

**JOHNSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT
STATE OF KANSAS**

NEWS RELEASE

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Johnson County forms Affordable Housing Task Force

OLATHE, KS (Johnson County Square) – Johnson County has formed an Affordable Housing Task Force as a communitywide effort to conduct a comprehensive review of current affordable housing needs and prepare a future action plan involving local governments, the housing industry, and other stakeholders.

Creation of the task force was announced Thursday, January 25, by Johnson County Commission Chairman Annabeth Surbaugh, who will chair the task force as one of the Future Focused Task Forces she established in 2005. The task forces were created to address future policy questions for Johnson County in an advisory capacity, to seek public input on certain issues, and to serve to the Johnson County Board of Commissioners. Each task force is led by a district county commissioner, who seeks volunteers to serve on the advisory panels.

The Affordable Housing Task Force will be led by a steering committee co-chaired by Gary Anderson, who served as the First District County Commissioner from 1999-2003, and Paul Robben of Robben Development. Other members of the task force will be recruited in the near future with a goal to begin meeting in late February.

The county also plans to form several sub-committees to support and assist the task force in discussing, researching, and providing a wide range of expertise in identifying specific problems, concerns, and issues and developing solutions to address affordable housing in Johnson County.

Official kickoff of the Affordable Housing Task Force will occur in April during the county's observance of Fair Housing Month.

"The affordable housing issue is not going away. Like it or not, we have to face up to the fact that Johnson County has growing pockets of citizens who are unable to achieve the good life, who struggle — day in and day out — to make ends meet, and who cannot achieve the American dream of owning their own home," Chairman Surbaugh said.

"A significant percentage of people working in Johnson County today earn incomes that are insufficient to pay the rent on an average two-bedroom apartment this community, much less purchase a home. This includes retail sales workers, school teachers, nurses, police officers, service industry workers, blue collar workers, and administrative staff. These are men and women who are employed in this county, yet cannot afford to call Johnson County their home."

Against the backdrop of a strong economy and vibrant home-building industry in Johnson County, Chairman Surbaugh points out the county is facing a growing shortage in housing affordability and availability affecting nearly every segment of the population.

The need for more affordable housing also was detailed in the "Johnson County Housing Market and Needs Analysis" in 2004. The comprehensive analysis was done by the Johnson County Community Development Department. Other partners in the study included Johnson

County Housing Services, Olathe Housing Authority, Home Builders Association of Greater Kansas City, and United Community Services of Johnson County.

The issue of affordable housing also was ranked as a top priority at a Leadership Summit, called by Chairman Surbaugh, on March 31, 2006, to allow an opportunity for city and county officials to discuss and identify common issues and concerns.

In her 2006 State of the County Address on March 31, 2006, Chairman Surbaugh announced plans to create a Future Focused Task Force on Affordable Housing regarding the issue.

According to 2004 Johnson County Housing Market and Needs Analysis, 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 reflected:

- 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.

Membership of the Affordable Housing Task Force will include elected officials, management or administration personnel from Johnson County and cities in the county; professional planners and financial experts; representatives from the home-building and development industry; and other experts with an interest and expertise in the affordable housing issue as well as interested members of the general public.

The task force's sub-committees are recruit community volunteers with expertise, advice, and a stake in affordable housing in Johnson County. They may include representatives from the home builders industry, faith-based and non-profit community, finance and banking, and planning and zoning in focusing on specific issues concerning the complex issue of affordable housing.

Chairman Surbaugh anticipates the task force will proactively address the needs and possible solutions of affordable housing in Johnson County for a growing and changing population, including:

- Looking at affordable housing efforts and types of housing units in other counties in the nation that might benefit the Johnson County community;
- Exploring financing options and incentives;
- Studying possible city and county regulatory issues involving planning, zoning, and codes decisions; and,
- Recommending an action plan for the Johnson County community for future consideration and participation by county and city governments, the home-building industry, and other stakeholders.

The findings, recommendations, and possible action plan of the Affordable Housing Task Force is expected to be completed in 2008 for review by local governments in Johnson County.