

Talking Points
Sussex County Comprehensive Plan Public Hearings

- ❖ **We commend Sussex County for creating and adopting the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program (MPDU)**
 - We look forward to full implementation of this effort when program guidelines are finalized.
 - We encourage Sussex County to take this program a step further by making it mandatory for all proposed major subdivisions in order to create housing opportunities for even more moderate income (80-125% AMI) families.

- ❖ We support the basic concepts in current comprehensive plan especially:
 - Focusing development near existing infrastructure
 - Allowing for cluster development where appropriate
 - Preserving farmland and open space
 - Emphasizing coordination between municipalities and Sussex County

- ❖ Areas of Concern
 - **Severe lack of affordable housing for Sussex Countians**
 - The Sussex housing wage is \$12.71/hour (\$24,660/ann.)* This is the amount a full time, year round worker must earn in order to not spend more than 30% of their income on housing for a fair market rate two-bedroom apartment.
 - This is close to twice the new Delaware minimum wage.
 - The Fair Market Rate (FMR) for a 2-BR apartment in Sussex is \$661/month.*
 - It would require 1.9 year-round, full-time minimum wage jobs to afford this FMR apartment.***
 - It is estimated that 19 percent (12,072) of Sussex households are renters.**
 - The mean income for renters in Sussex is \$9.24 / hour. At this rate it takes 1.4 full time jobs to afford a 2-BR FMR apartment.
 - Much of the job growth between 2003 and 2005 has been in low wage industries.+ The first two job areas represent 31.5 % of jobs and 21.8% of payroll. Four of the nine ranked growth job areas have the lowest pay.+

Job Area	Job Growth '03-'05	Job Pay	Avg. Annual Wage	% Sussex Area Median Income (AMI) (Hshld of 4)	Afford a FMR 2 BR Apt ?
Leisure & Hospitality	1	9	\$15,000	27	NO
Wholesale & Retail trade	2	8	\$25,000	49	Barely
Profess'l & Bus. Services	5	7	≈ \$30,000	54	OK
Manufact'g (includes food)	9	6	≈\$30,500	55	OK

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Recommendations

- **Encourage creation of permanently affordable housing through community land trusts and other creative models.**
 - Sussex County has been the beneficiary of Delaware's first affordable community land trust, the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust.
 - The Diamond State Community Land Trust, a statewide community land trust is now established.
 - Support pilot projects such as the New Horizons Cooperative which is a housing/agricultural co-op composed of low income families, mostly poultry workers, who will buy new manufactured homes, place them on permanent foundations on CLT land and collectively farm part of the property. The University of Delaware and the Delaware Housing Coalition are technical assistance providers to New Horizons in addition to Diamond State CLT.

- **Encourage varied zoning to accommodate needed multifamily housing**
 - Within appropriate zoning, allow clustering of manufactured housing on permanent foundations with the same stipulations as for stick-built dwellings.

- **Recognizing the current crisis caused by lack of affordable housing, Sussex County can provide incentives for developers, especially highly qualified not-for-profit organizations which are ready and willing help address this gap.**
 - Waive or reduce county fees for the building of housing affordable to 80 percent AMI and below.

- **Promote affordable housing and land conservation in Sussex County**
 - In many areas of the country, *conservation-based affordable housing* has achieved both objectives. There are excellent examples in New England particularly of citizens, government and industry collaborating successfully to create/preserve affordable housing while conserving land.^

- **Determine the true cost of development**
 - As elected officials and other decision-makers are well aware, there are difficult questions which need to be addressed in formulating wise land use policy. Striking a balance between the well-being of all the people and rights of property owners is a serious matter. Long term consideration of any use of land and the infrastructure it requires, the sacrifices it demands of the environment, as well as quality of life issues are all factors mandating judicious consideration.

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- Public officials have many options including conducting detailed and long-term cost analyses of what development will really cost and then make informed decisions on what and how much growth is in the overall interest of Sussex County.

* *Out of Reach 2006 National Low Income Housing Coalition* www.nlihc.org

** US Census 2000

*** The report was based on Delaware's minimum wage of \$6.15/hr, this corrects it to the 2007 rate of \$6.65.

+ Sussex Demographic and Labor Market Trends, Ed Simon, Delaware Dept. of Labor, Office of Labor Market Information www.oolmi.net as presented at Sussex County Today and Tomorrow conference 1/25/06

^^ *Conservation-Based Affordable Housing: Improving the Nature of Affordable Housing to Protect Place and People*. The Conservation Fund 2006 www.conservationfund.org