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HOUSING MATTERS

We need a systematic approach for affordable housing availability

It's time for us to revise our approach to affordable housing. We are fighting against the tide as we seek to provide housing options for low-income people. As land becomes more scarce, it becomes more expensive. As



Robert Dowling

the economy continues to improve, construction costs escalate. And perhaps most importantly, we are facing huge demographic changes with both Baby Boomers and Millennials, many of whom want to live

in towns and cities.

As a result, I believe it will be increasingly difficult to provide affordable rental and ownership housing for the lower paid people who work in our community. To maximize our impact, we need a new approach.

Currently and rightfully, each of our local governments has its own strategies and funding. However, there is little coordination of effort. I believe we would be more effective if we identified the types of housing that are not being provided by the market and determined how and where we can address those housing needs.

This should be a coordinated effort among all the local governments. If all the local governments work together, utilizing their political will, funding and shared expertise, and they invite nonprofit housing providers to do what they do best, our collective impact will be far greater than if we continue working, albeit earnestly, in silos.

A systematic approach will also require that we identify all the tools at our disposal, from tax credit rental housing to inclusionary housing. This approach will enable us to identify which housing should be developed (or purchased) in which locations, using which tools, with which source of funding and which partners.

Now is the time to shift our thinking about how to address affordable housing. Given the demographic changes taking place, affordable housing will be more challenging 10 years from now than it is today. Coordinated efforts will bear more fruit and thus generate more public support, which will be essential to approve the affordable housing bond in the fall.

The bond funds are absolutely necessary because federal sources of funding are declining and without subsidies, it is impossible to produce affordable housing. The local governments in Orange County lead the way in affordable housing, but we cannot rest on our laurels. If we want to provide housing options for teachers, bus drivers, minimum wage workers and those at risk of being homeless, we must have funding and we must maximize our impact. We can do this.

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Living green and easy

Article by Sally Keeney // Contributed Photos



The 2,012 square-foot Green house at 415 Revere Road in Hillsborough was designed by architect Jay Fulkerson and built to the Gold level of National Green Building Standards by Newphire Building Corporation to achieve Net Zero energy use.

Michele Myers, chair of the Green Builders Triangle Council and president of M Squared Builders and Designers since 1996, wants everyone who is buying or building a home to buy a house that has been certified to at least the Bronze level of National Green Building Standards of the National Association of Home Builders.

Why? Compared to houses built to be compliant just to North Carolina State Building Codes, Myers says Bronze level NGBS certified houses are healthier places to live, more comfortable, energy efficient and more life-cycle cost effective. "And the difference in costs can be as little as three percent," Myers says. "You know you and your family are worth that."

Certified Green Homes come in all styles and sizes – from "small is beautiful" to "expansive executive" – but they get there through a process that starts with a builder understanding and following the National Green Building Standards. For a house to achieve the Bronze level, or any NGBS certification, the builder uses a system that includes: Site Design Preparation and Development, Resource Efficiency, Energy Efficiency, Water Efficiency, Indoor Environmental Quality, and Operation, Maintenance and Homeowner Education (online at hbadoc.com/pages/green-home-builders-triangle).

The Green Home Builders of the Triangle, a joint program of the HBA of Durham, Orange and Chatham Counties and the HBA of Raleigh-Wake County – one of the largest in the nation – began promoting the use of green building materials and techniques in 2006 with a goal of building houses that consume less energy and other resources, facilitate better indoor air quality and provide a more durable structure requiring less maintenance. In 2015, the NGBS standards were expanded to encourage green builders to use universal design principles and products that make it easier for home owners to age in place.

These universal design features include: a no-step entrance into a dwelling from a substantially level parking area; a minimum 36-inch-wide accessible route from the no-step entrance into at least one visiting room in the dwelling; at least one full or

half-bath that is wheelchair accessible; all baths with wall blocking for easy installation of grab bars; rocker-type light switches; lever door handles; single-handle sink faucets with both volume and temperature controls; convenience-height power receptacles, communication connections (for cable, phone, Ethernet, etc.) and light switches; and wireless or mobile device control of HVAC, lighting, alarm system and/or door locks.

Myers, who has been building homes in North Carolina since moving to the Triangle from Washington, D.C. in the mid-1990s, is not only a Master Certified Green Professional, but also

has earned the NAHB's Certified Aging in Place designation.

Myers says most home buyers assume that if a house is safe and comfortable that it is also healthy, and that is not true. "State building codes are about safety," Myers says, "but the National Green Building Standards Program Certification is a system that goes above code to evaluate and incorporate critical health, comfort, and efficiency measures into the house."

"I encourage everyone to visit the homes on this year's Triangle Green Home Tour," Myers says. "Talking with the builders and

representatives and viewing the building practices and materials will give you a greater appreciation of the construction requirements of NGBS."

The 2016 Triangle Green Home Tour, chaired by Joe Norwood of Southern Energy Management, will take place Saturdays and Sundays on two weekends: April 30/May 1 and May 7/8 from Noon – 5 p.m. each day. This eleventh annual open-house of new and remodeled homes throughout the Triangle is free and self-guided. Each of the 24 homes on the tour meets the minimum certification requirements established by Home Innovation Research Lab's (HIRL's) National Green Building Standard. Visitors are welcome to tour any or all of the 24 homes on tour.

Green Home Tour guidebooks are available at all area Whole Foods and Harris Teeter stores, HBA offices and area Realtor Association offices. For more information about the Tour, go online to TriangleGreenHomeTour or [Facebook.com/GreenHomesTriangle](https://www.facebook.com/GreenHomesTriangle) or call 919-493-8899.



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Directions: MLK Blvd towards Franklin St, left onto Mt Bolus and house is on the right