

Delaware Housing Coalition's Long Term Strategy Pays Off

The Delaware Housing Coalition (DHC) has successfully built support for and sustained its state Housing Development Fund through a thoughtful and persistent strategy to demonstrate the value of investing in affordable housing. This year funding for the state housing trust fund was sustained through a \$4.07 million base, with a supplemental appropriation of \$4.5 million earmarked for the preservation of affordable rental housing.

DHC's director, Ken Smith, expresses his gratitude for the energy with which the coalition's members

have worked to accomplish this key goal, *"Setting aside differences, affordable housing advocates in Delaware have accomplished a critical task of protecting and increasing state resources to meet the need."*

Among its most important impacts, the Delaware Housing Coalition has gained the support of Governor Jack Markell, who recognizes housing as basic economic infrastructure and a core human need. This has reinforced their effective work with members of the Delaware General Assembly.

In 2004, the Delaware Housing Coalition published its first economic benefit study, *"Meeting Delaware's Housing Needs: The Economic Impact of the Proposed Five-Year Strategic Housing Plan."* The study contained a major finding that awards made through the Housing Development Fund were leveraged, on average, seven times over—for every \$1 dollar committed by the Housing Development Fund, another \$7 dollars were committed from other public and private sources.

In 2006-2007, the Nonprofit Housing Agenda was formed. This

group of twelve to thirteen agencies worked together to raise awareness about affordable housing among policy-makers and focused on the need to increase the resources allocated for affordable housing. Among its members are: ARC of Delaware, Better Homes of Seaford, Cornerstone West CDC, DHC, Diamond State CLT, First State Resource Conservation and Development Council, Homeless Planning Council, Interfaith Community Housing Delaware, NCALL Research, MHDC, Millsboro Housing for Progress, Sussex County Habitat for Humanity, and YWCA Delaware. The NHA combined resources from its members to hire a lobbyist with budget and policy expertise.

In 2007, the Delaware Housing Coalition began publishing, *“Who Can Afford to Live in Delaware.”* This annual report provided critical data on housing affordability and a summary of the major issues facing the state.

Work began in 2007-2008 to prepare for the transition to a new state administration. A democratic gubernatorial forum on affordable housing was held in May 2008. A post-election forum, *“Promising Prospects for Housing,”* featured national experts to discuss opportunities presented by changes taking place in the affordable housing field. The Forum was sponsored by the Housing Policy Round Table—a broad-based group of advocates, developers, providers, and lenders working to raise issues of adequate planning and funding. And a number of Delaware Housing Coalition and Nonprofit Housing Agenda members were named to the Governor’s transition team, helping to identify key issues and make strategic recommendations for the new administration.

The Coalition has continued to work with the new administration and the new state Housing Finance Agency Director to coordinate advocacy around critical issues. Preservation of affordable housing has remained a key priority.

These strategic steps enabled the Coalition to work with individual legislators to increase their knowledge of affordable housing issues. The economic impact (leveraging funds, as well as retaining deep subsidies to preserve affordable housing) has been a key argument in gaining support for committing resources to affordable housing.

Building support for affordable housing has also included the Coalition’s Annual Day for Housing held in the state’s capitol, Dover. The Coalition’s Good Neighborhood project underscores the importance of affordable housing and they have developed a *“fair share measure”* to identify where housing is affordable to very low-income households. The Coalition’s *“Why Not in My*

Back Yard,” highlights the benefits of affordable housing to communities. This effort is being guided by a nine-member, statewide, community oversight committee.

The Housing Advocacy Network for the Diamond State (HANDS) is a Coalition initiative to place affordable housing advocates in all of the state’s legislative districts.

The mission of the Delaware Housing Coalition is to advocate for safe, decent, and affordable housing throughout the state. Their goal is to impact and shape the environment relating to housing.

DHC is committed to fostering the growth and long-term success of grass roots constituencies; nurturing their leaders; and working together to change the conditions which prevent them from obtaining safe, decent, and affordable housing.

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EAST COAST PROPERTY MANAGEMENT



Old Landing I and II is a community of apartments and townhouses, produced by Millsboro Housing for Progress. A unique feature of Old Landing II is a special subsidy reserve which supports six of the units, allowing them to serve families earning no more than 30% of area median income. This rental assistance was provided by DSHA through the Housing Development Fund.