, Abernethy said.

In recent years, cities across the country have narrowed the legal definition of a family or limited the number of unrelated people who can live in a house.

One issue, officials say, is that the rules are difficult to enforce.

Inspectors can go to homes where there is alleged overcrowding but cannot legally ask for identification to verify a person's address, Abernethy said.

"There is no way to determine who is a visitor," he said.

In east Charlotte, Claude Shaw says there are two overcrowded houses in his neighborhood.

Garbage piles up, cars park on the lawn and the landlords refuse to respond to neighbors' complaints, Shaw said.

"It's hard to tell how many people are in there because it's so many," said Shaw, president of the Eastway-Sheffield Neighborhood Association. "There are four, five, six vehicles."

Racism or needed change?

Melendez, an advocate for the Hispanic community, helped Latino immigrants in Charlotte in the 1990s. In many cases, she said, 10 to 15 immigrants would live in one house because they could not afford a place to live. Other times, Melendez said, immigrants would bring customs from their native countries, where extended family members live together.

But landlords began to crack down, and it is now rare to find families living in overcrowded housing, she said.

Foreign-born people now make up roughly 102,000 -- or 12 percent -- of Mecklenburg County's 850,000 residents.

The proposed ordinance, Melendez said, is only the latest blow from local leaders "to make (immigrants) look bad.

"This is just continuous propaganda. We're not just going to keep taking this."

City officials disputed that. They said the citizen task force that helped make the recommendations included a cross-section of groups, including representatives from a Latino community group.

What's Next?

The city code enforcement officer will report to the Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee at 3 p.m. Monday in the Government Center. The meeting is open to the public. The committee will forward a recommendation to the full council.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

County to revisit trailer rules

Workshop Monday tackles 3rd hot topic in land-use plan for unincorporated areas

The Charlotte Observer
Hannah Mitchell
December 10, 2006

Among the complaints that people have about a proposed land-development code for Catawba County's unincorporated areas, rules on home businesses, minimum lot sizes and trailer homes top the list.

At public hearings on the proposal, many people called staff recommendations on those issues too restrictive.

So, one by one, county commissioners are discussing the three hot topics at workshops before they consider adopting the code.

Commissioners already have looked at minimum lot sizes and home businesses. Next come trailer homes, the topic of a workshop scheduled for Monday.

Individual community plans written by citizen volunteers form the skeleton of the proposed code. Planners are now working on the details, including the issues that stirred the most opposition from homeowners and business people.

Rules on trailers inspired some of the hottest criticism. Planners originally suggested that people could replace a trailer home only with a double-wide model, no single-wides. Now they're proposing people also be allowed to replace a single-wide with another single-wide.

That means that all of the 9,700 trailers in place today, or a third of the county's housing stock, could be replaced, said county planning director Jacky Eubanks.

They're also recommending that the county allow trailers as accessory dwellings in certain areas, if owners get a permit. That means, for instance, that parents could allow their adult children to place a trailer in the parents' yard.

But under the proposed ordinance, Eubanks said, new double-wides would be limited to just 18 percent of the unincorporated area of the county, compared with 90 percent today.

Sherri Frazier, who develops trailer home subdivisions in the county, is concerned about limits on trailers but acknowledged that it's hard to balance the need for affordable housing with other interests, such as increasing the tax base.

Trailers do not increase the base because they tend to decrease in value over time rather than increase like typical stick-built homes do.

"The middle class is disappearing," Frazier said. "Where are these people going to live?"

The county wants to allow some trailers but limit their number because many people who contributed to the land-use plans for individual communities said that lots of trailers in a small area can mar the rural beauty and decrease property values.

"It's trying to provide that balance," said county planner Mary George.

A steady decline in trailer home permits issued in the county and fewer mortgage programs for trailer purchases show decreased demand for this type of housing, Eubanks said.

Last month, commissioners reviewed home businesses, another of the three most controversial elements in the proposed code.

Currently, the county allows owners to operate a business out of a quarter of their home's interior but doesn't allow businesses in outbuildings or on lots separate from the house.

Though some home-business owners blasted the recommended changes to the rules, planners say they actually would provide more opportunities for home-based, or cottage, businesses. They say some opponents are now operating businesses, such as heavy construction, that the county doesn't allow in residential neighborhoods.

The proposal would allow owners to operate businesses in outbuildings or on tracts next door to their homes, if they own both tracts. It also would expand allowable business types to include retail sales, tradesmen's offices and florists, among other uses.

"We didn't go as far as allowing light manufacturing, assembly operation or heavy construction because we felt there has to be a line in the sand somewhere to protect the residential integrity of neighborhoods," Eubanks said. "Certain types of businesses are so intensive that they're more conducive in commercial or industrial settings."

If current businesses wouldn't comply with the new code, the county would give owners two years to move their business or apply for a land rezoning that would allow the business. The use, though, would have to blend well with surrounding properties and be consistent with that community's land-use plan.

Terry Moretz, who owns a hauling business that violates the county's current code and would also violate the new code, said such restrictions could put people out of business.

His company sits on 55 acres, where, he said, his trucks sit out of view and enter and exit the property just once a day.

"It's going to put 10 people out of jobs here," Moretz said. "It ain't going to just affect me. The code enforcement officer they've got, he'll be around knocking on everybody's door that he can."

Once commissioners hold Monday's workshop, they could move toward approval of the new code or ask staff for further change recommendations.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

FEMA again ordered to restart housing payments

The Charlotte Observer
Associated Press
December 8, 2006

WASHINGTON - For the second time in eight days, a judge ordered the Bush administration to immediately resume making housing payments to thousands of families whose homes were damaged by Hurricane Katrina.

U.S. District Judge Richard J. Leon said last week that the confusing, often contradictory letters to hurricane victims from the Federal Emergency Management Agency didn't explain why rental payments were cut off. He said that violated the Constitution and he ordered the agency to restart the program immediately.

FEMA appealed that ruling and asked Leon not to force the agency to restart the program while that case plays out. Leon refused Friday to do so.

He ordered FEMA to come to court Wednesday to discuss how many evacuees are due housing payments and how the funding will be restored.

The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, which won last week's ruling, said more than 11,000 families are affected by the case.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, in an interview with CNN, said Friday that FEMA wanted to ensure only eligible people received aid.

"Obviously, we are going to pursue the legal questions where they have to be pursued, but we also want to make sure we're doing the right thing," Chertoff said. "We don't want to have deserving people kicked out, but we also don't want to have people ripping off the program."

FEMA did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Justice Department had no immediate response to the order.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

Public housing leaders look to gates for safety

Authority also considers increased police patrols

Asheville Citizen Times
Adam Behsudi
December 11, 2006

ASHEVILLE — A proposal from the Housing Authority in Asheville would turn at least two of the city's public housing developments into gated communities.

The plan would reinstall gates at the entrance to the Hillcrest development in early 2007, and for the first time, housing officials will look at installing gates at Pisgah View, the city's largest and most crime-ridden public housing development.

"It would give us a better option as far as seeing who is coming in and out of the development," said Hillcrest manager and resident Michelle McClure. "Most of the people that come in and buy drugs, drive in and drive out."

A gate at Hillcrest is the first of a number of recent proposals from the Housing Authority aimed at improving safety and security at the city's 10 public housing developments, home to more than 2,800 people. Another initiative would increase police patrols at Pisgah View.

In the past year, Pisgah View, with 517 residents, had 2,312 calls for service from police. Those numbers included three rapes, five gunshot wounds, eight armed robberies and two stabbings.

Hillcrest, also with 517 residents, had 967 calls for service, according to data compiled by the Housing Authority and the Asheville Police Department.

McClure said people who live outside of Hillcrest cause 90 percent of trouble.

A gate has been used before, but that stopped despite some success. Gate-opening devices were left intact. McClure said police, with help from residents, would work at the proposed gate.

"We have plenty of examples of gated communities in the area, it's just that rich people live there," said City Councilman Carl Mumpower who chairs the council's public safety committee. "This is not an effort to isolate people in public housing, it's an effort to protect those people."

Police regularly use checkpoints to cut crime at Hillcrest's single entrance, and since the beginning of this year public housing residents have been required to carry identification cards.

But unlike police checkpoints, done primarily at night, gates will be in place 24 hours.

"Right now, the complexes are wide open," said Walt Robertson, director of security for the Housing Authority. "You got people coming all the way over from Rutherford County and Waynesville."

At Hillcrest Friday night, Robertson said officers chased a Clyde man to the Haywood County line after he failed to stop for an ID check. He was charged for driving while his license was revoked, but Robertson suspects he was in the development to buy drugs.

"It gets kind of hairy out here sometimes," Robertson said.

As a public housing resident for nearly 50 years, Robert Morgan said he has seen his share of crime.

He said he isn't holding his breath when it comes to the latest initiatives from the Housing Authority to improve security.

"Everything they started, it never worked long," he said.

Although the Hillcrest resident said he wants to see improvements, he's not sure how many residents will be brave enough to work at a gate.

Because of the good relationships he's had with police officers in the past, he said he's been openly called a "police pimp," Morgan said.

"It's dangerous to participate in things like that," he said.

Housing Authority Director Gene Bell said it's unfair for people to live in fear of violence.

After the gate is up and running at Hillcrest, he said the possibility of gates at Pisgah View will be studied.

The Housing Authority plans meetings on the proposal, and still must find funding, but plans to keep moving forward.

The challenge at Pisgah View, he said, is finding a way to put gates up at the development's five entrances.

"Our residents have said to us repeatedly that safety is their No. 1 concern," Bell said. "We have to do everything we can."

[TOP OF PAGE](#)
