

**JOHNSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT
STATE OF KANSAS**

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release: May 2, 2007

Contact: Chairman Annabeth Surbaugh of the Johnson County Board of Commissioners at (913) 715-0500

Affordable Housing Task Force begins its work in Johnson County

OLATHE, KS (Johnson County Square) –The Johnson County Affordable Housing Task Force began an anticipated year-long task in a comprehensive study and review of making more Johnson County housing more affordable to more people in the future.

The task force, which was created by Johnson County Commission Chairman Annabeth Surbaugh, celebrated its official kick-off on Wednesday, May 2, with a morning breakfast at the Ritz Charles, 9000 West 137th Street, Overland Park.

The event attracted more than 50 committee members representing a wide range of stakeholders from throughout the community, including representatives from cities, home builders, bankers and financial experts, nonprofit organizations, realtors, chambers of commerce, and federal agencies.

“Judging by today’s attendance, affordable housing is on a lot of people’s minds,” Surbaugh said in her welcoming remarks.

“It’s my pleasure to be able to convene this task force to study and to make recommendations on how Johnson County—as a recognized Community of Choice in this nation—can appropriately address the need for housing that is attainable; that is achievable across multiple jurisdictions; and that is affordable for our residents.”

Surbaugh said affordable housing was ranked as a top priority at a Leadership Summit, called by her in March 2006 to allow city and county officials to discuss and identify common issues and concerns.

She said the growing need for more available and more affordable housing has not gone away and has escalated at an increasing rate over the past few years, leaving growing pockets of families in Johnson County who cannot attain the American dream of home ownership.

According to the Chairman, the affordable housing issue is a multi-jurisdictional problem requiring multi-jurisdictional solutions.

“County Government cannot achieve any significant change without help from other stakeholders in this community —both from the public and private sectors,” Chairman Surbaugh said. “Obviously, we will need an investment in this effort from the cities in Johnson County, where the vast majority of housing and housing projects are located.”

Co-chairmen of the steering committee for the Affordable Housing Task Force are Gary Anderson, a former First District County Commissioner and a member of the board of directors of United Community Services (UCS) of Johnson County, and Paul Robben of Robben Development and chairman of the Housing Choices Coalition.

In his remarks, Anderson anticipated a menu of options will be required in addressing the affordable housing challenge with different solutions required for different groups of Johnson County households, such as for citizens with fixed incomes and first-time homeowners.

“Nobody has a single answer,” he said. “It’s not ‘one size fits all’ in this issue.”

Robben agreed, noting that Johnson County has lost its edge in the metropolitan housing market because of rising housing prices coupled with increasing transportation costs. Since 1999, the county has experienced a 46 percent decline in the number of single-family building permits being issued for new housing.

According to Robben, Johnson County household incomes have been relatively stagnant since 1995 while housing values have increased more than 60 percent. Anderson described the situation as a “middle-class squeeze” with more and more households having to use more than half of their income to pay for housing costs alone.

Transportation and commuting costs also have increased with rising fuel costs and have impacted affordable housing efforts since more than 106,000 workers commute into Johnson County to work since many of them cannot afford to live in the county.

Robben said Kansas City working families now spend an average of \$906 per month on transportation and only \$625 a month on housing. Increased fuel costs will result in more and more workers opting not to commute to Johnson County to work and looking for jobs closer to their homes. The trend would affect the future availability of workers needed by Johnson County employers, both large and small, throughout the business/industry community.

The Affordable Housing Task Force has formed four subcommittees to study and review existing and future affordable housing needs along with developing possible solutions.

The subcommittees and their chairs include:

- Affordable Housing Models – Carol Smith, associate director of UCS;
- Financing Models – Anderson;
- Regulatory Models – Mike Scanlon, administrator for the city of Mission; and,
- Proposed Action Plan – Robben and Dave Holtwick, senior vice president of governmental affairs for the Home Builders Association of Greater Kansas City.

The subcommittees are expected to convene meetings in the months ahead to further study issues, concerns, and solutions in their assigned tasks in shaping a future action plan.

“My goal is to have a final report and recommendations from this task force ready for presentation by March 2008, which gives us a little less than one full year. Because of this aggressive timeline, I think that using the subcommittee structure will be important to achieve any success,” Chairman Surbaugh said.

Membership of the task force remains open to anyone with an interest in the affordable housing issue, including interested citizens of Johnson County.

Johnson County residents interested in being a member of the Affordable Housing Task Force should submit their cover letter and current resume or curriculum vitae to the Board’s office at the following address:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Attn: Appointments Clerk

County Administration Building, Suite 3300

111 South Cherry Street

Olathe, Kansas 66061-3486

Applications are available on the Board’s website at <http://bocc.jocogov.org>. For more information, residents should contact the Office of the Board of County Commissioners at (913) 715-0430.

Findings of 2004 Johnson County Housing Market and Needs Analysis

The issue of affordable housing in Johnson County was detailed in the 2004 Johnson County Housing Market and Needs Analysis.

According to the study, with each passing year affordable housing is less and less available to more and more citizens and potential residents of Johnson County. The number of people seeking affordable housing was estimated at between 39,221 and 44,354 in 2003. The ranks were expected to swell to between 45,966 and 52,621 by 2010. By the year 2015, an estimated 50,867 to 59,427 households wanting to live in single-family homes in Johnson County will not be able to afford to buy a house.

Key points in the study indicated:

- Soaring housing prices in Johnson County have risen faster relative to income, forcing the poor, middle and working class people to live farther and farther from their work and social environment.
- Many workers cannot live in Johnson County or near the communities they serve because their incomes make renting or owning a home unaffordable.
- Young people are often unable to live in the communities in which they grew up.
- Rising property values also have increased tax bills and placed added burden on senior citizens, single-adult households, and others who live on limited and fixed incomes.
- The current housing market is clearly not meeting the need for affordable housing.