



Executive Summary

City of Brookhaven Affordable Housing Task Force Report and Recommendations

On September 13, 2016 Brookhaven City Council named thirteen volunteers to the newly formed Affordable Housing Task Force. The formation of the Task Force was motivated in part by a letter, dated June 7, co-signed by religious leaders in the city, urging Council to recognize the impact of housing gentrification in Brookhaven. The letter indicated that rising rents, and the commensurate decrease in affordable housing units were effectively displacing residents. The group asked Council to take stock of affordable housing and take steps to ensure its long-term availability.

The members of the Task Force commenced meetings the following month, and over the course of the next eight months heard from multiple community, regional and national experts in order to fully understand the very complex problem of supporting affordable housing.

Presenters were contacted and arranged through various experts on the Task Force, and a policy expert was brought in by city staff. Each donated their time and expertise and should be recognized for their efforts. The wide array of experience and expertise on the Task Force itself meant prolonged questioning, and subsequent research requests of city staff.

Ultimately, the Task Force found itself looking to identify ways to ensure a reliable and favorable climate for the preservation and development of affordable housing choices in Brookhaven.

The resulting recommendations, while not presented as a wholesale solution to the housing challenges facing the city do, in the opinion of the Chair, present an expert framework for taking steps in preserving the economic and social diversity that is the hallmark of our community. At the same time, the steps recognize that transformational change will not come naturally or easily to the market. Simple steps, that recognize the divergent interests of residents, business owners, developers, educational institutions, and government can often bring those interests more in line with each other, and produce a winning outcome for Brookhaven.

The recommendations were presented to, and passed by, the Task Force. It is a point of pride that members with vast differences in experience, motivation and professional affiliations were able to work together to produce this document.

While it is difficult to sum up such a complex issue, in closing, I should note two principals that seemed to transcend the group and therefore the recommendations.



First, it was agreed early on that affordable, accessible housing should not be an island. Brookhaven's strengths have always rested on its diversity and community spirit and that should not be compromised in any efforts to stabilize a market.

Second, the idea took hold that Brookhaven should work to present itself to all as the welcoming community that it is. This pro-active stance would impact not only current members of the community, through more accessible meetings and distribution of information, but include visitors, business owners and importantly, the development community.

I will close with the Mission Statement adopted by the Task Force at their second meeting.

Ensure that opportunity for affordable, accessible, integrated, and equitable housing for Brookhaven's diverse residents is at the heart of the City's ordinances, initiatives, policies, and conversations.

Respectfully submitted, David Schaefer, Chairman

July 25, 2017

**CITY OF BROOKHAVEN AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE
RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Position the City as a Community Resource.

- a. Partner with residents, developers, landlords, property owners, nonprofit service providers and faith leaders to identify, connect with, and access affordable housing options within the city.
- b. Create and maintain a public-facing resource page with information on affordable housing resources, options and opportunities.
- c. Brand this communication resource as a tool that showcases Brookhaven as a thoughtful, welcoming place for all.
- d. Fund a City Position to support community communications; engage landlords, not-for-profit partners; County and State programming; developer relations.
- e. Continue a dialogue with public and private schools in order to understand challenges, and better communicate with families.
- f. Make it City practice to ensure community is fully-informed of transactions impacting multi-family housing on a timely basis.
- g. Recognize and work to overcome language, knowledge of rights and responsibilities, working hour restrictions, mobility, family-care, social media, internet, income restrictions, and other access barriers to information.
- h. Consider meeting people where they live and/or work, on housing issues.
- i. Formation of a Brookhaven Affordable Housing or Livability Committee to advise City Leaders long-term on community issues.

2. Support a Suitable Living Environment as part of Affordable Housing Choice.

- a. Show through policy and practice that Brookhaven's diverse, dynamic residents are a valuable and integral part of what makes Brookhaven a great intercultural city.
- b. Recognize that accessible, Affordable Housing should not create "islands," rather its existence provides a diverse and expansive experience for all residents of Brookhaven.
- c. Ensure City staff is trained on accessibility standards of the federal Fair Housing Act, Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards and Georgia Minimum State Standards for Accessibility.
- d. Encourage solutions to sustainable living, for instance, support expansion of transit options, encourage creation of walkable centers of commerce; make Safe Routes to School, safe parks and affordable recreation choices top priorities.
- e. Recognize that in the long-term, encouraging and supporting access to a path to homeownership is in the best interest of families, schools, businesses, and community.

3. Position the City as a Desirable Partner with Developers participating in Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) programs.

- a. Keep an open dialogue with developers interested in participating in the LIHTC.
- b. Identify opportunities that the city can offer to developers applying for LIHTC, to make applications from Brookhaven more competitive.
- c. Develop a special streamlined permitting process, and waive appropriate fees for developers who have included an Affordable Housing component in their development.
- d. Work with appropriate developers and consider purchasing and holding land during the permitting and zoning process to make Affordable Housing less expensive for developers and thereby incent its construction.
- e. Engage in conversation with the DeKalb County Land Bank Authority to identify potential parcels of land that may be: (a) used to develop new affordable projects or mixed-income projects or (b) leveraged to establish a city housing trust.

**CITY OF BROOKHAVEN AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE
RECOMMENDATIONS**

4. Require a Developer Affordability Impact Statement

- a. Establish this protocol to collect impact statements as part of any rezoning and permitting process within the city that impacts residential and mixed-use development.
- b. The statement would simply quantify and provide a record of the proposed project's impact on the existing Affordable Housing inventory in the city.
- c. The statement might be shared with pertinent governmental and non-governmental bodies such as the Planning Commission, Community Development staff and/or a more permanent Affordable Housing or Livability Committee within the city.

5. Explore creative innovations and cross-sector solutions to protect existing Affordable Housing, as well as ensure its place in the mix of the city long-term.

- a. Evaluate and explore a first-in-the-region pilot program to preserve existing affordable housing (also known as Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing) to incent, support and partner with an existing multi-family development to phase in a rehabilitation project without displacing families from the complex during the process. The goal of such pilot would be to develop a wide-ranging partnership effort of government, private, and nonprofit sector partners to bring an existing affordable unit up to code, with improvements that would benefit residents and boost curb appeal, without a mass displacement and new construction.

6. Incorporate Affordable Housing into the 2017 Brookhaven Zoning rewrite.

- a. Consider an Affordable Housing requirement for high-density developments.
- b. Add a density bonus, for developers exceeding requirements.
- c. Streamline permitting and waive appropriate fees for developers exceeding requirements.
- d. Explore the use of Impact Fees and appropriate uses as incentives to encourage Affordable Housing units.

7. Work Beyond Municipal Boundaries to Provide Regional Solutions.

- a. Engage DeKalb County to ensure that existing programs and resources are supported, available, and well-communicated to residents using "City as Community Resource" (1) recommendation.
- b. Share and support resources regionally, and maintain communication on health and longevity of resources.
- c. Engage surrounding communities to maintain consistent support of Affordable Housing across borders.
- d. Engage and seek to participate in state programs, such as the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing, to continue to study best practices and learn from other communities.
- e. Engage the State of Georgia in an Affordable Housing dialogue with Brookhaven, and other Communities.