



## Delaware Housing Coalition

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February 29, 2008

The Honorable P. Brooks Banta, President  
Kent County Levy Court  
555 Bay Road  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Commissioner Banta:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the draft Kent County Comprehensive Plan. We have appreciated the various opportunities to interact with the Planning Department's professional and receptive staff, and the Levy Court, as this document has evolved. We also appreciate your appointing Karen Speakman, Deputy Director of NCALL Research, a sister affordable housing organization, to the advisory council.

The overall emphasis on a balanced housing approach integrating attendant density, infill, and community quality-of-life factors is welcomed. In Kent County where the need is great for affordable rental and homeownership opportunities, corrections to the current status are sorely needed.

Accessory dwelling units are an important option to help families care for elderly or similarly disposed members. The Levy Court's openness to this option has been and continues to be encouraging.

Inclusionary Zoning/ MPDU Programs are proven mechanisms to provide incentive to developers to create more reasonably-priced housing for families of more moderate (80%-120% AMI) incomes. DHC has been active in both Sussex and New Castle's efforts to formulate and implement MPHU/IZ programs. Based on these efforts as well as on research, we urge Kent County to follow the recommendation to make the program mandatory and to make the affordability period as long as possible. There are longstanding models operating as close as Montgomery County, Maryland.

DHC is very supportive of additional efforts to create and sustain affordable housing options for more Kent Countians including:

- Down Payment and Settlement Assistance program for first time homebuyers:

NCALL Research, Inc. has significant experience with these programs; we urge the County to consult with them as it goes forward with this initiative.

- Establishment of a Housing Trust Fund:

We believe this is an imperative step to take in establishing Kent County's commitment to affordable housing. It is also a wise move in light of the National Affordable Housing Trust fund legislation which, with hope, will be passed by Congress shortly. The priority of this legislation is to build or rehabilitate 1.5 million rental units affordable to extremely low ( $\leq 30\%$  AMI) throughout the country in the ten years following its establishment. Funds will be distributed on a formula basis with the program providing incentive for those jurisdictions which contribute matching funds.

- Incorporation of the Community Land Trust (CLT) model:

DHC is a strong proponent of the community land trust model which represents a most judicious use of public funds to create perpetually affordable housing. This model works in a stand-alone approach or can dovetail with other housing mechanisms. Participation from the Diamond State CLT (DSCLT), a statewide community land trust with efforts ongoing in each county, should be solicited as the County progresses with proactive affordable housing and land use planning.

- Public Committee:

DHC has lauded Kent County's hard work to solicit and include public input in the development of this plan. We certainly encourage the continuation of this effort as the plan is implemented. Please call on DHC for any assistance we may provide.

Thank you for your forethought, thorough treatment, and consideration of our comments on these vital housing and land use issues.

Kind regards,

Ken Smith,  
Executive Director

cc:

Michael Petit de Mange, County Administrator;  
Sarah Keifer, Director Planning Services

