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HOUSING MATTERS

Council increases commitment to affordable housing

Contributed report

Summer has arrived, vacations have begun and our local elected governments are enjoying a much-needed break. During the fiscal year that ended June 30th, we made good progress on affordable housing. In November, the citizens of Orange County approved a \$5 million housing bond. Although \$5 million does not go very far in Orange County, we are grateful to the Board of Commissioners for allowing voters to approve a local source of funding to produce and preserve affordable housing.



Robert Dowling

In Chapel Hill, the Council increased its commitment to affordable housing by allocating \$1.14 million of Town general funds. That represents a 65% increase in funding from the level of the prior two fiscal years. In Carrboro, the Aldermen did not allocate additional funds to affordable housing, but they still have a significant balance left over from the prior fiscal year.

Lastly, the County Commissioners moved very quickly to approve uses for \$2.5 million of the housing bond. Those funds will be used to produce 52 new homes, most of which will be affordable to individuals and families earning less than 60% of the median income.

All of this is good news, but there is more to be done. As regular readers of this column know, the private sector is unable to produce affordable rental or ownership housing because land and construction costs are too high, and the financial returns are too low.

To produce affordable rental or ownership homes, subsidy is essential. We must accept that reality if we want to increase the number of affordable homes in the future. Other towns and cities around the country are dedicating local funds to affordable housing — including the City of Durham, which just doubled their funding for affordable housing to two cents of the tax rate. Raleigh has a penny for housing in their budget and both Greensboro and Asheville voters approved \$25 million housing bonds last fall.

As we move into the future, land costs will most likely continue to increase, as will home prices. If you are a current homeowner in this market (or any market that is growing), you will benefit from this long-term trend. However, if you are a low-wage worker that rents, your housing costs may continue to increase in the years ahead. These cost burdens can be debilitating to families. Some are forced to move out of our area.

Although there is more to be done, I have confidence we will continue our efforts to create additional affordable housing options in our community.

Robert Dowling is the executive director of Community Home Trust. Reach him at rdowling@communityhometrust.org or visit communityhometrust.org

Colonial Revival opens to light-filled interior



If this door looks familiar – it's one of many on "The Doors of Chapel Hill" poster that raised funds for Preservation Chapel Hill. Stately Colonial Revival-style house in the heart of Chapel Hill's Historic McCauley District lets you walk to everything downtown.

Story by Sally Keeney // Photos by Paul Daughtry

If traditional architecture catches your eye each time you pass by, but you enjoy open and light-filled interior spaces to entertain, then the house at 314 Ransom Street in Chapel Hill is one you should tour.

This stately Colonial Revival is in the McCauley Historic District and was on Preservation Chapel Hill's Holiday 2010 Tour. Built in 1932 for assistant U.S. Postmaster Henry Dewitt Stroud, this house sits on land which was part of the Isaac W. Pritchard homestead and is just a five-minute walk to UNC's campus and a 15-minute walk to downtown Franklin with all its shops and eateries.

Postmaster Stroud, a World War I veteran, and his wife, Katie, lived in the house until 1979 when it was purchased by current owners, Chris Kannenberg and photographer Catharine Carter, whose career spanned 37 years of beautiful portraits and creative settings, including "The Doors of Chapel Hill" poster that raised funds for Preservation Chapel Hill.

Carter, who grew up on Laurel Hill Road in Chapel Hill's Rocky Ridge Farm Historic District, was drawn to the Ransom Street house because it is about the same style as her childhood home.

"This house really touched my heart when it came on the market in 1979," Carter said. "I ran my studio out of it for 30 years using settings in my backyard and a camera room with backdrops in the garage," Carter said. "The basement had my dark room and studio space, which could now make great work/hobby space for others' pursuits."

Carter and Kannenberg did a major renovation of the house in 2001 bumping out the back to create an open kitchen/dining/family space that makes the natural flow of the house even better for entertaining and for enjoying views of the back yard gardens through double-story bay windows. Original crown moldings and doors were preserved.

The renovation, which brought the house up to 3,934 square feet of heated living space, was designed by local architect Josh Guriltz of Guriltz Architectural Group and pays tribute to the home's historical roots while providing updated kitchen, baths and even an endless swimming pool in the basement that also has almost floor-to-ceiling views of the beautiful gardens on this incredibly private half-acre of land in downtown Chapel Hill.

The original screen porch had been glassed in to be a Carolina sunroom for year-round enjoyment. During the renovation a matching screen porch was added on the right which adds a lovely symmetry to this home that has matching pin oaks on each corner at the front of the house and one in the back yard – all providing cooling shade to the house in summer.

The house has a full walk-in attic for storage and a large



Stellar Pearl granite has blue flecks shimmering from deep in granite counters topping cherry cabinets in this open kitchen/dining/family space.

third-floor bonus room. The second story has the enlarged master bedroom suite with bay windows overlooking the back garden; two walk-in closets and a large master bath with soaking tub and walk-in shower complete this restful space. Two other large bedrooms share a full bath on the second floor.

First floor rooms have a circular flow from the front entry to living room, Carolina sunroom, library/formal dining, back of house kitchen, full bath, back to front living room. Slightly to the left is where old dining room used to be and could now be a bedroom or office closed off from the rest of the house (12 x 13).

"The flow is wonderful with a variety of intimate spaces where guests can hold a conversation while still being part of the crowd," Carter said. "And the driveway is long allowing guests a place to park, which is a real plus when entertaining at home in downtown Chapel Hill."

Carter loves the openness of the back of the house overlooking the gardens and the Carolina room. Kannenberg loves the fact they can cook in the kitchen with company and be near guests. The couple is building a one-story, age-in-place home in West Coker Hills.

Children living in this house would attend Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools: Carrboro Elementary School, Smith Middle School and East Chapel Hill High School.

For more information or a private showing of this \$939,000 property which has four bedrooms and 3 full baths, call Weaver Street Realty listing agent Bill Mullen at 919-270-3240. A Realtor Open House with light refreshments will be held Wednesday, June 12, from Noon to 2 p.m.

