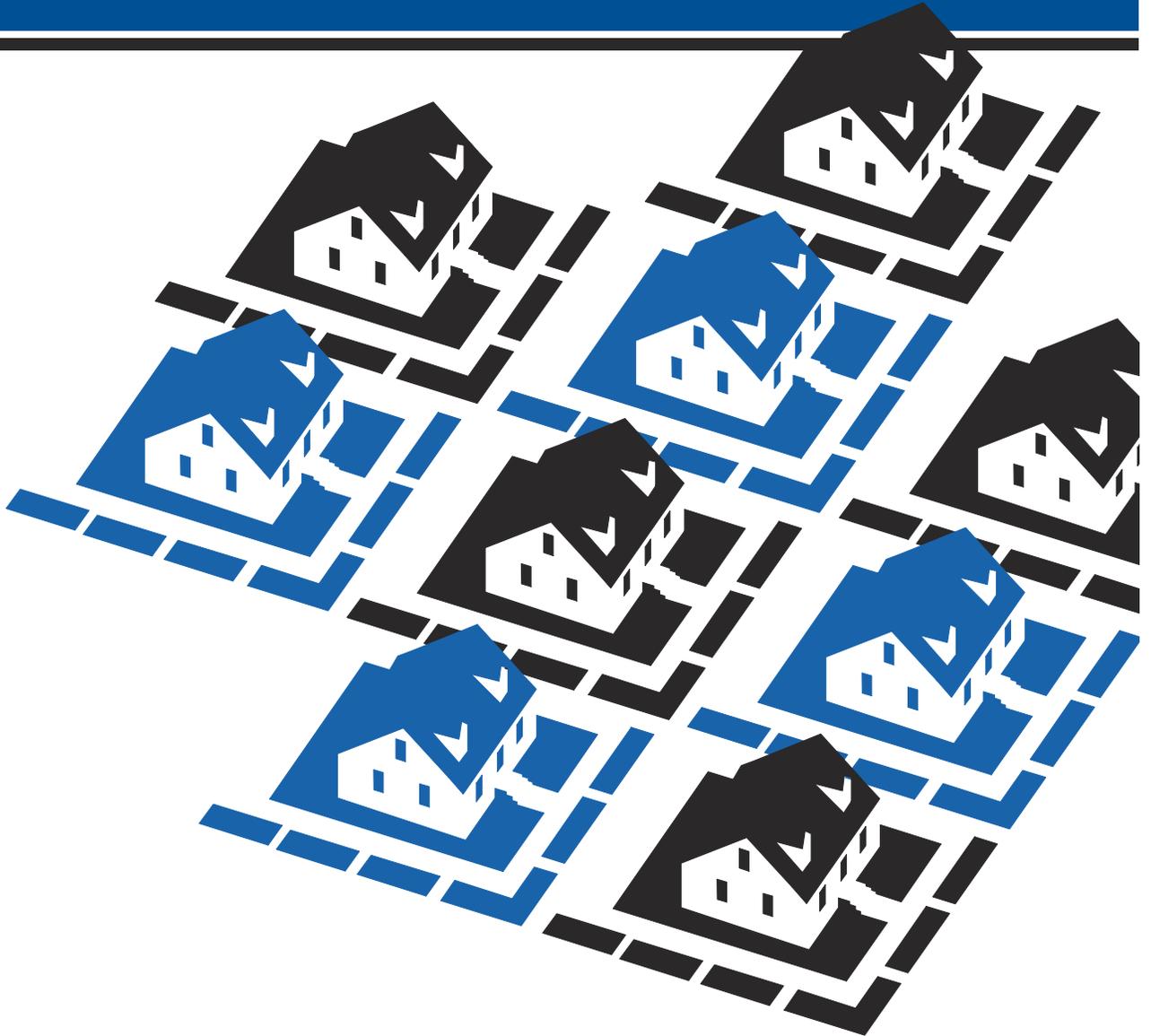


Opportunities for County Government and the Affordable Housing Challenge



CENTER for SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
County Leaders Building Partnerships for a Livable Future

and supported by

**Fannie Mae
Foundation**

June 2005

As President of the National Association of Counties (NACo), I believe that local elected officials bear a unique responsibility to create communities that enable their citizens to achieve the highest possible quality of life. Few things have more direct influence on the quality of life that citizens can achieve than where and how they live. To assist county leaders in creating more quality, accessible, and affordable housing and homeownership opportunities, NACo has been joined by a series of national housing stakeholders in a National Presidential Housing Initiative. Foremost among our partners is the Fannie Mae Foundation, which is collaborating with NACo through our Center for Sustainable Communities to assure that affordable housing is a key component in the development of quality communities.

To understand county housing concerns, with the support of the Fannie Mae Foundation NACo surveyed almost 800 county officials to learn firsthand the challenges they face in creating affordable housing in their communities and what steps need to be taken to assist them in doing so. Their responses and insights form the basis of this report, ***County Government and the Affordable Housing Challenge***.

In this new era, marked by tight budgets, new responsibilities in key areas such as education and homeland security, and dwindling federal resources, county leaders have had to become very creative in developing new approaches to solving their housing and community development challenges. Many of them are reaching out to the private sector and examining their own practices to bring quality affordable housing and homeownership opportunities to their citizens.

Although much has been accomplished, county leaders continue to need new tools and education to help assure that increasing the supply of quality affordable housing is an integral part of their overall community development strategy—along with economic development, job creation, transportation, and education. By listening to what they tell us, NACo and the Foundation will be able to effectively provide the research, best practices, and educational support that counties need to bring housing and homeownership opportunities to all Americans, regardless of age, income, geography, or ethnicity.

I encourage you to read the report, and take advantage of the education and ideas that it provides.

Sincerely,



Angelo D. Kyle
President

County Government and the Affordable Housing Challenge

A Report by the NACo Center for Sustainable Communities Supported by the Fannie Mae Foundation

Introduction

As county leaders have become increasingly concerned over the past few years about affordable housing issues, the National Association of Counties (NACo) has made housing a priority. Since 2003, NACo has provided county leaders with tools, education, and other assistance to support them in helping more of their citizens gain access to quality affordable housing. Under the leadership of President Angelo Kyle, the NACo Center for Sustainable Communities (the Center) has formed a series of partnerships with key housing and community development stakeholders designed to assist counties in meeting housing needs.

One key partner in this effort is the Fannie Mae Foundation (the Foundation), which has provided financial support, research, and programmatic guidance to America's counties. With the Foundation's assistance, the Center set out to learn from county leaders their affordable housing challenges and how NACo and its partners can assist them in increasing the supply of affordable housing and the homeownership opportunities for their citizens.

It is clear that county officials are balancing more and more responsibilities with fewer and fewer resources. In addressing their housing challenges, county leaders are taking strong, proactive steps that are based on local innovation and partnership building rather than relying on the federal government for assistance. Several counties have taken a close look at their development processes and acted to streamline or expedite them.

Arlington County, Virginia, has implemented an expedited building review process that increases certainty for developers and shortens their development and construction time. New Castle County, Delaware's Land Use department is working closely with home builders on environmental issues, helping to assure quick compliance with appropriate regulations. Honolulu County, Hawaii, uses an authorizing state law to exempt affordable housing projects from various development requirements.

The brief profiles of these counties' actions included in this report illustrate just three of the many different ways counties have utilized existing tools and created new ones to assure that housing is accessible and affordable to as many citizens as possible. This is important as several key groups emerged as posing concern to counties with regard to their housing needs, particularly seniors, young families, and middle-income working Americans.

The Survey

NACo sought to gain additional insight into local challenges and responses. The Center wanted to understand how county leaders view affordable housing among their community priorities, the state of housing in their county, the tools they are using to provide quality affordable housing to their residents, the challenges they face in doing so, and the assistance they need in overcoming them.

The Center conducted a survey of 789 counties during spring 2005. Ninety-four counties provided detailed responses. Respondents included 38 counties with populations below 100,000; 26 with populations between 100,000 and 250,000; 20 with between 250,001 and 500,000 residents; and 16 with populations of more than 500,001.

Of the survey counties, 24 classified themselves as urban, 28 as suburban, and 42 as rural. The mix of urban, suburban, and rural counties that responded were generally proportional to NACo's membership. Nationally, of the 3,066 county governments, about 1,400 would be classified as rural, with another 600 or so falling into the new Micropolitan demographic.

Although the sample is not scientific, the responses provide strong insights into county leaders' challenges and responses related to affordable housing and community development. The survey data give NACo and the Fannie Mae Foundation information to help them structure effective, accessible, and well-tailored assistance to help counties increase affordable housing. Because of their power as local and regional decision makers, county leaders are in perhaps the best position to implement measures and form broad-based partnerships that make housing available to more and more Americans. Through our partnership, NACo and the Foundation will utilize the information provided by county leaders on the front line to develop research, technical assistance, and education programs that help them successfully overcome our national housing challenge one community at a time.

Affordable Housing as a Priority for Counties

Affordable housing is a major concern for county officials—it was one of the top five challenges identified by the survey respondents.¹ Many counties named attracting and retaining businesses as their highest priority: It was cited by 37 percent of respondents. This is not surprising given the recession of the first years of the 21st century and rising unemployment levels. Business attraction issues were followed closely by managing growth/sprawl (35%) and increasing jobs (33%). Rounding out the top five were transportation (24%) and creating and preserving affordable housing (21%). This set of

¹ Respondents were given a list of 11 key issues from which to choose and rank their top five challenges, with one being most urgent and five being least urgent. The categories they selected from included: attracting/retaining business; managing growth/sprawl; increasing jobs; providing transportation; creating and preserving affordable housing; improving education; handling environmental issues (air/water); managing finances; reducing crime; providing homeland security; and reducing racial tensions. The survey also included an option to write in a response.

issues, along with environmental concerns, are the major components of creating sustainable, prosperous communities.

Although not the first priority of county respondents, affordable housing is near the top of their agenda and stands out as an issue of universal concern across counties of all sizes—unlike some other major concerns.

For example, four in ten suburban and three in ten urban respondents named transportation as their first or second most pressing challenge. Slightly more than one in ten rural respondents rated it so highly. In contrast, only about a 12 percent variance separated the number of urban, suburban, and rural counties that considered affordable housing as one of their top two priorities.

Even growth and sprawl challenges do not share a comparable level of commonality. While better than half of all suburban counties (53%) say managing growth/sprawl is one of their top two priorities, only about a quarter of rural (26%) and urban (29%) respondents share their view.

Affordable housing and environmental issues were the only challenges cited with a frequency greater than ten percent that were comparably important to all respondents—urban, suburban, or rural. Housing was a higher priority for these county respondents than education, transportation, reducing crime, and even homeland security.

Many county officials acknowledged important intersections among affordable housing and economic development and other policy priorities. Of the respondents who said increasing jobs—adding more jobs to the existing pool—was the most urgent challenge facing their county, all but two cited housing in their top five priorities. Six in ten who cited economic development as their highest priority selected affordable housing in their top five. In fact, those focused on economic development cited creating affordable housing more often than any of the other choices, including some of the more commonly associated components of economic development: transportation, crime, and education. The same pattern emerges for those who selected managing growth/sprawl as their top priority, with half also citing housing as a top priority.

This implied level of recognition of the relationship between housing, economic development and managing sprawl are encouraging. But for NACo and the Foundation, the survey also points to a clear need for education on the interconnection between housing and other major community priorities. Bolstering awareness of this interrelation may not only address affordable housing concerns, but also increase the prospects for comprehensive sustainable community development. NACo and the Foundation believe that to create quality communities, affordable housing must be incorporated with other policy priorities including:

- Attracting and retaining business by providing appropriate housing for a diverse workforce
- Creating vibrant and safe neighborhoods
- Providing stable home environments for families with school-aged children and aging Americans
- Reducing negative environmental impacts from increased traffic emissions and sprawl

Local government officials need successful, replicable examples of how to balance these priorities. In an era of increasingly tight budgets, new mandates, and dwindling federal and state resources, they cannot afford the luxury of trial and error. Throughout their responses, time and time again county leaders indicated a strong need for education and assistance in finding new ways to increase affordable housing and strengthen its role within their communities.

The State of Housing

Although counties lack sufficient supplies of affordable housing, they don't necessarily lack housing construction. All types of survey respondents—urban, suburban, and rural—reported high levels of housing construction in the past five years. More than six in ten described construction activity during that time as above average, with responses similarly strong for urban counties (67%), suburban counties (60%) and rural counties (57%). Their responses demonstrate the strength of the home-building industry, even during the recession that marked the first year or so of the new century.

Despite above-average levels of construction, eight of ten respondents said it is not meeting their community's need to provide housing for residents at all income levels. Although they cited a need for affordable housing across the board, county leaders expressed deep concern for several key population segments: the elderly, single-parent families, and young workers.

Better than seven of ten respondents agreed that there is a lack of affordable housing for ownership or rental within their communities. About seventy percent said that they were particularly concerned about the lack of suitable affordable housing to meet the needs of their elderly population. Whether from an urban, suburban, or rural county, as you advance in years, acquiring suitable affordable housing (for rental or ownership) becomes increasingly difficult. For example, for citizens ages 55 to 79, only one in three respondents were confident that their county had appropriate housing for this population; for those 80 and over, it had dwindled to less than one in six.

Along with their concerns about how to house aging Americans, counties say they need more entry-level housing for young people, middle-income working families, and single parents. Assuring a range of housing options plays a key role in a sustainable community development strategy. From an economic and business development standpoint, counties cannot expect to attract and retain quality businesses if there are no places for young workers to live. If they cannot find any suitable housing they can afford near their jobs, citizens move farther and farther from employment and community centers—the textbook formula for sprawl. The related stresses put on infrastructure, transportation, the environment, and families become an enormous burden for counties.

Opportunities for Counties to Increase Housing Production—Planning, Tools, and Partnerships

The task of creating quality affordable housing that underpins a sustainable community is, like other challenges that counties face, made even more difficult by fiscal constraints. Unlike the federal government, which can operate in deficits, or state governments, which have significantly more resources, county governments must balance budgets while providing an increasingly broad range of services to citizens, including those required by federal or state mandate.

To meet their housing needs, the majority of county respondents said they still utilize federal resources as a component of their housing and community development strategies, although not to the same degree that they had previously. More than seven in ten respondents cited major federal housing programs as tools they utilize in their housing and community development strategies. But federal resources that for decades have been the lifeblood of many local government housing and community development strategies have been either reduced or targeted for elimination. The federal government is no longer in the business of supplying housing, and is providing less support for its development.

Counties have seen similar reductions in state funding and, as a result, have had to become more creative in developing their own tools and initiatives to meet the housing challenge. They have become much savvier in leveraging dwindling governmental resources and more focused on creating partnerships with the private sector to increase the supply of homes and keep them as affordable as possible.

Local leaders are recognizing that America's housing crisis must be solved locally. As the level of government most directly accountable to citizens, county leaders are not only closest to the problem, but also closest to the solution. In their search for solutions to the growing affordable housing crisis, county leaders have gotten creative in utilizing existing tools where they can, and developing new ones where they have to. They have tested and evaluated several different regulatory and programmatic tools and strategies. They have identified effective actions they can take at the local level to streamline development processes, work with community groups, and build partnerships with the builders and developers who supply housing.

Overall, planning measures were the most commonly cited actions by counties to support the development of affordable housing. According to survey results, nearly two-thirds use comprehensive planning as a primary approach to develop affordable housing. Three in ten also cited a growth management plan as a principal vehicle for guiding their development of affordable housing.

Six in ten respondents said their county develops a comprehensive plan that includes affordable housing. This signals a realization among many counties of the role that affordable housing should play in their overall development plans, along with environmental, transportation, and land use components. However, about 20 percent do not develop a comprehensive plan at all and, more alarmingly, the same percentage say that although they do develop a comprehensive plan, it does not address affordable housing.

Although there may be some jurisdictional or authority issues behind some of those responses, the fact that one in five develops a plan that does not include affordable housing indicates a real educational opportunity for NACo and the Foundation. Counties need to understand the importance of developing comprehensive plans and the full range of variables that must be factored in. Failure to include affordable housing as a component of a comprehensive plan makes that plan less than comprehensive and opens the door to future problems that extend far beyond housing to encompass economic development, land use, transportation, and sprawl.

Although county leaders use the planning process to develop the overall community vision, they also recognize a strong need work directly with private/nonprofit developers to increase the supply of housing. Counties responding to the survey favored methods that provide incentives for collaboration, and they reported reaching out in a number of ways to build partnerships with the development community. Approaches include:

- Facilitating collaboration with citizen groups
- Coordinating and streamlining activities and administrative processes across governmental departments
- Providing incentives for inclusion of affordable housing in new or rehabilitated housing developments

In general, county leaders favor a “carrot” approach of incentives for developers rather than the “stick” approach of regulations. For example, a large percentage reported providing density bonuses for the inclusion of affordable housing units in new or rehabilitated developments—an incentive, or “carrot,” form of inclusionary zoning. Other incentives that counties believe to effectively increase housing production include:

- Expedited building or environmental review processes for precertified quality builders
- Waiving impact fees for affordable housing developments
- A coordinated and expedited approval program for rehabilitation or new construction

In addition, slightly more than half of respondents cited tax incentives to builders or developers as among their most effective tools for encouraging new housing construction and rehabilitation. More than half also reported a revolving loan fund or similar financing mechanism as an effective incentive to encourage developers to produce more affordable housing.

County governments could take the “stick” approach by implementing strict development measures to compel builders to develop more affordable housing. However, leaders are most interested in building mutually beneficial partnerships that increase ease and certainty for the development community while assuring that housing construction and renovation maximize affordability and quality. To help counties meet this objective, more attention should be given to examining the regulatory environment and facilitating dialogue with the development community. For NACo and the Foundation, this need indicates an opportunity to provide best practice examples on approaches such as code reform, expedited review processes, and potentially other tools, such as density bonuses and inclusionary zoning.

NACo's existing partnership with the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) can also be leveraged to support these efforts. Bringing the builders that NAHB represents together with county leaders, supported by Foundation research, provides a real opportunity to expand collaboration that increases the supply of affordable housing. The Foundation is supporting research by New York University's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy that examines the streamlining of local governmental processes and reviews that can increase the supply of housing. The report will be available in October 2005 and available to decision makers who can apply those lessons.

Counties clearly recognize the need for an increased supply of a range of affordable housing options. Through the power of their office as local decision makers, county leaders have implemented a variety of different strategies designed to reduce the expenses associated with housing construction and renovation, all with an eye on keeping costs low for developers and prices affordable for potential residents.

County Affordable Housing Tools—Expedited Review Processes

Although county respondents showed relatively little enthusiasm for reducing impact fees charged to developers for housing construction, they remain strongly committed to working with the development community to control costs. Because they are acutely aware that in the development business time is money, many county leaders around the country recognize that they can significantly reduce the cost of housing by shortening development and construction time.

Counties have focused on streamlining their development and review processes, looking for redundancies that can be eliminated and offering speedier reviews to responsible builders. Effective expedited review processes offer a classic “win-win-win” solution for builders, the county, and citizens. For builders, these measures shorten development time and reduce costs. Keeping development times short allows the savings to be passed on to citizens, keeping homes more affordable. County leaders benefit through reduced litigation costs, better services to their constituents, and often, increased certainty regarding the quality of developed housing.

Counties have taken several different approaches to expedite their review processes to increase the supply of affordable housing. Brief snapshots of the processes implemented by three forward-looking counties show how counties can work with the building community to make housing more affordable. They are included in the appendix of this report.

Challenges and Opportunities for Incorporating Affordable Housing into Sustainable Community Development

Although counties cited various planning measures as primary vehicles to create and preserve affordable housing, they face several barriers to accomplishing their objective. The survey

identified a couple of common threads to the challenges that county leaders face in bringing together housing, community, and economic development stakeholders on strategic planning. More than a third of respondents (36%) said their community does not recognize affordable housing, economic development, and workforce development as interrelated issues. With such a significant percentage reporting that their constituents do not view affordable housing as a critical component of a quality community, the job of providing it becomes all the more difficult.

The second and third most frequently cited barriers by county leaders were their beliefs that each community or interest group has its own narrow agenda (33%), and that historic distrust/division makes collaboration difficult (30%). Collectively, the responses suggest an opportunity to spotlight the linkage between housing and other policy priorities and to show how counties are creatively addressing housing needs without direct subsidies.

Just as important, the survey results also point to the need for facilitated dialogue between the local government, the development sector, and community groups. The responses suggest both an insufficient awareness among stakeholders of the full effect of the affordable housing challenge and a perception by county leaders of their unwillingness or inability to broaden their perspectives to see where various interests intersect. For the Center, this represents a real opportunity to provide facilitation services and a forum to bring stakeholders together.

County leaders not only know the challenges that they face, but they also have a clear idea of the types of information and assistance they need to meet those challenges and how they can best receive that information. County leaders want to learn from their peers. Respondents expressed a strong desire for replicable case studies, sample policies, and best practices implemented by other leaders who are successfully increasing the supply of affordable housing.

The county officials want information that is specifically tailored to provide insights on partnership development, cost-saving measures, and community facilitation. And they want that information to be timely and usable. Because housing challenges are so pervasive, many county leaders are proactively seeking assistance to meet them. For example, they use the Internet to search for assistance. Most travel to job-related conferences and events, and they want to use those trips to gather information they can apply at home. Respondents favor brief, implementable best practice case studies to academic reports, and they like newsletters.

The information provided by county leaders will play a key role in shaping the types of assistance the Foundation, NACo, and its other partners seek to provide. As such, NACo will work with the Foundation and KnowledgePlex® (www.knowledgeplex.org) to highlight ideas and innovations. NACo will also work with the Foundation and DataPlace™ (www.dataplace.org) to provide timely statistics and data that address the housing challenges in America's counties.

Conclusion

County leaders are keenly aware of the housing crisis that is affecting so many of their citizens. Despite the fact that the home building industry has thrived, and homes have been constructed in communities at an impressive rate over the past decade, the need for affordable housing options—particularly for the elderly, young families with children, single parents, and middle-income citizens—has increased. Counties are forced to meet this growing burden with fewer and fewer federal resources and an expanding array of new mandates in areas such as education, health care, and homeland security. Although their responsibilities grow larger, the resources they are provided are becoming fewer.

Despite these challenges, counties have taken strong measures to increase the supply and manage the cost of housing. They have expanded their toolbox, developing new approaches and ideas that utilize their power as local decision makers to bring housing concerns to the forefront. They have streamlined their development regulations and procedures, expedited housing reviews, and sought out partnerships with development and community stakeholders.

Although county leaders recognize the affordable housing challenge, and have demonstrated considerable innovation in resolving it, much more needs to be done. County leaders express a critical need for information in a variety of areas to help them become even more creative in compensating for what they have lost and will likely continue to lose in government support for housing.

Local leaders need examples to clearly show their citizens the importance of providing affordable housing for all ages and income levels for a healthy community. They need more and better planning tools to help them understand their current housing challenges and more confidently plan for those of the future. They need help in building bridges to housing construction, transportation, environmental, community, and faith-based stakeholders so they can collectively plan for and determine their future with all hands on deck. And they need appropriate and accessible education, technical assistance, and training opportunities.

For NACo, meeting these expressed needs is fundamental to providing services to America's counties. Working in collaboration with the Fannie Mae Foundation and its other partners, NACo will provide county leaders with the assistance they need to create sustainable communities in which citizens, regardless of age, income, or ethnicity can live, work, and raise their families.

APPENDIX: EXEMPLARY EXPEDITED REVIEW PROCESSES

EXEMPTIONS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS Pursuant to Chapter 201G, Hawaii Revised Statutes

Honolulu City and County, *HAWAII*

Hawaii's Chapter 201G law was enacted to encourage development of affordable housing. It provides a process through which an affordable housing project may be granted exemptions from statutes, ordinances, and rules of any governmental agency relating to planning, zoning, and construction standards, as long as the exemptions would not negatively affect public health and safety. For projects on Oahu, the City and County of Honolulu Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) processes requests for exemptions pursuant to this law and forwards them to the city council for action.

201G has allowed developers to reduce transaction costs and construct projects much more quickly with exemptions from components of the development and construction review process.

Project Eligibility

Affordable housing projects are eligible if they contain at least fifty units, at least half of which are made affordable to income target groups designated by city rules based on guidelines from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This 50 percent of units is further broken down into minimum percentages for specific target groups; for example, 10 percent of the units must be affordable to households with annual incomes at or below 80 percent of the median for the City and County of Honolulu, adjusted for family size.

The Chapter 201G Process

Developers are required to submit applications containing their preliminary plans and the list of exemptions they are applying for. There also are application prerequisites, which include presenting the proposal to the local neighborhood board where the project is located and demonstrating compliance with the Environmental Impact Statement requirements of Hawaii state law.

Once project plans pass the preliminary review phase, the plans and exemption requests are routed to various city agencies for standard review. Usually, the plans are sent back to the developer for modifications, and then the DPP submits the 201G request to the city council along with its report and recommendations. The plans most often are assigned to the city council zoning committee, whose role is to review the requests and recommend approval or disapproval of the exemption request. If the committee recommends approval, the plans are then forwarded to the city council for a vote.

Benefits to Developers and the Public

For developers, Chapter 201G offers a streamlined process that reduces transaction costs on a development project. Conventional projects must go through a development/sustainable community plan amendment and/or rezoning process, which can take the county many months to review and approve. Also, developers seeking zoning variances from development standards (e.g., density) and allowances not permitted in the zoning district may not be able to make a case for hardship under the criteria established in the conventional city charter. When housing construction is expedited, developers save money, which makes homes more affordable and benefits the general public.

Effectiveness

In the past 10 years, about 3,000 affordable dwelling units have been authorized or built under Chapter 201G. Honolulu County granted exemptions for 21 affordable housing projects in that time. Until the past year, however, rents on Oahu remained relatively stable. Single-family home values were comparable to the values that were required for affordable housing units developed under 201G. Currently, housing values and rents are rising at alarming rates and the need for affordable rental units is increasing. As a result, developers are utilizing the Chapter 201G more frequently, which county leaders expect will make many more affordable units available in the future.

For more information about the City and County of Honolulu's affordable housing project, please contact:

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EXPEDITED REVIEW PROCESS FOR REHABILITATION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Arlington County, VIRGINIA

An Expedited Review Process for Rehabilitation and New Construction

Having a sufficient stock of affordable, safe housing is a major policy objective for Arlington County. The county is taking a variety of actions to facilitate the development of affordable housing in the community, and the expedited review process is just one of its tools.

Arlington County manages its expedited review process through an agreement with the Institute for Building Technology and Safety (IBTS). A nonprofit public service organization, IBTS conducts plan reviews of all plans for affordable housing units submitted to the county. The cost for the third-party review is transferred directly to the developer. Arlington County is thus able to provide exceptional service to developers and the community without incurring additional costs to the taxpayers.

How the Process Works

Developers deliver plans for their affordable housing projects to the Arlington County Inspection Services Division. Permit numbers are generated for the projects and the plans are delivered the next day to IBTS for review. The turnaround time for the first review by IBTS is two to three weeks for complicated projects, and less than a week for standard projects. Once IBTS completes their review, they send comments by e-mail to the county and the project's architect so the parties can immediately work on any issues. The reviewed plans are sent back to Arlington. Revisions are taken care of by county staff.

Effectiveness

The third-party reviews conducted by IBTS have been extremely successful in expediting the building permit process. Developers' expenses incurred in this process are minimal compared to the cost of time lost in the county's standard review process. This is the principal benefit to the developer—significantly reduced time for plan reviews. As a result, the developers are able to build more quickly, saving thousands of dollars in construction costs that are passed on to potential occupants. This improves the financial base for affordable housing developments, and creates strong incentives to develop more affordable housing units in Arlington County. As a result of this process, developers are building more quickly and affordably, and passing along those savings to Arlington County residents.

For more information on Arlington County's expedited review process, please contact:

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Website: <http://www.co.arlington.va.us/Departments/CPHD/CPHDMain.aspx>

EXPEDITED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

New Castle County, *DELAWARE*

Sustainability in Action: Housing and the Environment

New Castle County, Delaware understands the value of preserving a healthy physical environment and requires all new developments to undergo an environmental review process. To protect its resources in the most efficient manner while still promoting development opportunities, the county has streamlined its environmental review process. The expedited environmental review process is designed to facilitate conversations between developers and the county.

The Environmental Review Process

New Castle County strongly encourages developers to meet with the county planning and engineering staff prior to the initial planning stages of their projects. The county assists developers in drawing up plans that will pass county inspections, reducing the likelihood that plans will be rejected or caught up in lengthy and costly debates.

The county's first assistance on the environmental review process comes in the form of a series of layered maps showing the environmental resources within a 1,000 foot radius of a site. The maps provide developers and the county with an overview of sensitive environmental resources on a site, enabling them to discuss methods to protect these resources at the front end.

The county's top priorities in the environmental review process are to:

- Link environmental resources throughout the county
- Develop storm water management systems that respect the natural drainage characteristics of sites and enable optimal infiltration
- Identify any historic resources on the site early in the development process
- Review transportation system needs for the site and its area

Effectiveness

The county's expedited review process is proving to be a great success. Developers are extremely appreciative of the county's efforts to expedite their projects by working with them at the front-end planning stages rather than entering into debates or negotiations later in the process.

With the environmental review process in place, developers are protecting sensitive areas on their sites. They are beginning to understand, early on in a project, the concepts best used to preserve their environments. As a result of its efforts, the county and local developers are saving both time and money. The process is even preparing the county for the future by

putting it in a position to comply with Federal Total Maximum Daily Load pollution control standards that will go into effect in the near future.

In addition to the cost savings seen by developers and citizens as a result of the expedited environmental review process, by working with developers to position itself to more readily comply with environmental mandates, the county may be saving itself hundreds of thousands of dollars in the coming years.

For more information on the New Castle County environmental review process, please contact:

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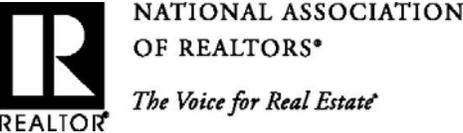
The Center for Sustainable Communities provides a forum for county leaders to work with other governments, the private sector, and citizens to develop policies and programs that will lead to economic enhancement, environmental stewardship and social well being -- the three pillars of sustainable communities.

For more information about the Center for Sustainable Communities and its programs, contact:

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The Center for Sustainable Communities thanks the following organizations for their support



Sustainable Housing Council Roster



NACo President Angelo Kyle and Fannie Mae Foundation Managing Director Sheila Maith sign a grant agreement to support affordable housing and home ownership.

■ NACo President

The Honorable Angelo D. Kyle
Chair

■ Members

Ms. Stacey Davis Stewart
President and Chief Executive Officer
Fannie Mae Foundation

Mr. Richard Townsell
Executive Director
*Lawndale Christian
Development Corporation*

Mr. Bobby Rayburn
Immediate Past President
National Association of Home Builders

Mr. Walter McDonald
President
National Association of REALTORS®

Mr. William J. Johnson
Executive Director
*National Association
of Police Organizations*

Ms. Gwen Thomas,
Consumer Real Estate/Neighborhood
Lending Sales Executive
Bank of America

The Honorable Grady Prestage
Commissioner
Fort Bend County, TX
Chair, *NACo Community and Economic
Development Steering Committee*

The Honorable Thomas “T.C.” Coley, Jr.
Commissioner
Tallapoosa County, AL
Chair, *NACo Housing Subcommittee*

The Honorable Robert S. Weiner,
New Castle County Council
Chair, *NACo Sustainability Leadership
Team*

Dr. Robert E. Lang
Director
Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech

Mr. John Murphy
Executive Director
*National Community
and Economic Development*

Mr. Jim Park
Vice-President
Industry Relations and Housing Outreach
Freddie Mac

Mr. Thayer Long
Assistant Vice-President
Manufactured Housing Institute

Mr. Tom Lentz
Executive Director
Lake County United

Mr. Charles Lyons
Selectman
Arlington, MA
Immediate Past President
National League of Cities

■ Liaison Representative

Mr. A. Bryant Applegate
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