

Navigating Our Future
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**Why can't our working families afford
decent housing in San Juan County?**

What are other communities doing?

What are we doing?

Please be informed!

Why can't working families afford decent housing in San Juan County?

This is the first in a series of fliers looking at the problem of affordable housing in San Juan County

The problem is real: Today, we have fewer residents in the 25-44 year age group than in 1990 while the overall population has grown by 50%. The median price of a new home is now \$475,000. More than half of our residents and more than two-thirds of first-time buyers can no longer afford to purchase a median priced home.

The problem is urgent: The cost of real estate went up by 27% in 2004 and has gone up 33.8% since this time last year while salaries have gone up by at most 3%. Moderate-income families are squeezed out.

The problem cannot be solved with private investment alone: 30-year, fixed-rate mortgages are now over 6%. Without assistance, a family with a moderate income of \$58,000 can only afford a \$260,000 home. There are very few homes available at this price.

Doing nothing has a high price. We will lose the diversity of the community that we value so highly; essential services will be difficult to maintain and will become increasingly expensive; the struggle for working people will be reflected in their inability to participate fully in community affairs.

What are other communities doing?

We are not alone in addressing this problem.

Community Land Trusts reduce the cost of homeownership by taking the high cost of land out of the equation and holding it for community benefit in perpetuity. There are approximately 200 Community Land Trusts in the United States providing permanently affordable homes.

Sweat Equity Approaches like Habitat for Humanity emphasize homebuyers' labor and using community volunteers to build homes for low- and very-low-income families.

Workforce Housing is a relatively new focus on providing housing for working families. Many communities across the United States have realized that it is important for workers, especially those providing public services to live in the community.

How do they do it? Every community has unique needs and limited means to meet these needs. Their programs rely primarily on local support through a variety of donations, grants, taxes, use of public land and constructive legislation.

What are we doing?

To learn more about what local organizations are doing on this important issue:

San Juan County Housing Bank
<http://www.SanJuanHousingBank.org/>

The Orcas Research Group
<http://OrcasResearch.org/>

San Juan Islands Institute
<http://SanJuanIslandsInstitute.com/>

Lopez Community Land Trust
<http://www.lopezclt.org/>

OPAL Community Land Trust
<http://www.opalclt.org/>

San Juan Community Home Trust
<http://hometruster.org/>

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