

Affordable housing gets foot in the door in mayoral election

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In recent weeks, the mayor's race has taken a new focus: Affordable housing.

Some in the community feel this is unwarranted and take issue with organizations such as NOAH (Nashville Organized for Action and Hope), which are forcing the candidates to spend more time on social issues, which I support.

NOAH has three requests – OK, demands – for candidates to address:

- Affordable housing and gentrification
- Economic equity and jobs
- Criminal justice

If these issues are addressed, a number of peripheral problems will be addressed, including education, safety and economic development.

NOAH recently hosted an event titled “A Tale of Two Nashvilles,” at which each mayoral candidate was allowed to address the group for two minutes if they made a pledge to address – should they win – all three of their issues during their first year in office.

Some sources estimated the crowd at as many as 1,600, and it was deemed to be a group the candidates need in their respective camps. Not surprisingly, all candidates made the pledge.

One person who is thrilled with the attention being given to affordable housing is Eddie Latimer, founder and CEO of Affordable Housing Resources, a non-profit that was nationally recognized for its work in affordable housing. Latimer has been a strong advocate for those in need of housing.

In an interview last week, Latimer noted there were 3,400 apartment units completed in Nashville in 2013, with only 450 of those being affordable units. Latimer defines affordable housing as receiving some form of subsidy, meaning renters make 50 to 60 percent of the median income.

As the city has grown in “itness,” there were 9,986 units under construction as of October with none of those units meeting the affordability definition.

As Danny Herron of Nashville Area Habitat for Humanity mentioned a few weeks ago, the window is closing.

Latimer says there were 617 demolition permits in 2012, 200 more in 2013 and more than 1,000 in 2014. Few of the homes built on those sites qualify as affordable housing.

“We’re not adding, we’re losing,” Latimer bemoaned.

The city has come a long way since the 500-year flood in 2010 and the Great Recession. But on the journey out, one group was left at the station.

Sale of the Week



Get ready, West Meade, here they come.



In Beatle terms, West Meade has for years played the role of George Harrison to Belle Meade's John Lennon and Hillwood's Paul McCartney. Now, with its rolling, enormous-yet-affordable lots covered in towering trees with sprawling canopies, the neighborhood is experiencing the builder invasion.

Freed from the yoke of Belle Meade's volume restrictions, architects are unleashing their unfettered creativity.

Located across Harding Road and Richland Creek, Belle Meade's zoning restricts structures by volume,

not square footage, as is the case in most of the city.

Many an uninitiated architect has left Belle Meade City Hall with his plans between his legs, forced to tell his clients that the ceiling heights of the second floors have shrunk from nine feet to eight feet and that the downstairs vaulted ceilings have been reeled in from 15 feet to 12.

And now homes such as 6233 Bresslyn Road are raising the roof and the property values in West Meade.

This home, listed by the mother/daughter team of Whitney Musser (daughter) and Lynn Samuels (mother) sold for \$1,060,000 after being listed at \$1,225,000 some four months earlier while it was under construction.

Musser and Mom, who are with Worth Properties, have been pioneers in the marketing of the upper-end homes in the area, as well as Belle Meade and Williamson County, and were quick to note in their Realtor remarks that this home includes 10-foot ceilings down and nine-foot ceilings up. They also brought attention to the fact that there were two bedrooms on the main level, including the master.

With its 5,200 square feet, 6233 Bresslyn fetched more than \$203 per square foot. It has six bedrooms and five and a-half baths spread over its flowing design, all located on a .95-acre lot.

It is one of two homes of \$1 million or more to sell this year in West Meade, and another is under contract.

Last year, five houses sold for over \$1 million, while seven sold in 2013, up from one in 2012 and two in 2011. The West Meade area had begun its newfound glory in the year prior to the Great Recession with nine million-plus sales in 2007 and eight in 2008.

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