

Proposal for the Formation of The Tompkins County Office of Housing Coordination (TCOHC): a non-profit organization to facilitate and expedite the construction of single-family housing in the Tompkins County area.

A) Mission:

To create an organization with acute knowledge of the home building process which will act as a navigator, facilitator, and coordinator of local single-family housing projects and to create a bridge between private developers and the municipalities where developers plan to build.

TCOHC will achieve these goals in the following ways:

1. By providing help to municipalities in order to facilitate the identification of areas within these communities where the addition of single-family housing would be beneficial to the community at large and consistent with each municipality's comprehensive plan.
2. By providing help to qualified, private, single-family home developers by assisting them in navigating through the various development and permitting processes at the municipal level.
3. By working with the various municipalities to help coordinate and shepherd development projects through the approval process.
4. By managing a sizable (proposed) revolving loan fund to be used to fund the soft and hard costs of approved projects. Developers who present projects compatible with the needs addressed in the Tompkins County Housing Strategy could gain access to loans from this fund to help cover the upfront infrastructure, predevelopment design/engineering, and application review costs. The loans would be paid back out of the proceeds from the sale of individual lots and/or residential units.
5. By offering engineering, SWPPP management, and code enforcement assistance and code enforcement assistance to smaller municipalities that don't retain full time engineers and code enforcement officers on staff. By offering these services towns and villages would cut overhead costs and builders would develop a personal relationship with the coordinator they work with.
6. By offering larger municipalities facilitation and intermediation services to assist with coordination between various municipal departments.
7. By working to help coordinate the planning efforts of local municipalities and the County in order to advance the creation of new single-family residential housing throughout the County in a manner consistent with the needs and desires of the community.
8. By facilitating and expediting the placement of public utilities and coordination with utility providers.
9. By advocating and promoting sustainable building and land use practices.
10. By identifying and providing solutions for difficulties associated with the construction of single-family home and exploring alternative development models e.g. ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units), cluster subdivisions, pocket neighborhoods, etc. TCOHC would also assist municipalities in addressing and amending zoning constraints to allow for these alternative development models.

B) Organization & Structure:

Board

The board will be composed of:

- 1 representative from each county government, preferably the planning director from each
- 2 or 3 individuals from in the private development sector to represent home builders
- The head of the Tompkins County Health Department
- 1 representative from the Ithaca Board of Realtors
- Representatives from INHS/Banks/other NGOs

Office

An office staffed with professionals would work directly with the government and private sector to help shepherd projects through various municipalities. The office may be composed of:

- A professional planner/zoning/building code expert
- A full-time engineer to review work coming in from municipalities
- A professional fund manager to solicit, secure, collect and disburse loan funding for development and manage the revolving line
- Support staff

C) Funding

Funding could be obtained from the following sources.

1. Seed grants from the municipalities, towns, villages, the City of Ithaca, and Tompkins County.
2. Private funding:
 - Cornell
 - Tompkins County
 - The Park Foundation
 - Other Large Employers
 - Local Realtor Contributions
3. Fees for services from developers:
 - Engineering review fees and help
 - Fees for management of development review and process assistance
 - Legal fees

D) Conclusion

For this program to be successful, municipalities would need to agree to commit to working in collaboration with TCOHC. The most important thing that needs to happen for TCOHC to function properly is for municipalities to fully embrace TCOHC. Municipalities must be convinced of the benefit of this type of collaboration and the positive impacts it can have on the community. The need for high quality affordable housing is indisputable. It's also clear that if implemented correctly, this type of private/public collaboration could go a long way in helping address this housing crisis.