



Town seeks to fill affordable housing with town workers, residents



The Vestry on Bloomfield Avenue will be one of the first developments to market its affordable housing to current residents or people who work for the township or BOE.

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The town will begin marketing new affordable housing units with preference given to current residents, or households including full-time employees of either the Township of Montclair or the Montclair Board of Education.

The council amended its affirmative marketing plan, which is designed to attract buyers and/or renters of “all majority and minority groups, regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, marital or familial status, gender, affection or sexual orientation, disability, age or number of children to housing units which are being marketed by a developer, sponsor or owner of affordable housing.”

The marketing plan is intended to target potentially eligible persons who are least likely to apply for affordable units in Montclair, according to the recently passed ordinance.

Community Grants, Planning & Housing LLC (CGP&H), the administrative agency for Montclair’s affordable housing stock, will develop procedures for implementing the local preference. Of 780 affordable units within the township, the company only oversees 136 those units that were built through the Housing Trust Fund, said town planner Janice Talley.

In September 2018 the township approved a contract with CGP&H for \$18,900, to serve as an administrative agency for Montclair’s affordable housing stock and to maintain the affordable housing waiting list of more than 3,000. The company also reaches out annually to each occupant to make sure they still reside in the affordable units.

The affirmative marketing process for available affordable units will begin at least four months prior to the expected date of occupancy. The costs of advertising and affirmative marketing of the affordable units will be paid by the developer, sponsor or owner, unless otherwise determined or agreed to by Montclair.

Rentals handled by CGP&H include units in 24 Elm Street, Montclair Residences at Bay Street Station, the Montclarion at Bay Street Station, Valley & Bloom, The Vestry, and Washington Street Rentals.

Homes for sale that are offered as affordable include units at James Street, The Siena, Bay Street Commons and Talbot Village.

Affordable housing is also available but not handled by Community Grants, Planning & Housing LLC at First Montclair House, Matthew Carter Apartments, Montclair Inn, Montclarion I, Pine Ridge of Montclair and South End Gardens. For those units, affordable rental applications are handled directly through the development.

All built-out developments have a waiting list of two years or more, according to the CGP&H website.

Ten percent of the 200 units at the in-progress Seymour Street development will be affordable; the upcoming Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment will designate 20 percent of its 154 units as affordable.

New units administered by CGP&H to be marketed with the local preference include six units at The Vestry, 20 units in the Seymour Street redevelopment project, 30 units in the Lackawanna project and 10 units in six different projects scattered through the township, said Talley. There is currently one affordable sales unit on James Street.

Montclair has roughly 14,000 housing units, approximately 40 percent of which are rented. The median rent is \$1,422 in Montclair. Low- and moderate-income household guidelines in Montclair are \$44,000 and \$71,000, respectively.

The state recommends generally that no more than 30 percent of income should go toward housing in order for it to be affordable. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 39 percent of Montclair residents pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing.

Montclair NAACP Housing Committee co-chair William Scott said the waiting list of 3,000 people seeking Montclair housing reflects the ongoing issue of too little supply for the demand.

Last year, Montclair's NAACP chapter successfully lobbied for an increase in housing set aside for affordable units in new developments, to 20 percent.

However several new project approvals — including a 74-unit development on the site of the former Hahne's department store parking lot on Church Street, and 46 units on the site of Ferrara's Auto Body on Orange Road — only include 10 percent affordable housing.



Montclair approves new affordable housing administrator



By Kelly Nicholaides

for Montclair Local

The Montclair Mayor and Council approved an \$18,900 contract on Sept. 4 with [Community Grants, Planning & Housing LLC](#) to serve as an administrative agency for Montclair's affordable housing stock.

The company will oversee 129 affordable housing units built through the Housing Trust Fund located at Siena, Valley & Bloom, Residence and other locations throughout town.

The Cranbury-based company replaces the former administrative agency Piazza & Associates. The contract includes \$8,150 to maintain the affordable housing waiting list of more than 3,000, town planner Janice Talley said. Additionally, the governing body approved an updated Housing Trust Fund spending plan through 2025.

"The new company will reach out to each occupant annually to make sure they still reside there. During the first year, new protocols for the waiting list will be added, including making communications in digital and online format. There's a large inventory of units and the new company will better serve and respond to people on the waiting list. There's also new procedures for local preference to get into certain units," said Talley.

Montclair has 600 affordable housing units, but only 129 fall under the Housing Trust Fund. The rest were built through public money through the state's affordable housing program and are open to residents throughout the state. They include residences at The Siena, Montclair Mews, Bay Street Commons, Montclair Residences and Montclarion II.

The upcoming Seymour Street development housing will include an affordable housing component with preference to Montclair residents.

Montclair NAACP Housing Committee Co-Chair William Scott said the waiting list of 3,000 people seeking housing from Montclair and beyond reflects the ongoing issue of too little supply for the demand.

"If you've got 25 affordable housing units and a waiting list of 3,000, you're not advancing the ball," Scott said. "Montclair has roughly 14,000 housing units, around 40 percent renters, and thousands who cannot afford the rent. Montclair renters are at the mercy of the market."

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Effecting change through advocacy helped Montclair provide up to 20 percent affordable housing set asides with each development. The NAACP chapter has successfully lobbied for the higher percentage for some zoning areas like Lackawanna, but high rents and rent increases will continue to be an issue without municipal rent controls, Scott noted.

Montclair adopted the Housing Trust Fund Spending Plan on Oct. 8, 2002. Amended plans were approved on Aug. 5, 2009 and Jan. 26, 2012, according to the resolution.

The Council on Affordable Housing granted substantive certification to the township in 2009. Since then, the

township proposed a consent order with Superior Court to permit collection and expenditure of development fees for affordable housing as indicated in the updated spending plan that projects fees and expenditures through 2025.

The new spending plan approved this week includes projected revenues of \$1,203,000 through 2018. The town will spend \$225,000 to rehabilitate 15 units and dedicate \$182,885 to render units more affordable to households earning 30 percent or less of the median income by region.

Montclair collects developer fees for commercial and residential construction, which go into the Housing Trust Fund. The rates are 1.5 percent of equalized assessed value per house, 2.5 percent for non-residential construction. All development subsidizes new affordable units, as well as the rehabilitation plan for existing units, Talley explained.

Details of the contract with CGPG to administer the affordable housing on the 129 units include sections on affirmative marketing, household certification and affordability controls, processing requests from unit owners, enforcement, and recording of project files, inventory, bank accounts and monitoring reports on resale and rental units.

The median rent is \$1,422 in Montclair. Low and moderate-income household guidelines in Montclair are \$44,000 and \$71,000, respectively.