
LAS VEGAS SUN

Experts: Creativity needed to make housing attainable

Jennifer Shubinski

Fri, Aug 26, 2005 (10:50 a.m.)

Representatives from local private and public entities joined with housing experts from other parts of the country in a series of roundtable discussions this week that focused on how to create affordable housing in Southern Nevada.

The discussions were organized by the UNLV Lied Institute for Real Estate Studies and sponsored by development company Focus Property Group.

"This is our eighth roundtable and each year we discuss an issue that is key to the community," Debra March, executive director of the Lied Institute said. "This year we are discussing work force housing, attainable housing. We hope the comments from the roundtables will be a catalyst in the industry."

A white paper based on this week's discussions will be issued by the Lied Institute within the next two months. The roundtable discussions were not open to the public, but panelists' presentations were open to the media.

One area focused on by panelists was the issue of "gap" housing, or providing "attainable" housing for people that make too much money to qualify for subsidized (affordable) housing, but who can't buy a house at today's median housing costs.

"Ninety-five percent or more of the programs are for people that make 80 percent or below the area median income," said Louis Galuppo, director of residential real estate, the Burnham-Moores Center for Real Estate Studies at the University of San Diego.

In the Las Vegas Valley the problem of providing reasonably priced housing for residents has become a growing problem.

As housing prices have skyrocketed, employers have struggled to recruit workers from out of state, residents have left town in search of lower cost housing, and the possibility of homeownership is out of reach for thousands of others.

The maximum sales price of a house a family of four earning the area median income of \$54,700 could afford is \$182,700, according to Clark County's Consolidated Plan.

(The data was based on the 2004 median family income, as defined by HUD and assumes a 6.5 percent FHA 30-year mortgage, 3 percent down payment, 3 percent closing costs, no debt and good credit.)

In July, the cost of a resale house in the Las Vegas Valley was \$280,000, while the median cost of a new house (not including apartment-to-condo conversions) was \$317,909, according to Home Builders Research Inc.

Panelist Brad Wiblin, director of Bridge Housing, a Southern California-based nonprofit, said when housing becomes too expensive for a community's workforce, it creates a host of other problems, including traffic from commuters and an increase in pollution.

The panelists encouraged public and private groups to think of new ways to do business together, from land trusts to long-term land leases with public entities such as school districts. They also encouraged companies to come up with ways to provide affordable and attainable housing options before being forced to by local municipalities.

Attendees were shown examples of workforce housing -- a mix of market rate, affordable and attainable housing in one development -- that worked as examples of what could be done in Las Vegas. So-called work force housing, also referred

to as inclusionary zoning, has been on the minds of many local municipalities as a way to solve the valley's housing problems but has been vehemently opposed by developers.

Galuppo said Las Vegas developers and public officials need to find a way to "loosen the dollars and loosen the land" to be successful. He cited the Bureau of Land Management's program that provides land for low-cost housing. That program and how it would work is now being reviewed and revised.

"You need to go beyond the interim regulations; they need to be changed a little bit," Galuppo said, adding that the way it is written now makes it very difficult for any meaningful development to take place.

archive

[Find Senior Housing](#)

Free assistance finding Senior Housing in your local area.

[Housing Grants \(Free\)](#)

Are you Eligible for Free Grants? Find out Now and Apply online!

© [Las Vegas Sun](#), 2008, All Rights Reserved. [Job openings](#). Published since 1950. [Contact us](#) to report news, errors or for advertising opportunities.