



SITKA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Community-Supported, Sustainable, Affordable Home Ownership

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FIRST PUBLICITY ARTICLE - INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS

To understand what affordable housing is, go to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition: ***Affordable housing is defined as housing which does not require more than 30% of the renter's income including the cost of rent and utilities and for those who are owners it is defined as the cost of the mortgage payment, utilities, insurance and property tax.*** Using your own housing expenses and the HUD you can determine if your housing is affordable.

The issue of affordable housing in Sitka was first addressed in 2005 when the Sitka Long Range Planning and Economic Development Commission was tasked with working toward a solution to the high cost locally of home ownership and rentals. Even that long ago, it was clear that there was a widening gap between the rising price of housing locally and the stagnating income of a large sector of those seeking housing. A study was commissioned with Agnew-Beck, Anchorage-based consultants. The easily readable charts and text which made up the 21-page report present a startling picture of a growing problem. (That report and those described below can all be found on the Sitka Community Development Corporation web site www.sitkacommunitydevelopmentcorporation.org under the link "Reports")

In 2006 there is a 17-page report on that same web site of a diverse community forum sponsored by Sitka Economic Development Association, reiterating the points made in the Agnew-Beck report. There was a call for action in the report but no evidence of any actions taken to remedy the housing problem.

The City and Borough of Sitka in late 2006 added an Office for Affordable Housing and hired a qualified planning specialist, Felix Au Yeung, a graduate of UC Berkeley. During 2007 Au Yeung produced a masterful 52-page report, using surveys, analysis, charts and documented text to paint a stark picture of a still-growing problem, along with solid proposals for solutions. The Sitka Assembly took action by designating the old city shop property as the site for high density affordable housing. Plans were drawn and an outside developer was contracted to develop and build the structure. When the anticipated federal tax credits the developer was depending on to complete the work were disallowed, the project was abandoned. Au Yeung eventually resigned and left Sitka in early 2008, the position was not filled and the problem of affordable housing remained, growing larger and more burdensome with each year.

By 2009 a newly minted commission known as Sitka Community Development Corporation (SCDC) commissioned yet another report consisting primarily of a survey of senior housing needs and supply. It was smaller (about 19 pages) and lacked the charts, analysis and planning of the Agnew- Beck Report or the Au Yeung work. But again, there was no solution advanced for correcting the problem of adequate, affordable housing and the declining income of a majority of residents while the price of both rental and owner occupied housing had largely held steady or increased.



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Over the past 3 years, there have been efforts by SCDC and SEDA to address the problem. Within the past 2 years, SCDC has determined that a Community Land Trust (CLT) would be a doable, practical solution for Sitka's housing problems and has worked to communicate with consultants, attend CLT annual conferences and research the large amount of information available on CLT structure, organizational and legal issues. Michael Brown, a CLT land trust consultant, visited Sitka earlier this year and gave several public presentations.

Board members of SCDC are Paul Rioux, president, Randy Hughey, vice president, Joshua Houston, secretary, Dorrie Farrell, treasurer and members Michael LaGuire, Rene Mann, Patrick Fowler and committee member Cleo Brylinski. Mim McConnell is Executive Director. There are two vacant positions on the board and if you are interested in becoming part of the effort to solve the affordable housing problem, please consider attending a meeting to learn more. Meetings are generally the 3rd or 4th Thursday of each month. Look for PSAs in the Sentinel and at KCAW and KIFW for time and place. The public is always welcome and encouraged to attend.

This article is the first of 8 which will appear in the Daily Sentinel. Each will address a specific concept of a CLT. We encourage you to read them and to visit the SCDC web site to review the reports referenced above. During that same time span, both local radio stations will be interviewing board members. There will also be a community survey available at some time during the series, either in the paper, online, on Facebook or at community events and public venues where you can give your input. We also encourage you to visit the web sites listed below.

Additional Information can be found at:

www.sitkaaffordablehousing.org (website) or

Sitka Community Development Corporation on [Facebook](#) or

Community Land Trust Network: www.lctnetwork.org (website)

Community Land Trust Info: www.burlingtonassociates.com