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Victory! \$2 Million for the Housing Trust Fund Lexington, Kentucky

by Michael Anderson // 2014, Fall



Lexington's Urban County Council voted 12-0 on September 11, 2014 to set aside \$2 million in funding and create an oversight board for the city's affordable housing trust fund.

BUILD (Building a United Interfaith Lexington through Direct Action), Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative, Habitat for Humanity and many others have been tirelessly working to establish a dedicated revenue source for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in Lexington since 2008.

The affordable housing trust fund will be used to encourage the rehabilitation or construction of housing that lower-income residents can afford. On the same day the council also approved \$750,000 for the office of homelessness prevention and intervention. While the council did not dedicate revenue for the trust fund, it did approve an automatic allocation of \$2 million each year for four years. [Read more here](#)

Commenting on the vote, David Christiansen of Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative state, *"We are certainly excited by the first commitment of public funding to develop affordable housing by our city, as well as the creation of the new city Office of Affordable Housing and the city Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention. However, we are still advocating for the city to pass legislation that designates a specific on-going funding source set aside for these programs."*

Even though a dedicated revenue source was not secured this year, the advocates in Lexington are encouraged by the present commitment of \$2 million and the appointment of Richard McQuady, a 28

year veteran from the Kentucky Housing Corporation who will administer the affordable housing trust fund. McQuady said, *"The purpose of the fund is to leverage other housing dollars to ensure that everyone in Lexington has an affordable home. And by affordable, I mean no one pays more than 30% of their household's income on rent and utilities."*

This successful push to pass an affordable housing trust fund came in March of this year when Lexington Mayor Jim Gray announced the city has a \$13 million surplus. The Mayor recommended to Council that a portion of the surplus be used for affordable housing and to address the needs of those who are experiencing homelessness. On March 20th the full Council passed the ordinance that set aside the funding for the fiscal year starting July 1st, 2014. [Read more here](#)

Over the years there have been multiple task forces addressing the lack of affordable housing in Lexington, all recommended as a solution the creation an affordable housing trust fund with dedicated revenue. Most recently, in 2013, Mayor Gray commissioned another study carried out by consultant czb who reported in February that there are about 15,000 households that need assistance to rent a decent place to live in Lexington. Of those, only about 9,000 receive any kind of help, leaving 6,000 families in the community, most with at least one person working, who can't find decent housing at an affordable price.

For advocates, the release of the report was not new information, but further made their case to establish an affordable housing trust fund with a permanent revenue source. This year, supporters have continually beat the drum for a dedicated revenue starting in January when BUILD organized a meeting of stakeholders that [brought many advocates and community members together](#) to push a united demand for a dedicated revenue source for an affordable housing trust fund. The Community Action Council, the Catholic Action Center and the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice held a candidate forum focused on affordable housing and homelessness. [Read more here](#) They urged candidates if elected to authorize a dedicated revenue source for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. At their annual Nehemiah action, BUILD members secured the Mayor's commitment to propose and advocate for the affordable housing trust fund. [Read more here](#) Community members kept it up by testifying at hearings, holding prayer vigils and media events in order to keep Mayor Gray and Lexington Council members accountable to their promises.

The next steps for McQuady are to create the oversight board, get the word out about the availability of funding and start taking applications by December 11th. McQuady is purposely pushing for this deadline because it coincides with the deadline for applications for proposals for the Kentucky Housing Corporation. *"My goal is to leverage this money as much as possible. \$3 million wouldn't do one project, but it can really help to provide gap financing, bridge loans in order to get the housing built,"* McQuady said.

DART leader, Reverend Adam Jones sums up the advocates sentiments when he spoke to council on the day of the vote, *"After six long years the affordable housing fund has been discussed, studied, vetted, planned for, and now it's time for it to be passed. Our city should be a place where everyone has a safe affordable place to call home. As a community, we stand behind you in addressing this problem, in passing the ordinances before you."*

Lexington is moving forward to provide homes for all of their hard working residents.

BUILD (Building a United Interfaith Lexington through Direct Action) is a local faith-based organization part of the DART Network. The Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative mobilizes the nonprofit, public, faith-based and private sectors in an effort to end homelessness and ameliorate housing insecurity.

For more information on the Lexington campaign please contact Dustin Pugel at dustin@dartcenter.org or David Christiansen at davidccky@gmail.com.



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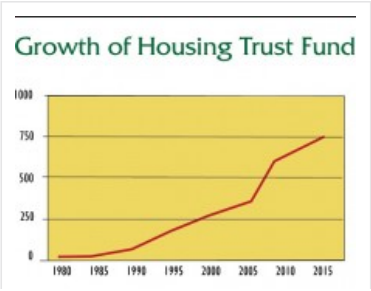
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