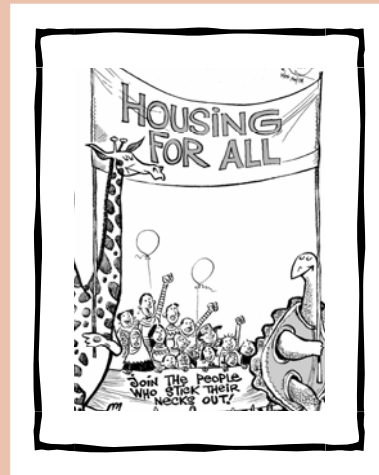
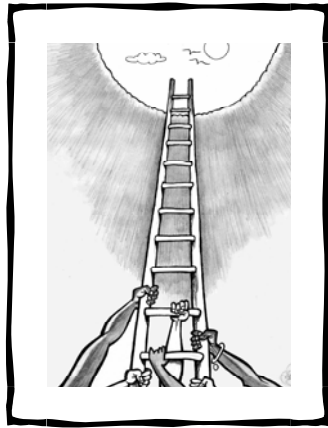


Delaware Housing Coalition STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT



2007 – 2009

Mission Statement Of the Delaware Housing Coalition

The MISSION of the Delaware Housing Coalition is to advocate for safe, decent and affordable housing throughout the state. Our goal is to affect, impact and shape the environment relating to housing. We are committed to fostering the growth and long-term flourishing of grass roots constituencies which develop their power; nurture their own problem-solvers and leaders; and work together to change the conditions which prevent them from obtaining safe, decent and affordable housing.



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| History | 4 |
| Strategic Planning Process and Evaluation | 5 |
| DHC Three-Year Goals | 6 |
| Community Goals | 6 |
| Organizational Goals | 11 |

DHC Values and Operating Principles

In our Board retreat, the group discussed criteria that are important to us all, both individually and collectively, and that should be used to evaluate DHC activities. The following criteria or values were identified:

- Contributing to Delaware affordable housing – beyond today
- Empowering grassroots leadership
- Mission and value-driven
- Responsiveness to our constituents, members, and community needs
- Building our capacity and increasing reach and influence
- Collaboration and partnerships
- Public policy impact
- Championing difficult, challenging causes – even if unpopular

2006 DHC Board of Directors

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Helen Drayton

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Leslie Holland (*Treasurer*)

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Ray Paylor

Jim Peffley

Roxie Sturgis

Norma Zumsteg

DHC Staff

Ken Smith

Executive Director

Gina Miserendino

Grassroots Policy Specialist

Tina Riley

Community Organizer

Marlena Gibson

Social Housing Specialist

History

The Delaware Housing Coalition was founded in 1983 to create a central voice on affordable housing issues in Delaware. Since then, our work has encompassed a broad range of issues around poverty and affordable housing. Over the years, our major accomplishments have included:

- ♦ leading the activism and research which resulted in the creation of the state's Housing Development Fund, the state's only flexible source of affordable housing construction and rehabilitation support;
- ♦ championing Delaware's first statewide Housing Code;
- ♦ working to establish the Delaware Community Reinvestment Action Council, Homeless Planning Council of Delaware, and Housing Capacity Building Program;
- ♦ providing organizing and technical assistance to public and assisted housing residents in the creation of SWAT, a statewide tenant organization dedicated to organizing and leading tenants to speak with one voice;
- ♦ operating a tenant's rights hotline, providing in-depth, free advice and information to tenants as well as landlords on rights, responsibilities and affordable housing resources;
- ♦ organizing a Housing Trust Fund Working Group and its successor, the Housing Policy Roundtable, to create and coordinate a broader, more diverse voice in support of affordable housing solutions;
- ♦ preserving project-based Section 8 in apartment properties where subsidized units are threatened by opt-out or prepayment, through community organizing and legal work;
- ♦ assisting community leaders in West Rehoboth to form a community land trust;
- ♦ facilitating the development of the Diamond State CLT (Community Land Trust); and
- ♦ providing organizing, technical and legal assistance to former residents of the Dogwood Mobile Home Park, who, after wrongful eviction, are now working to create a new cooperative homeownership and agricultural community in Sussex County.

"We are facing diminishing funds to do our work. Since they are diminishing, we all end up competing for the same relatively small pots of money. Meanwhile, we are putting together projects to try to serve the people most in need of affordable housing. We end up spending too much time trying to piece together the multiple layers of financing needed to pull the projects off. Then people say that the nonprofit sector isn't productive enough. There is a specific set of incentives that would help the nonprofit housing community to do its work more reliably and productively."

- Nonprofit Housing Director

Strategic Planning Process

The environment for affordable housing today is perhaps more broad, challenging and complex than ever before. In light of this changing environment and the Delaware Housing Coalition's changing role within it, the Board and staff created and engaged in a strategic planning process to establish and communicate key goals and strategies to address them in the coming three years.

Through the summer of 2006, DHC interviewed numerous partners, supporters and leaders in the housing field. We also hosted multiple community forums in all three counties targeting broad as well as specialized audiences. This input was used by the Strategic Planning Committee, Board and staff to identify strategic opportunities and challenges for the organization, and ultimately to articulate the road ahead with the following community and organizational goals.



Acknowledgements

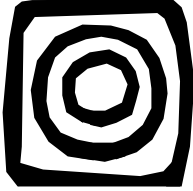
Thanks to all our Board members and staff for their vision and commitment to both DHC and this process; our consultant and facilitator, Jane Vincent of The Vincent Group; and all members of the community for sharing their concerns and ideas about Delaware's affordable housing issues.

Strategic Plan Evaluation

Progress towards our strategic goals will be evaluated quarterly by the Strategic Planning Committee and annually by the Board of Directors. The goals and evaluation of progress will inform annual work planning and budget planning. Staff will be evaluated against annual work plans based on the strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan. Board Committees will also have responsibility and oversight for some aspects of the plan.

As the environment and the opportunities and challenges within it continue to evolve, so will this strategic plan be a living document – the strategies within it in motion and evolution, but always revolving around the five core community and two core organizational goals identified here.

∞ DHC Three-Year Goals ∞
Community Goals



0103

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.

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

- Advance innovative ideas by continuing DHC's role as a knowledge base on affordable housing, bringing in national experts, and fostering dialogue
- Input into DSHA Needs Assessment, Consolidated Plan, Qualified Allocation Plans (QAPs), strategic planning documents, and county and municipal comprehensive plans
- Develop outline of DHC proposal for statewide affordable housing plan with menu of recommendations to the state, counties, and cities/towns
- Publicize and build support for recommendations, especially as related to awareness and funding campaigns
- Hold symposiums, forums, and conferences which highlight this goal

Benchmarks

- DHC input into state, county and local Needs Assessments, Comprehensive and Consolidated Plans
- Participation in and evaluations of events
- Creation and adoption of recommendations for statewide affordable housing strategies

Lead: Social Housing Specialist
Support: Staff, Board of Directors
Partners: Nonprofit housing developers and social service providers, other housing advocacy and professional groups, tenant organizations, national research organizations

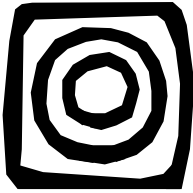
Contingencies

Commitment and funding to implement new strategies will be key.

Threats

Some probable recommendations - such as a dedicated revenue source for the HDF, permanent affordability, and inclusionary zoning - will likely garner animated opposition among some groups even within the affordable housing sector. We will have to carefully balance the diverse interests and agendas of our members, supporters and the broader community.

“Incomes are not keeping up with home sales and rent prices. In 2006, our national organization found that 60% of the households at median income can afford the median-priced home. In 2000, 95% of those households could afford that same home.”
- A Home Builder



Elevate affordable housing to a priority position within state policy and budget.

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.

“State funding into the Housing Development Fund has been virtually static over the past 20 years. This means we are losing ground rapidly, relative to the increasing and daunting needs.”
- DHC Board Member

Strategies

- Undertake planned and regular contact with legislators, elected officials, and emerging public leaders
- Engage existing and new partners more actively in the creation of a "big-tent" campaign for affordable housing, including a shared government relations representative
- Increase awareness and understanding of affordable housing issues through a public awareness and education campaign
- Make affordable housing a priority with elected leaders and their staff through grassroots lobbying

Benchmarks

- Multi-year awareness and advocacy plan developed with partners and funding identified
- Contacts with legislators
- Creation and distribution of promotional and educational materials
- Increases in allocations to HDF and other public investment of funds
- Identification & earmarking of dedicated revenue source for HDF
- Participation in and evaluations of events

Lead: Executive Director

Support: Staff, Board of Directors

Partners: Nonprofit housing developers and service providers, other housing advocacy and professional groups, tenant organizations, national technical assistance organizations, other progressive advocacy groups, faith community, business and civic organizations, employers

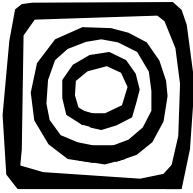
Contingencies

High-profile budget crisis issues or a dramatic decrease in state budget.

“Affordable housing is nonexistent here. We need to make affordable housing a platform, building coalitions, and changing policies.”
- Sussex County Resident

Threats

As in many areas, balancing the diverse interests and agendas of partners will be critical, as will the promotion of grassroots involvement and leadership. A successful public campaign will require significant funding and strong partnerships.



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, conservation and smart growth.

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

- Evaluate Livable Delaware and county land use policies, creating, if necessary, a commentary document with strong discussion of affordable housing development costs and benefits
- Develop for DHC a well-formulated, balanced, and feasible policy on land use issues
- Increase the level of understanding of the position among allies and others, and engage these groups to adopt and actively support the position
- Secure formal support from leaders, decision-makers, and government bodies
- Engage land use professionals to the end of making affordable housing a routine component of plans
- Sponsor symposiums and public events which help to draw connections between affordable housing and wise land use

Benchmarks

- Research, formulate, and discuss the position widely
- Refine and promote the position
- Endorsement by partners
- Adoption as public policy
- Participation in and evaluations of public events

“Livable Delaware is counterproductive to affordable housing. The preferred ‘growth zones’ are prohibitively expensive for affordable housing development. So, we are building farther from transportation, child care, shopping, and other services.”

- Municipal Planner

Lead: Grassroots Policy Specialist

Support: Staff, Board of Directors

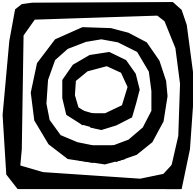
Partners: Civic organizations, other progressive advocacy groups, planners, planning entities, and associations of housing professionals, Delaware Rural Housing Consortium, land and environmental preservation groups, farmland preservation advocates

Contingencies

Availability of staff and resources.

Threats

While erroneous, an ingrained view is that affordable housing and wise land use are inimical.



Insure 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%)

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.

“Lack of transitional and immediate stay housing, especially for women with children, creates a situation where stay limits are too short for households to find and take the ‘next step.’ We desperately need more tiers to the housing ladder, including some with supportive services.”
- NCCo Shelter Representative

Strategies

- Work to insure the inclusion of very- and extremely-low income households' affordable housing needs in statewide, local and public housing authority planning documents
- Make preservation of affordable rental units a priority
- Make manufactured housing a stronger affordable housing option and work to preserve and improve this sector
- Make housing for very and extremely-low income households a priority in a statewide housing plan (Goal 1) and all DHC's other advocacy work
- Advocate for reservation of funds in HDF and elsewhere
- Engage in public outreach, holding events and symposiums
- Provide technical assistance to selected model projects (e.g., New Horizons)
- Advocate for creation of a ladder of housing opportunities and choices, including sustainable homeownership opportunities, for households with very and extremely low incomes

Benchmarks

- Gain public recognition of the problem
- Create clear proposals for addressing the need for housing affordable to very- and extremely-low income households
- Assure that resources are applied to create housing opportunities for very- and extremely-low income households

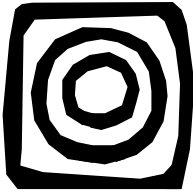
Lead: Executive Director
 Support: Staff, Board of Directors
 Partners: Other housing advocacy and professional groups, tenant organizations, nonprofit housing developers, Rural Housing Consortium, nonprofit service providers for whom affordable housing is a priority, faith community

Contingencies

Accomplishment of this goal is tied closely to the success of efforts towards Goals #1 and #2. These most intense needs are also the mostly complex and costly to address.

Threats:

A diminished public budget encourages temptation toward bureaucratic efficiency of meeting less urgent and less costly needs. Recent years have also witnessed a continued upward re-definition of the affordable housing problem in public discourse.



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

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 and independence.

Strategies

- Conduct grassroots work which promotes 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 trainings
- Work with DHC Board on Goal #6 to help grassroots representation and participation within DHC to be mutually reinforcing with effort on this goal

“Tenants have no protections from displacement. There is a stigma against those of us who rent; an assumption that we are transient and worthy of less consideration.”
- New Castle County Tenant Leader

Benchmarks

- Recognizable success of grassroots groups in taking direct action
- Identifiable emergence of new grassroots leadership
- Participation of grassroots leadership in DHC advocacy and policy work
- Grassroots influence on DHC organization (Board, membership, future plans)

Lead: Grassroots Policy Specialist
 Support: Staff, Board of Directors
 Partners: Tenant Councils, Strong Communities, the faith community

Contingencies

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

“I live in a manufactured home. I see more and more evictions of my neighbors due to rent increases. A manufactured home is not a vehicle! It is the affordable housing of choice for many in Delaware. We should preserve and protect it.”
- Manufactured Home Owner

Threats

The prevailing view of change in Delaware is top-down, not grassroots-up. Grassroots speech and action are sometimes unwelcome by more privileged groups.

☞ DHC Three-Year Goals ☜
Organizational Goals



Goal 1

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.

Strategies

Our core strategy will be creating processes and a culture for continuing Board improvements and development to occur.

Benchmarks

- Ancillary and advisory committees of Board established
- Board recruitment and orientation process in place by 2007 Annual Meeting

Lead: Board Development Committee

Goal 2

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.

Strategies

- Explore opportunities for collaborative projects, grants, and shared costs
- Create Resource Development Committee charged with the creation and implementation of a multi-year Resource Development Plan

Benchmarks

- Creation of Multi-year Resource Development Plan with annual goals and benchmarks
- 100% Board participation in fundraising

Lead: Resource Development Committee and Executive Director

Contingencies

At minimum, the continuation of existing major funding sources at current levels is necessary. In a difficult fundraising environment for all nonprofit organizations, it is especially difficult to find adequate sources of support for advocacy and community organizing work.



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