HCLT breaks new ground with Habitat for Humanity partnership

Homestead Community Land Trust will add seven homes to its portfolio over the next 18 months through an innovative partnership with Seattle/South King County Habitat for Humanity and the City of Seattle.

Some homes will be new construction, others fully remodeled. Three were structurally sound cottages saved from the wrecking ball by being moved to new locations in a “house parade” along city streets early May 21st. Habitat is coordinating the construction and its signature sweat equity component, as well as financing for the buyers.

The City of Seattle’s Office of Housing is providing vacant lots to the partnership, lowering the project costs. Savings are passed along to low-income buyers, promoting its affordable housing goals.

Homestead Community Land Trust will own the land under each home, and lease it to each homeowner. As with all its homes, it will steward the ongoing affordability of each home, making sure that the community’s investment in affordable housing remains in place. If/when one of these lucky initial buying families decides it is time to move on and sell their home, HCLT will facilitate the sale to a new low income household.

This partnership demonstrates the viability and benefit of adding a community land trust partner to housing projects developed by other organizations. CLTs add a layer of protection for the ongoing affordability of housing. The CLT is the organization that stewards the product of the community’s investment (the affordability) and makes sure that each home will serve many generations of low income homeowners.

Go online for more information

about Habitat for Humanity Seattle/South King County: http://www.seattle-habitat.org/projects/index.shtml

about City of Seattle’s Office of Housing: http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/housing/

Letter from Sheldon Cooper, HCLT’s executive director

Using the hindsight of others as foresight for us, or, “Don’t let us become like California.”

There is often a sense among those of us in Seattle’s affordable housing world that looking south to California is like looking 10 years into our own future. We lag behind in terms of severity of our housing affordability problems, but we are trending in the same direction.

Why not also look south for innovative solutions they have tried and found to be effective? Irvine, California provides an interesting example that is particularly relevant to Seattle right now. Irvine was one of the early adopters of inclusionary zoning policies, which require 15% of all new housing built to be affordable for low income residents. This policy has been highly productive, resulting in approximately 4,400 units of affordable housing over the years. Unfortunately, these units were only required to be affordable for 30 years and that timeframe is beginning to expire.

On March 14, 2006 Irvine once again proved itself an innovator in housing policy. Wishing to permanently hold onto

Cottages reach their new home after an early morning move
the affordability of the housing units that will continue to be created through inclusionary zoning, it’s City council voted to create a city-wide community land trust to protect the ongoing affordability of its affordable housing units. The Irvine CLT has a goal of growing to about 10,000 permanently affordable units by the year 2025, roughly 10% of the city’s housing stock. With a new community land trust to preserve the affordability of units being generated through its already proven effective inclusionary zoning policy, Irvine stands to make impressive strides towards solving its affordable housing crisis in the coming years.

Seattle can look south to Irvine for several lessons. First, inclusionary zoning can be a very effective tool for generating a supply of affordable housing. Seattle is now considering creating similar policy, after a new Washington State law cleared the way for local inclusionary zoning laws. Secondly, permanent affordability is crucial for gaining traction on the problems created by run away housing markets. Community land trusts are a powerful and proven tool for stewarding the affordability of homes for the long-term benefit of the community.

Imagine if Seattle decided to craft its housing policy around the goal of having 10% of its housing stock permanently affordable for low and modest income households by 2025. Imagine looking in the paper and seeing hundreds of affordable priced homes for sale all over Seattle on any given day, as opposed to the handful of teardowns our current housing market offers low income families seeking to purchase. With zoning changes being considered in many areas of the City that will allow greater density, now is the time for Seattle to act. We need to create inclusionary zoning requirements that enlist this greater density to produce affordable housing units. And we need to ensure that these units stay permanently affordable.

Seattle has one significant leg up on Irvine, as Homestead CLT is already operational throughout the city and can steward the ongoing affordability of ownership units created through inclusionary zoning. With some creativity and political will, we can solve our affordable housing crisis in Seattle.

Go online for more information

about Inclusionary zoning: http://www.policylink.org/EDTK/IZ/


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“It just made sense”: Pete is HCLT’s 10th homeowner!

Text: Peter Graff

The articles always stressed me out. You know, those front page above-the-fold reminders of the white hot Seattle housing market, astronomic home prices, and gruesome bidding wars. I couldn’t take another story about one more couple laying down lottery winner sums of money for their undersized fixer. It was depressing.

I didn’t harbor dreams of making a killing in real estate. To me, “flipping” was (and still is) something you do at the pool or with pancakes. I simply wanted to put an end to my status as a terminal renter, to be able to paint my walls whenever the urge struck me, to make it mine. But, the combination of my chosen field of work and Seattle home prices formed a seemingly insurmountable financial barrier. And then I came upon Homestead CLT.

It just made sense. Along with assistance to get my own place, I would be perpetuating affordable housing in the city I love. Soon after, I met up with my agent, Tonya Hennen, and she immediately — and very expertly — began demystifying the whole process. The search began.

It wasn’t easy. Over the next five months, we scoured the city, and put offers in on four other homes before finding the one in which I now sit and type this. I had become used to getting outbid, and to Tonya’s phone calls in her post-rejection but unflaggingly optimistic tone of voice.

But with her and Homestead’s tenacity and patience, it finally happened. In April, I purchased a home from the Seattle Housing Authority in the Puget Ridge neighborhood. And now, one month into home ownership, the project list is a mile long, I’ll soon be on a first name basis with the entire staff of Home Depot, and mowing a lawn has never seemed so enjoyable.

In other words, I’m elated. Homestead has made this possible, and calling them last October was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. Oh, and now, I gladly skip right over those articles.
Land Trust News goes electric

W e’ve made the decision to switch to an “e-newsletter” format in order to deliver more timely information about our programs and progress to you, closer to when they happen. We have automatically switched those of you who have recorded your e-mail addresses with HCLT to start to receive the HCLT newsletter electronically. You will begin to receive emails from news@homesteadclt.org that contain links to entries in our e-newsletter/blog. These are stories that you would have found in our printed newsletters, like the letter from HCLT’s executive director in each of our issues, or profiles of our newest homeowner. After a few of these e-newsletter issues, you will start to be able to search through our stories by topics (or “tags”) and by month.

For those of you who don’t use e-mail, HCLT will still be producing paper newsletters, to be sent to your mailing address on file. Likewise, if you have an e-mail address but prefer to receive your HCLT news by postal mail, let us know by sending an email to news@homesteadclt.org, or by calling 206-323-1227.

If you have an e-mail address, we encourage you to get added to our e-News list for faster news from HCLT. We’re excited about growing HCLT in the months ahead, and keeping you informed!

Check out HCLT e-News online
http://www.homesteadclt.typepad.com

Thank you, Anita and Denise; welcome, Johan!

HCLT seeks new Community-at-Large delegate for board

H CLT is looking for an individual to serve as a Community-at-Large delegate on its Board of Delegates. Community-at-large seats on HCLT’s board provide the opportunity for experts in areas not represented by Member/Leaseholder delegates, or a representative from an allied organization, to be a part of Homestead’s work. As HCLT looks forward to a period of growth, we are seeking persons with expertise in the following areas to join HCLT’s board as a Community-at-Large representative:

1. Real Estate Law
2. Financial/Accounting
3. Fundraising/Development
4. Connections to the Rainier Valley

For more information, please contact Sheldon Cooper at 206-323-1227 or sheldon@homesteadclt.org.

Anita has been instrumental in helping guide HCLT through our strategic planning, and secured some very valuable and free (!) help from the Leadership Institute of Seattle for our most recent planning session. Anita’s been a trusted liaison to the Delridge community, especially when our purchase assistance program, HCLT ADVANTAGE, was focused there geographically. She has also lent a unique voice in HCLT board meetings, bringing a longer term focus to our work and helping us imagine beyond the current scope.

Thank you for your vision, Anita!

Tirelessly devoted to HCLT’s programs and financial well-being, Denise has contributed actively to many facets of HCLT’s work. Having been a seasoned homeownership and credit counselor, Denise volunteered countless hours assembling detailed information on credit repair for a number of potential homebuyers. Denise single-handedly managed donations to our 2005 summer picnic and also organized our Chinook Book fundraiser. Always thinking of HCLT, Denise and her husband Zach asked that their friends and family donate to HCLT instead of giving gifts at the baby shower celebrating their son, Sam. The day before leaving town, Denise dropped off a stack of reference materials so that HCLT can start a maintenance library for homeowners. Denise’s involvement with the board has made work truly easier for HCLT staff. Thank you for all you’ve done, Denise!

Johan Grimsrud, a HCLT homeowner, will be stepping up to the plate to replace Anita as a leasing member of the board. Johan and his wife Jill Humphrey purchased Jefferson Cottage, a wonderful homeownership opportunity made possible by HCLT’s first private land donation. Johan is a musician and is a teacher in a youth drop-in center. In joining the board, Johan will represent HCLT homeowners, and is especially interested in helping HCLT develop and grow our neighborhood-based chapters. Welcome, Johan!

Without the energy and work put in by Anita Manuel and Denise Zachariah, two of our exiting board members, HCLT could not have grown the way we have in the last two years. June 2006 marked the end of service to the board for Denise, a Community-at-Large delegate, and Anita, a Potential Leasing delegate. Anita, having been part of HCLT for over five years (the last four as a board member), is re-directing her energies on other projects that are calling to her. Denise will be moving with her family to sunny Puerto Rico, where her husband will serve in a new position with the U.S. Coast Guard.
Funding and donations come in for programs and operating

Homestead Community Land Trust (HCLT) received a $100,000 funding commitment from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Seattle for its HCLT Advantage homebuyer program. These funds are available through People’s Bank and will provide $10,000 additional subsidy to support 10 low income homebuyers to purchase their first homes through the program. Priority will be for households who are very low income, need larger homes, or have special needs.

The Washington Mutual Foundation continues its steadfast support of Homestead Community Land Trust with a $20,000 operating support grant for our work this year. Thank you!

The CoHo Team of Windermere agents has donated $4,850 to HCLT this year so far in general operating support. This donation comes from their Coho Realty Community Housing Fund, which receives contributions from their member agents each time they help a client purchase or sell a home. Two of our clients recently used CoHo agents to purchase homes, facilitating this donation. If you are thinking of buying or selling a home, look into CoHo and help HCLT grow. Thanks Ryan, Tonya and Will of CoHo!

Go online for more information about the CoHo Team of Windermere Agents: http://www.cohorealty.com/