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SPOTLIGHT

Think Above and Beyond the House with Us



Volunteer

Be part of the engine that powers Habitat's mission to transform lives and communities.



Donate

Consider a donation today to provide a "hand up" to our wonderful families. Your gift will make dreams come true and help build a better Charlottesville.



Advocate

Help put wind in the sails of a hardworking local family, or support more sustainable, inclusive housing policy.



WHAT WILL YOU BUILD?

LEARN MORE AT CVILLEHABITAT.ORG



COMMUNITY

Thinking Big to Combat the Housing Crisis

It is time to think beyond the house. Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville is a recognized national leader in creating homeownership opportunities and mixed-income communities. Yet, despite our efforts—helping nearly 200 families realize their dream of homeownership, preserving affordable rentals for more than 1,500 people and building six mixed-income neighborhoods—the local housing ecosystem remains out of balance.

Some key indicators should alarm us all. According to a recent City study, there is no available and affordable housing inventory for a family making less than 50% of area median income. Half of Charlottesville residents are cost-burdened by housing. And Albemarle County faces a net deficit of approximately 8,000 affordable units.

As a result, children's grades suffer, health outcomes worsen, neighborhoods decline, and we all pay.

The time has come at Habitat to leverage our success and to become a catalyst for change in the overall housing sector. Collectively, we can build toward a future when every local man, woman, and child has a clear pathway to safe, decent, affordable housing.

As part of a two year strategic planning process, we are thinking bigger. In addition to maintaining or increasing the number of homes we build each year, we are now identifying ways to increase our overall impact.

"Make no mistake," says Habitat President and CEO Dan Rosensweig. "Our homebuyer program will always be the core of what we do. Bringing the

community together to provide a helping hand up out of poverty via homeownership is still the best way we know to create meaningful, generational change. However, going forward, we will also measure our success by larger, more ambitious goals."

The possibilities are abundant and will be outlined in our new strategic plan, set for release this summer.

If we can help a partner organization to affect a positive housing solution for a family outside the Habitat network, that is a win. If more educational opportunities enable families to better plan for their future, we all benefit. If local policy, funding, and programming align so that, no matter who you are, you can find a safe, decent place to live—without sacrificing food, or school supplies, or being forced out of your community—that is what success looks like. **B**



FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

"If at first the idea is not absurd then there is no hope for it."

— Albert Einstein

Thanks to so much community support over 25 years, we've been able to partner with hardworking neighbors to build homes, create mixed-income communities, and preserve affordable housing opportunities for thousands of local residents.

So the fact that we are looking for ways to increase our impact above and beyond the house may seem absurd at first. But Dr. Einstein's words speak to the need for innovation in our work.

After all, the home a child grows up in—its quality, location, access to schools and jobs—plays a huge role in shaping outcomes later in life. That's why we are asking ourselves how, in addition to being leaders in affordable homebuilding, we can catalyze meaningful change in the housing sector to eliminate the conditions that cause local housing poverty in the first place.

As you will see in this edition of *Blueprint*, our strategic thinking is focused on three primary realms: Building, Rebuilding and Market Development.

In the building realm, we know that affordable homes in our region are scarce, and when they are available, they tend to be segregated in areas that offer less access to amenities and opportunities.

We are committed to changing that for folks like Shanice and Kiyon, featured on page 3. Their new home is part of our effort to bring much needed affordability to the increasingly popular and pricey town of Crozet. Similarly, we are building in a section of the City of Charlottesville that has, up until now, offered virtually no affordable options.

We are also expanding our activities in the rebuilding realm because we understand that disinvestment in existing neighborhoods can unravel their very fabric.

We are piloting a rehabilitation initiative in the Albemarle County urban ring, where aging infrastructure and a steady decline of owner-occupied housing are threatening the long-term stability of those communities. And at Southwood (featured on page 6), we are working side-by-side with long-time residents to bring about a holistic and lasting transformation.

Ultimately, addressing the shortage of affordable housing opportunities in our region will require significant market development. For so many people, the pathway forward has been the Habitat homeownership program. But we need to do more because we know that housing stability for many could involve a different kind of a "hand up"—from a ramp, to a loan, or skills for a better paying job. On page 3, you'll read about Scottie Poor, whose volunteer work with Habitat has opened up worlds of employment possibilities for him. As a result, today Scottie is dreaming of purchasing his own home.

Won't you share your thoughts with us? Because every idea—no matter how absurd it might seem at first—can make a difference.

Best,

Dan Rosensweig

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EDITOR Annie Stup
PHOTOS Habitat Staff
and Chadia King

Connecting Her Community to Healthcare

What if you were sick and scared with nowhere to turn? Guille Alvarado recalls how many years ago, her neighbor in Southwood was in that exact situation. She desperately needed medical and mental health treatment, but was afraid to seek help due to language and cultural barriers.



"I knew there must be someone to help, but didn't know who spoke Spanish," says Guille, a resident of Southwood for 17 years. This memory, paired with the drive to help others in need, spurred Guille to enter the Community Health Worker training program with the Thomas Jefferson Health District.

Guille is one of four women from Southwood to graduate from the 40-hour program. They learned about regional services and how to connect their neighbors to the right provider—in times of crisis or for everyday needs like insurance and dental care.

"Now I can help my community," says Guille proudly. "We know our choices and where support is available."

Strong partnerships are one way that Habitat is not just building homes, but building networks in Southwood and throughout the region. We are proud to support Guille and her fellow graduates as they help their neighbors become safer and healthier than ever before. **B**

Hard Work Pays Off

"I knew that for what I was paying in rent, I could own something that's mine," says Shanice Dillard, who will soon move into her new Wickham Pond home with her 5-year-old son Kiyon.

A deli manager at Kroger, Shanice felt she was throwing her hard-earned money away on rent for substandard housing. But with a poor credit score and no savings, she'd been turned away from homeownership before and didn't think Habitat would accept her application.

So Shanice buckled down.

Through Habitat's homebuyer education classes and financial coaching, she built the financial skills she needed to get out of debt. She started chiseling away at her payments and even saving for the future.

"Learning to be on a budget is hard, but if you want a house then you've got to save for it," she said recently at a meeting of prospective homebuyers who are also struggling with debt. "If you really want it, you'll do it. Just try!"

Her son Kiyon loves the outdoors and is delighted that his new home will offer him space to run around, as well as "a pretty view where you can see all the mountains." He dreams of stepping outside his doorstep to see a clear night sky—but leaving nothing to chance, he plans to decorate the ceiling of his new room with stars. **B**



Volunteering to Get Ahead



"If I ever got a job at a moving company, people would be amazed by all I learned on the Habitat truck," says Scottie Poor, who began volunteering with Habitat in 2012.

Scottie came to Habitat as a way to gain job skills while working with the Choice Group, a partner organization that helps clients facing varying obstacles to find meaningful employment. Through his service at Habitat, Scottie built a family-like relationship with staff and volunteers and learned skills that helped him secure a position at the new Wegman's grocery store.

"It's been very advantageous to have the Habitat skillset," Scottie says.

"When we have inventory truck days, I put everything in its place. When I help in the dish room, I can stack everything with military precision."

Continued on page 6

Innovation at WORK



Habitat is pioneering new approaches to affordable housing, helping families and communities thrive. These five projects offer a glimpse of the future...

WICKHAM POND

Building for the Future

Six homeowners—including Shanice and her son Kiyon—have been getting to know their new neighbors through our Community Conversations program. Their new energy-efficient homes in the Crozet growth area are almost ready for move-in!



CLEVELAND AVENUE

Expanding Our Reach

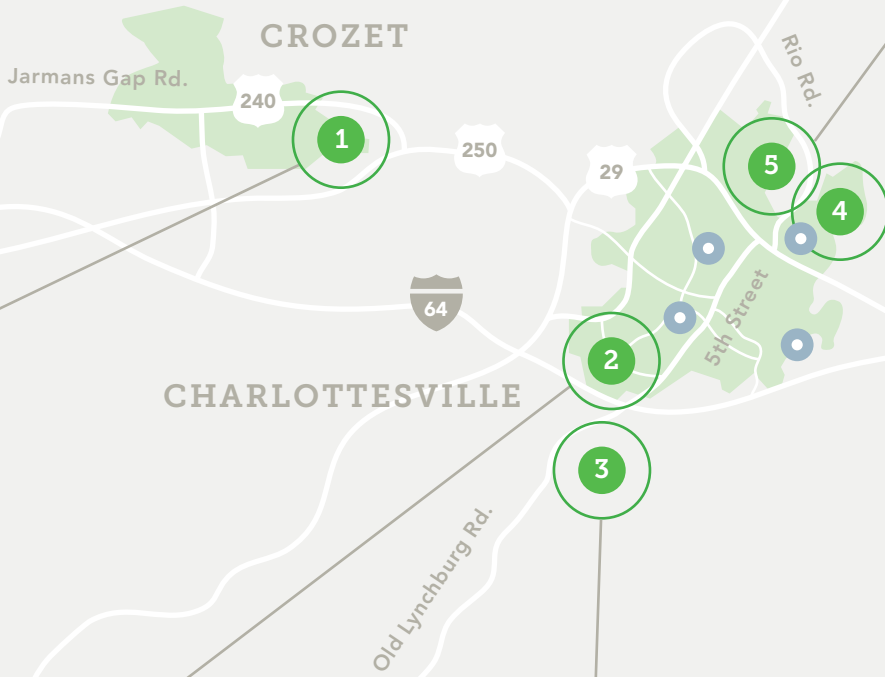
Partnerships are critical to our work—by developing these properties with the Thomas Jefferson Community Land Trust, we can ensure the homes stay affordable for generations.



TOWNE LANE

Strategic Rehabilitation

We're taking a new, cost-effective approach by rehabbing an existing unit in a strategic location. This home is part of our County urban ring initiative, stabilizing communities with affordable homeownership.



LOCHLYN HILL

Creating New Opportunity

In an area of Charlottesville with virtually no affordable housing options, these eight homes will open up new pathways to success for our Partner Families.

SOUTHWOOD

Community Revitalization

Redevelopment planning is underway at Southwood! Through a resident-driven process, we're discovering together how to design a new community that retains the family-like spirit of Southwood.



Neighbors Envision a New Southwood Together



On a brisk March evening, 35 neighbors cluster around a scale model of the Southwood Mobile Home Park. They help each other locate their homes and label them with colored tags, adding to a steadily growing rainbow of houses, buildings, and roads. As the model comes alive with the addition of each resident's name, so does a sense of hope for what the park can become.

"PEOPLE HELP THEIR NEIGHBORS HERE. THEY WATCH EACH OTHER'S KIDS AND RAKE EACH OTHER'S LAWNS. THEY LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER."

– Molly McCumber, Habitat's Community Partnerships Coordinator

"We want to equip people to look at a Master Plan and understand what's in it," says Molly McCumber, Habitat's Community Partnerships Coordinator in Southwood explaining the exercise. "By making an abstract concept into a concrete thing, they can take ownership over the planning process."

This activity is part of a series of redevelopment workshops happening this year at Southwood. The sessions offer an

opportunity for residents to participate in community building and financial counseling, to learn about land use and planning, and to share ideas, concerns, and hopes for their neighborhood. Their collective input will be the primary building block for an emerging Master Plan.

Joann Pugh has lived at Southwood for more than 20 years and says the meetings have helped her envision even more possibilities for Southwood, like different housing options and the potential for stores, parks, and communal spaces. She's hopeful for the future—she's already seen her neighborhood change for the better with the help of Habitat and partner organizations like the Boys and Girls Club.

"We would like to keep our community going, where we do things together," says Joann. "We've got a lot of people who stick together out here and Habitat wants the same thing."

The resident-driven planning process is part of Habitat's long-term effort to ensure the redeveloped Southwood builds upon the existing strengths of the neighborhood as it becomes an inclusive place for people from all walks of life. While it does currently contain the area's largest single concentration of low-income families, it is also home to a strong network of residents who are steadfastly committed to each other's well-being.

"People help their neighbors here," says McCumber. "They watch each other's kids and rake each other's lawns. They look out for each other. It's a really close knit community."

While degrading trailers and an obsolete infrastructure network make it imperative that Southwood be redeveloped, one thing will remain the same—the closely knit fabric of this unique and vibrant place. **B**



Continued from page 2: Volunteering to Get Ahead

His work at Wegman's aligns with his true passion—culinary arts. Scottie recently graduated from an employment assistance program at PVCC, where he learned professional cooking techniques and interned at Farmington Country Club.

With so much on his calendar, Scottie has little time to volunteer today—but he does hold a volunteer record for serving food at dedication events for more than 50 Habitat homes. He's been inspired by our Partner Families and considers himself a lifelong member of the Habitat family.

"I'm hoping that someday I can get my own Habitat house," Scottie says. With the skills he has built over the years, Scottie is well on his way to a promising and self-sufficient future—and someday, a home of his own. **B**

Habitat's Strategic Plan is Underway



16,000
more affordable homes needed



3,000
substandard units



850
families on waiting list for public housing

Charlottesville's affordable housing crisis affects our entire community. When low-income families overspend on housing, poverty and homelessness increase, public resources become strained, and neighborhoods decline. But Habitat's new strategic plan will take a proactive approach to our region's growing housing challenges. Although the specific contours of the plan are still the design stage, the plan will be broad and ambitious and focus on increasing our impact in three main realms: Building, Rebuilding and Market Development.

"We're setting out to create more affordable housing in new and innovative ways," says Board Chair Doug Ford. "And we're working to address the conditions that cause housing poverty in the first place, by such measures as advocating for policy changes and pursuing new partnerships."

Building

Although new construction is happening every day in the Charlottesville area, not enough is being built for low-income families who face exorbitantly high costs of living. That's why Habitat remains committed to building at least 20 new affordable homes every year in sustainable, mixed-income communities. We are currently focusing on a "scattered site" approach by building in a range of neighborhoods where affordable housing is either scarce or non-existent. Mixed-income communities will open the doors to better education and employment options, and become venues for social networking and cultural exchange. Families will have the chance to earn equity and build a better future for themselves and future generations.

Rebuilding

With the Sunrise Trailer Park redevelopment, Habitat showed the nation how to rebuild communities without displacing residents. Our Southwood revitalization will guarantee permanent homes to current residents, open the community to new members and include mixed-income units with options for families in every stage of life. In addition to redeveloping whole communities and transforming trailer parks, we're looking to acquire degrading or abandoned homes in the County's urban ring. These areas have aging housing stock and face declining homeownership. Rather than let them fall to speculation and

absentee landlords, we're helping low-income families invest in their neighborhoods so they can build wealth and preserve housing quality, shoring up the reserves of affordable homes for future generations.

Market Development

We know that addressing the root causes of housing instability goes beyond building and rebuilding. Our community needs sound land development policies, support systems for low income families, purposeful partnerships, new housing approaches and products, as well as the continuous evaluation and improvement of our existing methods. That's why Habitat's third planning realm looks to the future—and far beyond the house.

If we all work more effectively together, we can aggressively and strategically tackle the root causes of housing poverty and instability. When a family is able to find a better housing solution—regardless of whether it's a Habitat home—we all win. Similarly, when an individual like Scottie Poor, featured on page 3, acquires the skills and experience necessary to move up in the world, a better housing outcome becomes much more likely as well.

Habitat's strategic plan is still under construction, but we're excited for what the future holds. Watch for its release in the coming months and, please, help us build a better Charlottesville today—and enjoy it with us tomorrow. **B**

