

Workforce Housing Collaborations

Strategy description

Collaborations of business and civic leaders can support the development of housing affordable for employees of local businesses using a number of strategies. Business leaders can provide resources and aid in generating community support for affordable housing. Strategies used by collaborations include backing legislative changes, conducting community outreach, and mobilizing support for specific development proposals to counteract NIMBYism.

History of the strategy

Efforts focusing specifically on workforce housing have gained momentum in recent years as housing prices have risen sharply in some parts of the country.

Target population

Workforce housing collaborations typically target moderate-income renters and homebuyers, particularly employees unable to afford the cost of housing near their workplace.

How the strategy is administered

Workforce housing collaborations can be administered in a variety of ways. Some collaborations consist of a partnership solely among employers, while others include government agencies and other stakeholders. Collaborations also range in size from small, informal groups to those consisting of tens of partners. Larger collaborations may have a board of directors.

How the strategy is funded

Collaborations consisting of employers are funded by the participating employers; those that include non-profits are often funded by foundations and grants from state and local governments.

Extent of use of the strategy

Moderate use.

Locations where the strategy is being used

- The Workforce Housing Partnership of Saratoga County (in New York) includes business and community leaders, developers, and concerned citizens who are working together to promote affordable workforce housing by building community and political support, providing county-wide planning, increasing financial access for rental and homeownership opportunities, attracting and supporting development solutions, and improving transportation opportunities for employees in the county.

- The Silicon Valley Leadership Group (SVLG) is a partnership of more than 200 employers, primarily in Santa Clara County, CA, that are actively involved in policy issues including housing. In addition to supporting legislative changes and conducting community outreach, the SVLG endorses specific home development proposals and mobilizes support for these proposals at city council meetings to overcome local NIMBYism.
- The Coastal Housing Partnership (CHP) in Santa Barbara, CA provides financial assistance programs and educational services to help employees of specific companies become homeowners in the local community. CHP employer members recognize that, when employees live locally, it benefits the company as well as the employee. Employers have collaborated to offer employees a housing benefits package that addresses common obstacles to purchasing a home and includes down payment assistance, closing cost assistance, and information about the home buying process.

Strategy results

- In 2004, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group endorsed nine development proposals that were subsequently approved, representing 5,711 new homes. In 2006, SLVG endorsed 17 developments representing 3,277 homes.
- In 2006, the State of California passed Proposition 1C, allowing the State of California to sell \$2.9 billion in general obligation bonds to fund housing for lower- income residents and development in urban areas near public transportation. The SLVG lobbied to put Proposition 1C on the ballot while co-chairing a statewide campaign to support the proposition.

Pros and cons to using the strategy and/or types of markets where the strategy is more or less effective

Pros:

- Workforce housing collaborations may result in reduced employer costs related to turnover, recruitment, relocation, and training.
- Workforce housing collaborations create a collective voice, often composed of business and civic leaders, to raise awareness of the need for affordable housing while counteracting NIMBYism.

Cons:

- Employers tend not to be interested in assisting in providing housing for workers unless they view high housing costs as a barrier to recruitment and retention of workers.
- Small employers may not find it cost-effective to participate in a workforce housing collaboration.

Sources of information about the strategy

- Workforce Housing Partnership of Saratoga County website <http://www.whpsaratoga.org/>.
- Silicon Valley Leadership Group website: <http://www.svlg.net/>.

- Regional Employer-Assisted Collaboration for Housing website <http://www.reachillinois.org/>.
- Coastal Housing Partnership website <http://www.coastalhousing.org/>.

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This document is a portion of NAHB's report
Research on State and Local Means of Increasing Affordable Housing.

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Research on State and Local Means of Increasing Affordable Housing



January, 2008

Prepared for the
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