

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY COMMUNITY LAND TRUST
Gillespie Circle Project, Report to TBOE
4-22-2014

Project Background

In 2008 the Transylvania County Workforce Housing Coalition made a proposal to the Transylvania County Board of Education (TCBOE) to develop a housing program for critical workforce employees, beginning with teachers, on land owned by TCBOE. The TCBOE land is located in the city of Brevard off of Gillespie Circle. The concept was to use available resources—TCBOE land, and student labor through the CTE program—to provide affordable housing to recruit and retain a critical component of our workforce—teachers.

It was determined that using a community land trust would be the best vehicle to be able to protect the affordability of any housing developed on the Gillespie Circle property. Consequently, Transylvania County Community Land Trust (TCCLT) was organized and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. TCCLT would facilitate the development and sustained affordability of the Gillespie Circle housing, and would be the vehicle used to facilitate other affordable and workforce housing projects in the county. TCCLT's role would be to partner with various organizations in the county to develop and manage affordable and workforce housing; TCBOE would be the organization's first partner.

Project Conception

The plan was to use the 4.8 acres owned by TCBOE off of Gillespie Circle and build housing to be purchased or rented by TCBOE teachers or staff. Housing was to be built by Brevard and Rosman High School students in the carpentry and masonry CTE programs. The project was intended to be an educational laboratory. In addition to providing a way to continue the successful program of carpentry and masonry classes building houses, other students in horticulture, drafting and environmental sciences would participate in various aspects of the project. Housing would be built to meet energy standards developed by Advanced Energy. Low impact development techniques would be used as much as possible.

Anticipated Project Benefits

- Recruit and retain high quality teachers
- Provide for continuance of CTE carpentry and masonry house-building program
- Provide educational opportunities for other high school programs
- Improve local economy by keeping teachers in the community
- Resource for TIME program
- May provide a link in Brevard's multipurpose path extension

Anticipated Project Challenges

- Cost of infrastructure on unimproved land (water, sewer, roads, sidewalks, lighting)
- Containing costs to enable sale prices and/or rental prices to be affordable for a young teacher
- Balancing CTE program needs with project development goals
- Funding!

Evolution of Project

Since 2008 much work has been done to attempt to bring the Gillespie Circle Project from concept to reality.

- TCCLT was formed and went through a process with a grant through Land of Sky to define the organization, develop a vision and mission statements and develop a framework to use in the Gillespie Circle Project and other projects.
- Master plans for the Gillespie Circle Project were created and revised as the needs and constraints of the project were more clearly defined.
- Potential funding sources were explored. The most likely source to fund the building of home was SECU Foundation. Several discussions were held with Foundation staff.
- Adjoining property was identified that would be helpful to the realization of the Project and was purchased by TCBOE.
- A grant from Western Carolina Community Foundation was applied for and received that was used to fund a part-time executive director for TCCLT, pay for surveying of the property, pay for architectural drawings and a site plan.
- Request was made to Brevard City Council to fund some of the infrastructure costs for the Project and to provide some funding for ongoing costs of TCCLT. These requests were denied.
- Architectural drawings were completed for a combination of single-family units and duplexes.
- Bids were received from two contractors to construct the various units with and without student assistance.
- A site plan was completed that met the requirements to submit a planned development application to the City of Brevard.
- The planned development application was submitted and approved by the Brevard City Council, with acceptance to allow the Project to be done in three phases.
- Assistance was received from Self Help Credit Union real estate development staff to refine our financial modeling to better determine the feasibility of the Project.

Where Are We Now?

After more than six years of work TCCLT has to advise the TCBOE that the Gillespie Circle Project as conceived is not feasible because the projected costs do not allow for an affordable product for the intended market (young teachers) and there are no realistic

affordable funding sources for the infrastructure or to supplement loan funding for the building construction costs. At this point, TCCLT has decided to table the Gillespie Circle Project. TCCLT may choose to reconsider partnering on this project if TCBOE endorses a different concept that will allow the Project to be financially feasible.

TCCLT Recommendations to TCBOE

Consider some of the following actions if it wishes to pursue the utilization of the Gillespie Circle land to accomplish its dual purposes of providing CTE and other educational opportunities and to provide affordable housing to young teachers:

- 1) Engage a development consultant to consider other models for the Gillespie Circle land
 - a) Project to include lower-income housing. This may allow for tax credit funding, and infrastructure grants through the community development block grant program.
 - b) Partnering with a for profit developer to develop property and reserve a certain amount of property for student built or contractor built teacher housing to be managed by TCCLT. Developer would own and develop remaining property at market-based pricing.
 - c) Consider combination of multi-family housing along with single and duplex units.
- 2) Sell all or some of the Gillespie Circle land to provide a fund to buy developed lots for building teacher housing for rental or sale. The homes, when completed, would be transferred to TCCLT to protect future affordability.
- 3) Include cost of Project infrastructure and certain amount for building construction in anticipated bond request.
- 4) Raise funds from private sources for infrastructure construction for one phase at a time. **(This is the option we are currently considering)**