

Delaware Housing Coalition



Strategic Plan Report

2011 ~ 2013

Progress Report on Goals 2007 ~ 2009

The Delaware Housing Coalition (DHC) engaged in a lengthy strategic planning process in 2006 which resulted in seven major goals, five community goals and two organizational goals. The process took particular guidance from several community meetings throughout the state, some organized geographically and some by interest area. The resulting goals were for the three-year period from 2007 to 2009.

In 2010, the board of directors of DHC assessed our progress on these goals, elicited community comment through electronic surveys and from standing committees and workgroups, and defined a new set of objectives to be applied to each of the seven existing goals. This is a report on our progress over the first three years and our projected work over the next three.

We are grateful to Ruth S. Sokolowski who facilitated the current strategic planning process and to Jane C. W. Vincent who facilitated the previous one.

We invested significant energy which yielded considerable results toward our seven goals. A synopsis of the goals and the progress and effort toward each is included here (below).

We discovered that advocacy for government initiative **toward our first goal**, a comprehensive statewide housing plan, was less promising than the new, more direct strategy we have now begun, of collaborating to create a community-based plan in which

all sectors of the affordable housing community can participate.

Toward the second goal of elevating affordable housing to a priority position within state policy and budget, we began publishing *Who Can Afford to Live in Delaware?*, which has become an important reference and advocacy tool. (2007 – present).

We convened the **Housing Policy Round Table**, which worked

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The Seven DHC Strategic Planning Goals

GOAL 1) Promote the development, implementation, and funding of a comprehensive, coordinated and strategic statewide housing plan that meets the affordable housing needs of Delaware's residents.

PROGRESS: Limited

ACTIVITY/EFFORT: Moderate

GOAL 2) Elevate affordable housing to a priority position within state policy and budget. PROGRESS: Strong

ACTIVITY/EFFORT: Strong

GOAL 3) Identify and encourage integrated state and local land use policies which balance provision for affordable housing sufficient to meet the needs of Delaware's residents with concerns for open space, land conservation and smart growth.

PROGRESS: Limited

ACTIVITY/EFFORT: Moderate

GOAL 4) Ensure that Delaware's affordable housing system focuses on creating housing opportunities for households with very low incomes (<50% of median income) and extremely low incomes (<30%).

PROGRESS: Moderate

ACTIVITY/EFFORT: Strong

GOAL 5) Foster development of grassroots leaders and groups working to address their housing problems.

PROGRESS: Limited

ACTIVITY/EFFORT: Limited

GOAL 6) Strengthen our Board of Directors.

PROGRESS: Strong

ACTIVITY/EFFORT: Strong

GOAL 7) Assure that we have the financial resources to meet these goals.

PROGRESS: Moderate

ACTIVITY/EFFORT: Strong

DHC Strategic Plan Goals for 2011 ~ 2013

Goal I: *Collaborate with other organizations to develop a community-based, comprehensive, coordinated and strategic statewide housing plan that meets the affordable housing needs of Delaware's residents.*

Board Review: Lorraine deMeurisse, Leslie Holland, Susan Starrett, Serena Williams

Rationale: As the magnitude and complexity of housing needs have increased, Delaware's affordable housing system has been unprepared to respond strategically. We have not successfully linked needs to strategies and strategies to resources. Also, in our efforts to raise the visibility of affordable housing needs, it is crucial to have progressive recommendations to offer to legislators and leaders that will address the needs we are highlighting.

Strategies

- **join a collaborative, community-based effort** with the Homeless Planning Council and all other interested organizations to develop a community-based housing plan for the state
- work for adoption of the plan by the State and sub-state jurisdictions in Delaware

Contingencies

- organizational capacity
- level of public concern about affordable housing
- agencies' willingness to collaborate

Restraints

- government inertia and agency territoriality
- lack of overall framework or vision for the affordable housing system
- tendency to focus on immediate needs rather than long-

term solutions

Lead: Executive Director

Goal II: *Elevate affordable housing to a priority position in public sector policies and budgets.*

Board Review: Dorothy Medeiros, Joe Myer, Veronica Oliver, Amy Walls

Rationale: Efforts to increase funding and improve coordinated planning for Delaware's affordable housing needs cannot be successful until affordable housing is a priority issue. A multi-faceted campaign is needed to elevate the issue of affordable housing in Delaware to a position of priority for leaders, institutions, elected officials, and the general public.

Strategies

- continue and intensify efforts of the **Nonprofit Housing Agenda** (NHA) on all levels
- continue relationship with a high quality **government relations representative**
- organize and host **housing hearings** for state and elected officials featuring testimony by persons with housing problems (using "teach-in" model)
- hold **housing policy breakfasts** in all three counties

Contingencies

- level of NHA participation
- ability to expand and deepened NHA legislative and policy agenda
- receptiveness of new officials, state administration
- public awareness

Restraints

- federal cuts
- state budget
- NIMBY sentiment

Lead: Executive Director

Goal III: *Identify and encourage interrelated state and local land use policies and practices that balance provision for affordable housing sufficient to meet the needs of Delaware's residents with concerns for open space, conservation and sustainable growth.*

Board Review: Sarah Keifer, Jocelyn McBride, Sandy Spence, Van Temple

Rationale: Many Delawareans do not have access to affordable housing, and land use plans have not incorporated affordable housing as a necessary component. Housing that is safe, decent and affordable requires a minimum quality of community life and environment. Policies addressing better growth, environmental conservation and community quality of life must include strategies to address the need for high-quality, integrated affordable housing.

Strategies

- continued and heightened **Good Neighborhood Project**
- **Good Neighborhood endorser campaign**
- **Good Neighborhood memoranda of understanding** with public officials
- **affordable housing community impact study**
- **WHYNIMBY.ORG website**
- **Housing Advocacy Legal Fund (HALF)**
- hold elected officials accountable for exclusionary/discriminatory practices

Contingencies

- adequate "Fair Share" data
- continued federal emphasis on affirmatively furthering fair housing
- new statewide "analysis of

impediments to fair housing”

- condition of the real estate market

Restraints

- NIMBY sentiments, local anti-density reflexes, and lack of political will
- current zoning often increases costs and sprawl and limits affordable housing options
- comprehensive plans are not translated into ordinances
- affordable housing advocates need more land-use expertise

Lead: Executive Director

Goal IV: *Promote the development of an adequate housing supply throughout the state to meet the needs of households with very low incomes (<50% of median) and extremely low incomes (<30% of median).*

Board Review: Karen Curtis, Patricia Kelleher, Brenda Osborne

Rationale: The housing needs of poor households are both unmet and overlooked, and increasingly so, as more affluent households feel the pinch of the lack of "affordable housing." The affordability gap is most extreme and most critical for poor Delawareans.

Strategies

- convene **disability housing needs study** group
- monitor public housing trends
- advocate for fair housing legislation such as protection against discrimination based on income source

Contingencies

- recognition of housing as a basic human need
- availability of affordable housing funding and development vehicles
- success of state housing

voucher effort

- recognition of superiority of affordable housing alternative (versus shelters, prisons, hospitals)

Restraints

- apathy and resignation in face of increasing numbers of households in need
- zoning restrictions on multifamily housing
- loss of existing subsidized and low-cost units
- need for high subsidy cost per unit
- developer preference for building for higher income families
- landlord preference for renting to higher income tenants

Lead: Executive Director

Goal V: *Foster development of grassroots leaders and groups working to address their housing problems.*

Lead: Grassroots Policy Committee and Executive Director

Rationale: Those most directly affected by housing policy decisions are under-represented in decision-making. Our understanding of the affordable housing problem is broadened and deepened by grassroots work, and grassroots leaders are best able to identify and address their own problems. Strengthened grassroots groups are an important vehicle for promoting self-reliance, independence, and broadened and deepened leadership for social change.

Strategies

- conduct grassroots work to **promote the identification of common problems** and ways to address them by the people directly affected

- **encourage models which trust grassroots decision-making** (direct action, mutual aid, self-help, constructive work)
- hold county and statewide gatherings and **mutual education events**

- work with DHC Board on Goal #6 to help grassroots representation and participation within DHC to be mutually reinforcing with effort on this goal
- Contingencies

There are numerous social and practical challenges which make it difficult for poor households to participate.

Restraints

- prevailing view of change in Delaware is top-down, not bottom-up
- grassroots speech and action are often unwelcome by more privileged
- DHC organizational capacity

Goal VI: *Strengthen Our Board*

Rationale: The Board is both the governing body and the essential link between organization and community. It is especially important at this juncture to increase its ability to do its work effectively.

Lead: Board Development Committee

Goal VII: *Assure that we have the financial resources to meet these goals.*

Rationale: To sustain growth and ensure long-term organizational viability, DHC must focus on its financial planning and fundraising to identify and develop long-term means of support that will be diverse and stable.

Lead: Resource Development Committee and Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the Delaware Housing Coalition examined the seven strategic planning goals and the related factors, restating the goals and adding some preliminary new objectives under each of them.

on issues related to the operation of the Delaware State Housing Authority and the Governor's Council on Housing and on the review of the Council by the General Assembly's Sunset Committee.

In 2007, we started the Nonprofit Housing Agenda to have a greater impact on state budget decisions and increase the awareness of the affordable housing need. Through a collaboration of twelve nonprofits, we have a contract with a high-quality Government Relations Representative. (2007 – present).

We continued to hold an annual Day for Housing, except May 2008, when we held the Democratic Gubernatorial Forum. (2007 – present).

We began using a commercial electronic broadcast for housing bulletins and are able to make more frequent broadcasts. (2007 – present).

We have held statewide conferences at least annually on affordable housing issues, including promising prospects for housing (November 2008) and balanced housing (November 2009).

The Council on Housing has changed its structure, composition, and way of operating, including a more public and objective HDF application process.

The HDF has seen level or increased funding since 2007.

Toward the third goal of identifying and encouraging integrated state and local land use policies which balance provision for affordable housing sufficient to meet the needs of Delaware's residents with concerns for open space, land conservation and smart growth, we developed and began the Good Neighborhood Project, made public the Fair Share Housing Measure and its

policy implications, as well as the "Why NOT In My Back Yard?" resources.

We were involved in the formulation of the Sussex County Moderately Priced Housing Unit (MPHU) program.

We were early advocates of a mandatory inclusionary housing program for New Castle County and encouraged the announcement of the program in that original form, but which became the Workforce Housing Ordinance.

We attended and participated in the public planning meetings for all three county comprehensive plans.

We presented to Kent County Levy Court and saw many of the recommendations included in the final comprehensive plan.

The Sussex Housing Group presented to the newly elected Sussex County Council on affordable housing needs in Sussex.

Toward the fourth strategic goal of ensuring that Delaware's affordable housing system focuses on creating housing opportunities for households with very low incomes (<50% of median income) and extremely low incomes (<30%), we published the report: The Housing Needs of Extremely Low Income Delawareans. (11/2007).

We participated in the statewide Working Group which issued the report: Housing for Extremely Low-Income Delawareans. (12/2009)

We continued to work with our Congressional offices and the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) to institute and fund a National Housing Trust Fund.

DHC worked with others to address a Town of Laurel "nuisance" ordinance aimed at multifamily housing.

We continued to express our

concerns and make suggestions on the DSHA "Moving to Work" annual plans to help ensure that public housing remains available to ELI and VLI households.

We re-published The Realities of Poverty in Delaware.

Toward the fifth goal of fostering development of grassroots leaders and groups working to address their housing problems, we have revised, updated, and republished the Tenant Council Election Manual.

We have continued to do *ad hoc* work with individual tenants and tenant groups.

We have supported the New Horizons Cooperative in its efforts to find a new home and to participate in the planning process in Sussex County.

Our sixth and seventh goals are organizational ones.

Toward the sixth goal of strengthening our Board of Directors, we formed a Board Development Committee (2007 – present), which consolidated all existing documents into an updated DHC operations manual (2008), reviewed and updated all board forms, and initiated a very thorough board member identification, screening, and orientation process.

Toward the seventh goal of assuring that we have the financial resources to meet these goals, we formed a Resource Development Committee (2007 – present), which has increased board pledges and contributions by ~200% and DHC memberships and individual donations by 100%.

We have instituted online payment and registration software that allows additional donor opportunities.