

MINUTES

The meeting was in person, with the public invited to attend. The public was also able to view the meeting via Zoom Webinar.

Committee Members Present

Amanda Edwards, Brownie Newman, Parker Sloan

County Staff Present

Jennifer Barnette, Matthew Cable, Brandon Freeman, William High, John Hudson, Nathan Pennington, James Shelton, Sybil Tate, and Don Warn

Call to Order & Welcome

- Chairman Newman called the meeting to order at 1:05.

New Business

- Public Comment – The committee expressed support for having public comment be in person, and to parallel the method that the Board of Commissioners uses.
- Goal Affirmation – Sybil Tate
 - After discussion, Commissioner Edwards made a motion to affirmed support for these goals:
 - 1,500 rental units for households at \leq 80% AMI with an average at \leq 60% AMI across all households.
 - 400 ownership units for households at \leq 80% AMI
 - 500 repair units for households at \leq 80% AMI 400 ownership or rental units for households at $>$ 80% to \leq 120% AMI
 - All voted in favor.
- FY 2021 AHSP Contract Status & Extensions – Matthew Cable
 - Mr. Cable provided an update on the status of existing FY 2021 contracts and explained that staff intended to provide an additional extension in order to allow recipients to complete the open contracts.
- Update to Buncombe County AHSP Program Description, Requirements and Guidelines and Application for FY 2023 – Matthew Cable
 - Commissioner Edwards asked if there was a method to increase the number of 4% LIHTC projects that apply, and whether they could encourage applicants to be included. Mr. Cable explained that staff would work to communicate the opportunity to new applicants but that funding signaling ability to support these types of projects would be necessary.
 - The Committee expressed support for to offer loans at a maximum of 10% of the cost per affordable unit, while providing 20% of the cost per affordable unit for 4% low-income housing tax credit projects.
 - The Committee also requested staff include language that would allow for projects that target $<$ 30% AMI to exceed these percentage caps.
 - Mr. Cable presented additional information on construction loans.
 - Chair Newman expressed support for creating language to support projects that can get funding from outside of Buncombe County.
 - Commissioner Edwards asked staff to explore how to promote housing partnerships and increase the availability of community partners that work on housing.

- Commissioner Sloan mentioned the need to learn whether other cities in NC are bringing in outside partners. Ms. Tate replied that most other cities are still only engaged by local partners.
- The Committee indicated that the draft document, with these modifications, was ready for release.

Next Steps

Announcements

Public Comment

- 18 written public comments were received prior to the meeting, and one audio comment. These materials were shared with the committee prior to the meeting, and are included in the meeting minutes.
- Public comment was submitted in person by the following: Wayne Blackwell, Laura Kirby, April Nance, Roberta Binder, Brian Combs, and Geoffrey Barton.

Adjourn

- Chairman Newman adjourned the meeting to order at 2:25.

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED IN ADVANCE OF THE DECEMBER 7, 2021 AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING

1.

At a time when affordable housing is perhaps the most comprehensive answer to a myriad of community afflictions, it comes down to a question of leadership. The City of Asheville has shown leadership in its support of the Haywood Street Community Development Deeply Affordable Housing Project @ 339 West Haywood Street, in my neighborhood. It has been reported numerous times that Buncombe County has pledged \$2 Million towards this effort. It is time for Buncombe County make good on its pledge and stand with the City of Asheville and the Dogwood Health Trust to make this project a reality.

As a long time resident and board member of the West End / Clingman Avenue Neighborhood Association, I more than welcome this project. Affordable Housing that is able to stay affordable does not currently exist in WECAN. MHO has built many affordable dwellings in WECAN, yet they become market rate after the first owner sells their property. In order that our lower income folks be able to either stay in the neighborhood or benefit from association with other more fortunate neighbors, they need to be afforded a seat at our table. It is incumbent on the City of Asheville and Buncombe County to do what the market rate developers do not do, and fund making this possible.

I recognize that this project may seem expensive. The cost of land near downtown is astronomical. But by only funding affordable housing where land is cheap is to put further burden on already stressed finances of many of our front line workers. Being afforded the opportunity to live near where you work should not be a luxury for only the rich. In an equitable society, those benefits are more evenly distributed. It is a question of environmental as well as social justice. I look to Buncombe County to lead the way here and encourage you to put the HSCD Project back on your agenda and find and approve the \$2 Million that has been pledged... in the next 60 days.

With respect and gratitude
Pattiy Torno
WECAN Treasurer

2.

Hello, I live at 381 West Haywood, next door to the proposed affordable housing building. My family and I are in full support of this project. We welcome neighbors who work downtown, support the vibrancy of our community, and strive to live happy, healthy lives here in Asheville.

I understand that this project is expensive compared to projects outside of the city, but single mothers and their kids shouldn't have to ride the bus for 3 hours to get to work and school. It is critical to have affordable housing IN the city.

There are federal low income tax credits available that HSCD would like to access but is unable to access due to red tape that requires them to apply through a developer that has received these funds before. These developers are not incentivized to include HSCD on their application as it would mean that HSCD could be competing with them for future LITC. Additionally, closing costs for these loans can be upwards of \$250,000 and are unaffordable for a non-profit.

If County Commissioners feel this project is costly for the county, then please help HSCD access LITC funds by working with local developers who have previously accessed LITC funds.

Thank you for your consideration.
Carrie Pettler

3.

Deeply affordable housing should be funded by Buncombe County. Projects as good as the one that the Haywood Street Community Development has proposed should be given the highest priority. More than one in five (21.1%) children suffer from poverty in WNC. As Director of Homelessness Prevention Program at Pisgah Legal Services, I regularly see Buncombe county families struggling to pay rent and feed their children. Buncombe County has an absurdly low rental vacancy rate (1.2%) and practically zero vacancy for deeply affordable housing. We can do better and fortunately there is something concrete in front of you that will make a difference. Buncombe County must make sure that we fund community-led developments that will accept federal housing subsidies and help house our most vulnerable children. The HSCD housing project at 339 Haywood St is that project and I respectfully request your support of this vital work.

Best,

David Bartholomew
Director
Homelessness Prevention Program

4.

I support Buncombe County funding Haywood Street Community Development's proposal for deeply affordable housing at 339 West Haywood Street. Buncombe County has identified our number one priority is Affordable House. Our community could have a development in the heart of town starting Spring of 2022 for 45 units with 23 of the units meeting the qualifications of the 30% AMI. It is crucial for the well-being of the tenants to be housed in the heart of the community that they serve. To push low-income housing to the outskirts of town is detrimental to those families and to our community. Isolation will not work. One of the mottos of HSCD is that the opposite of homelessness is not to be just housed, the Opposite of Homelessness is Community. This location on 339 West Haywood Street aligns with that mission and with the Buncombe County 2025 Strategic Plan of Affordable Housing to build near Transportation and Jobs. This site has 2 bus stops within walking distance as close as 0.3 miles away and in proximity to 7500 jobs downtown.

HSCD's plan proposal has 19 two-bedroom and 4 three-bedroom apartments. Most rental units in our affordable housing communities are one-bedroom apartments. According to the 2019 census, 897

single-fathers with children at home and 3951 single mothers with children at home. Numbers have only increased since the Covid-19 Pandemic.

With HSCD's direct ties with Haywood Street Church, they are the most qualified to understand the true needs and support systems for Buncombe Counties most vulnerable citizens. HSCD wants to truly address what is needed to heal a community and ALL of its citizens. HSCD's plan for affordable housing combined with Community Space is giving an opportunity for Buncombe County to make a statement that it believes in the Whole meaning of the word Community. Community is a 2-part definition. 1) a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common and 2) a feeling of fellowship with others.

This model of Housing supports BOTH.

I strongly urge you to considered supporting this project on 339 Haywood. ST.

With Gratitude,

Meredith Ellison
Co Founder, Organizational Well Being
Quility

5.

My name is Teresa Stephens and I work as the Affordable Communities Director for Givens Communities. I am writing to ask for your support of Haywood Street Community Development's proposed project at 339 West Haywood Street in Asheville. Getting more local non-profit developers involved in solving our affordable housing shortage will only make Buncombe County stronger. We need to encourage local, non-profits with this level of commitment to long-term, deeply affordable housing to get involved. This project will address the most urgent needs identified in the Bowen Report to by offering relief to some of the most of severely cost burdened households including those in the workforce, those with vouchers, and 20% of all the children in Asheville.

Who owns and develops affordable housing really matters! We need local non-profits to develop affordable housing because they already know our community, are deeply committed to supporting residents, and will prioritize services to support those residents. Local non-profits meet residents where they are to build trust and increase connections that help them develop self-sufficiency in their housing, nutrition, and mental and physical health. When these basic needs are met, residents have a greater ability to invest in themselves and their community. It is in this long game that non-profits like HSCD have the capacity and commitment to do far more than simply add housing units to our inventory.

Your willingness to invest in this project is about much more than leveraging funding. Your investment will demonstrate that Buncombe County understands the value of having more local non-profits as owner/developers because they strengthen the community overall and are committed to the residents who will live in there. Nonprofit ownership offers the best protection by ensuring that the properties they develop will always serve low-income people.

The bottom line is that we need to stop making it more difficult for local non-profit organizations to join our efforts to address affordable housing challenges and look for ways to make them part of the solution!

Teresa Stephens
Givens Communities

6.

I support Buncombe County funding Haywood Street Community Development's proposal for deeply affordable housing at 339 West Haywood Street.

Asheville and Buncombe County have a significant affordable housing crisis that is only getting worse. It is simply too large a problem for any one entity to solve. We must bring all willing partners and developers to the table as soon as possible. Thankfully Buncombe County and the City of Asheville have both made addressing our critical housing need a priority. Our new partner in town, Dogwood Health Trust has also signaled a willingness to help. Never before, in our world, our country or in our community, have we needed collaboration more to solve big problems. Our affordable housing shortage, particularly for our lowest income residents, is a big problem that we read about or view almost every day. What a statement it would make to this community if our county, our city and our new Dogwood Health Trust joined together to provide the needed funding to enable HSCD to move forward with desperately needed housing for our lowest area median income residents. Our citizens want to see action and solutions to this acute problem. Please show your commitment to working with other community partners to address this dire need by providing \$2 million in necessary funding for HSCD's project for deeply affordable housing.

Thank you,
Pat Smith

7.

Dear Buncombe County Commissioners,

I support Buncombe County funding Haywood Street Community Development's proposal for deeply affordable housing at 339 West Haywood Street. This project is low hanging fruit in the continual effort to address the county's affordable housing crisis. HSCD' plan is to construct 45 units of affordable housing with 23 of the units supporting those at or below 30% AMI (\$15,800 per year for one person). HSCD plans for those 23 units to utilize Housing Choice Vouchers, of which Buncombe County has an estimated 965 unused vouchers according to the most recent Bowen Study of Western North Carolina's housing needs which was commissioned by the Dogwood Health Trust. This same study showed Buncombe County has a shortfall of 4,837 family apartments for those at or below 80% AMI, with 3,936 of those needed for families at or below 50% AMI.

The need is very real and cannot be met with Tax Credit financing alone. Elected leaders need to be flexible and open to different types of development groups to build affordable housing if we are going to meet the need. No one project will accomplish meeting the county's affordable housing shortfall.

With support from the county, the project can begin construction in Spring 2022 meaning people will get housed sooner. HSCD's proposal aligns with our county's Strategic Plan 2025's goal of implementing land use strategies that encourage affordable housing near transportation and jobs. The project is

strategically located in downtown Asheville, near two bus stops and over 7,000 jobs. Additionally, the project will address the number one steep trend, growing housing costs and supply. Please fund Haywood Street Community Development's project so we can continue tackling one of our county's greatest challenges.

Sincerely,
Andrew Crosson
Givens Communities

8.

I am writing to implore you to fund the Haywood Street Development Corporation deeply affordable housing project. As a resident of Buncombe County, and an affordable housing advocate, I recognize this project as one that is desperately needed. For years we have discussed housing affordable to those living below 30% of AMI, and every developer says they cannot afford to build it. The mechanisms for developing more affordable housing, such as Low Income Housing Tax Credits, do not reach those living below 30% of area median income without a very difficult to get voucher. It means that more public financial support is needed to make the Haywood Street project work, but it will house people who are currently homeless, living in unsafe conditions, doubled up with family, or forced to continue living with an abusive partner. These are all people who deserve an affordable, high quality place to live. This project would give them that. You have worked to set goals over the last several months to increase the supply of affordable housing. This project gives you an opportunity to put those goals into action, and I urge you to do so.

Robin L. Merrell
Pisgah Legal Services

9.

This is in support of the affordable apartments planned for W. Haywood Street in the WECAN Neighborhood of Asheville by the HSCD organization. Please fund this and support it otherwise in every way you can.

I have rented in Asheville for 16 years and for the last 3 have owned a home in WECAN.

My home is one of the dozen closest to the proposed site.

I am doing my part for safe affordable housing in our area by sharing my house with two housemates.

This housing emergency in Buncombe County needs more projects like the HSDC one in WECAN.

I have worked in Retail, Hospitality, Museums and to afford to keep a roof over my head have never owned a car.

I feel thankful that I bought a home when I did, because I would not be living in Asheville as the wages in my fields, and the current cost of renting are no longer adding up to being able to pay the rent.

We need options for our vast workforce like me who can no longer afford a centrally located apartment, and also can not afford a more distant rental and a reliable vehicle for a long commute.

We need diversity and stability and a future for all kinds of people here. Now is the time to build it out as best we can, and the perpetually affordable units in this location are a great step.

Many thanks,
Sylvia Organ
17 Park Ave N
Asheville, NC 28801

10.

To whom it may concern,

I am reaching out to express my support of Buncombe County funding Haywood Street Community Development's proposal for deeply affordable housing at 339 West Haywood Street. In a city such as Asheville, where housing is expensive and only increasing in price, it is vital that our city invests in affordable, sustainable housing options for people who struggle to maintain housing at a low or median level income. As someone who works with folks who are in and out of housing, I hope that an opportunity to provide sustainable, reliable housing in our city will be pursued with fervor and expediency. My hope is that Asheville will set an example for other cities in our state and in the U.S. of what it looks like to invest in deeply affordable housing and the residents of our city that need it the most.

Thank you,

Katlyn Zulinke

11.

I urge the Buncombe County Commissioners and Housing Committee to follow through and fund the Haywood Street Development Corporation (HSDC) development of deeply affordable housing on Haywood Street in Asheville.

- We need more units of deeply affordable housing in downtown Asheville, although land there is more expensive.
- After many tries to find suitable land, HSDC has purchased land at great expense in reliance on Buncombe County, City of Asheville, and Dogwood Health Trust commitments of funding to make the 45 units quite affordable.
- It would be a shame to lose this opportunity for lack of Buncombe County funding.
- 4% tax credits will not work for this number of units, and new non-profit housing developers are ineligible for such credits.

- Buncombe County needs more non-profit housing developers to achieve its affordable housing goals. Investing in this first project for HSDC will enable the non-profit to develop permanently affordable units and tackle additional, deeply affordable housing developments in the future.
- Not all multi-family housing can or should be large scale so as to be attractive for tax credits; smaller in-fill housing is needed and will arouse less neighborhood opposition.

Thank you,
 Jim Barrett
 Buncombe County Resident, HSDC Board Member and Executive Director of Pisgah Legal Services

12.

County Commissioners,
 I am writing to voice my support for Buncombe County funding Haywood Street Community Development's proposal for deeply affordable housing at 339 West Haywood Street. As a home owner and tax payer in Buncombe County for over 25 years, I realize how many people are being pushed out of home ownership in our community. I recognize the urgent need and the commitment you have made to create affordable housing. This plan is ready to go and needs your support. Please fund this and allow this plan to move forward as soon as possible. I urge you to be committed to your position and help citizen in downtown Asheville who desperately need this.

Thank you for your time and sincerity to this matter.

Lori Hilliard
 Teacher AHS
 9 Ozark Spring Lane
 Asheville NC

13.

I support Buncombe County funding Haywood Street Community Development's proposal for deeply affordable housing at 339 West Haywood Street. Here's why...

Some of our citizens and Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development are proud of our designation as "Beer City USA"..... Not me; Let's instead be: "Compassion City USA".

Downtown Merchants complain about Homeless people around Pritchard Park. Let's give Homeless Folks a place to live and a living-wage job of which they can be proud. Haywood St. Congregation is doing just that with their proposal for the Affordable Housing Development at 339 W. Haywood St. Even as we claim to create affordable housing in Asheville, the Haywood St. Congregation is offering that.

Worried about drunks and vandalism in our neighborhoods? Is there anyone here who does not have some family member with substance abuse or mental health issues? If I struggle with this, I have friends, family, and resources to help with this. The Haywood St. proposal plans to give their folks the resources to which most of us already have access.

NIMBY(Not in my Back Yard)? Haywood St. has got that covered as well with plans for a Social Worker designated specifically to work with the residents of this Development to address mental health and substance abuse challenges. In addition, they plan to have residents with proven stability to live in this community as peer mentors. Haywood St. has too much at stake to screw this up, both for their folks

and for the neighborhood; they HAVE to make this work. AND SO DO WE as a community that prides itself on being welcoming and accepting of diversity. I want to brag about our beautiful mountains, our stewardship of the environment AND about how we care for our fellow human beings. Look at the many churches and businesses who already support the Haywood Street Congregation. It IS 'sustainable'. The City of Asheville and the Dogwood Foundation find this project worthy of generous funding. It is vital that Buncombe County fund it as well. THIS PROJECT SERVES ALL OF US.

Susan Presson RN FNP
78 Rosewood Ave.
Asheville, NC 28801

14.

Commissioners,

I write to you in support of Haywood Street Community Development's proposed project on 339 W. Haywood Street. As a Buncombe County native, I have watched WNC's housing market make many changes. I have also watched as local residents and those who work at our thriving businesses, get priced out of the market. Downtown Asheville is the hub of WNC, bringing tax dollars, jobs, and diversity to the area. However, the businesses in downtown cannot survive without the working class, many whom cannot afford to live in town. Single mothers who clean hotel rooms, struggling immigrants who wash dishes at our most popular restaurants, disabled veterans who volunteer at the library, are all examples of residents that would benefit greatly from deeply affordable housing. Buncombe County and many other jurisdictions are struggling to confront the housing crisis, but this project will provide a solution to a multitude of our neighbors.

As a residential contractor in WNC, I also understand the process of development. We desire to work with Buncombe County, Dogwood Health Trust and the City of Asheville to develop a partnership in the construction of this complex. Though we aim to provide accurate projections in pricing and planning, the volatility of the market still leaves gaps. It must be noted that property in downtown Asheville is at a premium and ensuring that parking is adequate on site, adds substantial cost to any project. Yet, we are continuing to work with architects, engineers and the contractor to hone the final project cost. Considering these challenges, we are proudly moving forward, and requesting your support in building a deeply affordable homes for our neighbors. We will continue to be transparent with costs associated with this project and look forward to a trusting and beneficial relationship with Buncombe County. We trust the expertise of HSCD board members, the general contractor and design team to be good stewards with this exceptional opportunity to make an impact in our community.

-Thank you - McKenzie Dillingham, Haywood Street Community Development Interim Board Chair
McKenzie Dillingham

15.

Remember when you wanted to take your family and friends out to dinner at one of Asheville's prestigious restaurants and they were closed...lack of staff, no chef, no wait staff. Remember when the kids couldn't get to school because there were no bus drivers, not to mention lack of teachers in the classrooms. Can you imagine carrying a monthly rent payment that costs half or more of your monthly household income?

All of the above is happening right now in our Asheville and nearby suburbs. These are some of the everyday working class Asheville residents who need affordable roofs over their heads! This struggle comes from: lack of affordable housing, perhaps a single parent with no training for a high paying job trying to build a new life and resume, recent college graduates just graduated and building a future in our workforce.

It is beyond time for Asheville to step up to the plate and open pathways in affordable housing opportunities for the working community that makes Asheville operational and the thriving tourist town it is known to be. The community being able to keep the doors open with dependable staff for independent start-ups, musicians, artists, restaurants, businesses, hospitals – the list goes on. Let's open doors to the opportunity to extending an example to the county, state, country – by taking this giant step in providing the beginning of affordable housing and helping the community rise and shine.

Thank you,
Roberta Binder
Swannanoa Resident for 11 years

16.

I support Buncombe County funding Haywood Street Community Development's proposal for deeply affordable housing at 339 West Haywood Street. Here is why.

I work as Chief at Haywood Street Congregation. Every day we are confronted with the sobering reality of hard core homelessness. The "tent city" that has grown in recent weeks on DOT property next to our campus is hard to miss. What one sees at first is a lot of tents and trash when entering our city from the west. What one does not necessarily see when passing by or even looking from close range is the hierarchy of poverty, the effect of human waste and assorted chemicals being disposed of into the soil, the danger of fires during burning ban, and the human tragedy of no housing options that exists.

Let me be specific about the hierarchy of poverty and people living outside. There are the strong and there are the weak. There are folks that are dependent on others for their safety, their place to lay their heads, their drug supply, and just about anything else. Dependency can translate into prostitution, indentured servitude, drug running, and compromise of most any caliber. It doesn't have to be this way. We can do better!

When a couple hundred people live in a field with no bathrooms, no sanitation remedies, no trash cans, no water, etc, bad things happen. It could get out of hand rapidly through conflicts (fights over meager possessions), disease and negative environmental impact (human waste and narcotic chemicals entering the soil), or fires (very cold nights with no code purple options and burning ban). We can do better!

Please, Buncombe County officials, support Haywood Street Community Development's deeply affordable housing proposal as well as the other proposals that can help people in our community be able to live indoors safely and securely.

Thank you!

Stephen Noblitt

17.

Dear Mr. High:

I am writing in support of Haywood Street Community Development's (HSCD) proposed housing project for West Haywood Street in Asheville. As community leaders, Buncombe County Commissioners well know the scarcity of quality, affordable housing in the Asheville area - we are in desperate need of more housing stock for individuals and families. Organizations like HSCD have worked tirelessly over the past few years to create a compelling housing development plan that will not only provide much-needed housing stock for those at 30% AMI or below, but it will also offer on-site services and resource connections so that the residents can not only survive, but thrive in their housing. These support services will come in the way of childcare, food support, health and wellness activities, etc.

Simply put, housing is healthcare, and I can't think of a better way to increase the overall health of an entire community than by supporting projects like this one. I do hope that the Affordable Housing Committee will thoughtfully consider the proposal from HSCD so that this amazing project can finally move forward.

Respectfully,

Meredith Switzer, M.Ed.

Meredith Switzer Consulting & Former Executive Director, Homeward Bound

18.

I support Buncombe County funding Haywood Street Community Development's proposal for deeply affordable housing at 339 West Haywood Street. Buncombe County and particularly the city of Asheville is a progressive region that seeks to set a standard for equity and inclusion for all of its citizens. Affordable housing is a long-time issue that continues to be a focus of this county. Admirable efforts have been created through incentives with for-profit developers, yet this falls short of both need and long-term success. The deeply affordable housing proposed by Haywood Street Community Development differs in its insistence on remaining affordable and sustainable. The 339 West Haywood Street building will not only house individuals striving to improve their living situation, but it will have the additional benefit of supporting their ability to build a better life for themselves and their families. It is the start to helping low-income individuals see a way out of poverty and inclusion into the larger community. As the saying goes, the Haywood Street Community Development proposal is the tide that will help rise all boats for the poor and unhoused community of Buncombe County. At the heart of this development is equity and inclusion, which aligns with Buncombe County's vision. I strongly urge the County to support with funding the building of affordable housing proposed by Haywood Street Community Development.

Thank you,
Lorili Toth