Downtown Charleston Housing

The puzzle pieces to downtown Charleston housing are coming together.

Nearly ten years ago, a group of young professionals in Charleston met with the Charleston Area Alliance to discuss the region’s issues and needs. Downtown housing quickly rose to the top of their list and served as a springboard for the Charleston Area Alliance’s Generation Charleston. The group has continued to focus on the interest of downtown housing by hosting annual Loft Walks, which has grown to be one of their most popular events.

In 2013, downtown housing was thrust further into the spotlight as the City of Charleston, Charleston Area Alliance, Charleston Urban Renewal Authority and the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation joined forces to generate a citywide comprehensive plan and downtown development plan titled, Imagine Charleston. Part of that plan focuses on increasing downtown’s livability. The goal is to create an exceptional living environment in the urban core of Charleston. Significant improvements to the quality of public spaces and the perception of safety while incentivizing investments toward renovated and new housing developments would be essential.

With the Imagine Charleston plan underway, another downtown project was introduced. The EDGE project would bring about 35 new housing units to downtown. The project would serve as an impact incubator while simultaneously cultivating new leadership, reinvigorating our urban center and providing our businesses and institutions with a competitive edge in recruitment and retention, specifically of young professionals. The city of Charleston is spearheading this effort with the support of the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation and Charleston Urban Renewal Authority.

Housing is one of the Charleston Area Alliance’s major action items as it takes the lead implementing the downtown redevelopment portion of the Imagine Charleston plan. The Alliance recognized the need for additional research on Charleston’s housing market. A housing study was completed in May with funding assistance from the Governor’s Community Partnership Program, the Kanawha Valley Council on Philanthropy, Charleston Urban Renewal Authority and the city of Charleston. Bowen National Research provided a comprehensive market study of both rental and for sale housing for not only downtown but the entire city.

The report included an overview of the history and general characteristics of Charleston, an analysis of more than 100 demographic and economic metrics, findings from nearly 30 community stakeholder interviews, a rental housing survey of 46 multifamily apartments with more than 3,090 units, a for-sale housing gap analysis for various income segments in Charleston and an overview of other housing factors that influence the housing market.

The report states, based on demographics, Charleston will likely require 400 more housing units consisting of small unit types (two-bedroom or smaller), and units that meet the needs of higher income households and Charleston’s aging population.

The housing supply factors note the multifamily apartment rentals in downtown Charleston is at 100 percent, which indicates a housing shortage. The entire city is at 99.7 percent. Generally, an occupancy level over 97 percent is an indication of a housing shortage which can lead to housing problems. There is a residential development opportunity for downtown Charleston.

Houses in downtown Charleston have sold at double the price per square foot compared to the city as a whole. Available downtown housing according to the Multiple Listing Services data shows houses listed at a median list price of $231,000 as compared to the city of Charleston median list price of $164,600. It is important to note that the total square footage of houses in downtown is much smaller than those in the city at large.

The pricing and performance of recently sold housing units in downtown compared to the overall city indicates a healthy for-sale housing market in the downtown area.

Charleston Area Alliance understands there are significant hurdles our community needs to overcome to bring more downtown housing development to life. We are committed to better understanding the hurdles and will work to address them with available resources.

For more information please contact Susie Salisbury, VP Community Development, Charleston Area Alliance at 304-340-4253. A full copy of the report is available at CharlestonAreaAlliance.org, Community Enhancement-Current Projects.
President and CEO’s Message

During its most recent strategic planning process The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, with the help of over 300 community members, identified the root causes of many issues facing our community such as high substance abuse; poor food culture and access; lack of recreation facilities, parks and programs; lack of educational attainment and workforce development. These issues are symptoms, surface-level signs or indicators of a deeper issue. The symptoms are easily seen. The root causes are the source of one or more symptoms that when fixed, will significantly reduce the likelihood of the symptom’s recurrence. Based on the analysis there were six root causes:

* Underperforming education system and ill-prepared students
* Poor health of our population
* Not enough strong and visionary leadership – at all levels of society
* Weak community connections and lack of collaboration
* Apathetic attitudes and unhelpful cultural beliefs
* Economic disparities and lack of a diverse economy

As a result of this analysis the Foundation selected three long-term goal areas: Health; Education; Leadership and Civic Engagement. As do many foundations, The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation has a long history of support in the areas of health and education. While the Foundation has supported efforts in the area of Leadership and Civic Engagement it has never been a focus area. The Foundation’s long-term goal in the Leadership & Civic Engagement area is to be a community full of strong, innovative, and effective leaders who work to create shared visions, cross-cultural relationships, and the capacity to foster positive change.

There are eight principles described in a report by the National Commission for the Renewal of American Democracy that our community should consider and all of us can incorporate in our own work. These principles are:

* Citizens must have ongoing ways to participate. Participating in the political process must involve more than voting as essential as that is to our democracy.
* Citizens must play a meaningful role. It is not enough to have citizens invited to a town hall meeting to ask questions. We must become problem-solvers by learning about and fully discussing important issues, and assuming responsibility for creating change.
* People must have public spaces to deliberate. We need places to come together and discuss issues with each other, as well as with public officials.
* All voices of the citizenry must be heard. We all need to be able to see ourselves in the governing process if we are to feel connected.
* The process must be open and credible. To restore public faith in government, public leaders must demonstrate that the process is inclusive and has integrity.
* Local leaders must act as catalysts. Often we look to local role models such as our clergy or trusted neighbor in deciding what is important. They need to be able to reach out to the citizenry and help spur our involvement.
* Communities must socialize and work together. Socializing together will help us develop ties that will enable us to discover our common interests. Communities that “play well together, work well together.”
* Communities must develop a culture of participation. We, citizens and public leaders, must place value on having all the members of the community actively involved in public life.

Democracy requires participation. Citizens have rights and responsibilities. People must consider community interests. We must respect diversity. We must work to find common ground. Through its Leadership and Civic Engagement focus, The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation is working with partners to achieve the participation and common ground that will move our community forward.

President Abraham Lincoln said it best “With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed.”
TGKVF staff and friends working hard for our communities
Amid the transition into a new strategic plan, Becky Ceperley, the president and CEO of the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, has just a little more than a month left before she retires from this job — but she isn’t leaving the Foundation high and dry.

“She believed so much in our credo about civic engagement, she’s decided to become a council person with the city of Charleston,” said Melvin Jones, the Foundation’s chairman of the board of trustees. “She moved us eons from where we were and left us in a great place. We owe her so much.”

Ceperley, who won her spot on council during Saturday’s election, said she’s always encouraged people to get involved with the local and national government and encouraged others to run for office. She decided not to run for a larger office because she’s seen the power of grass-root organizations and thinks working at the ground is where the real public service happens.

After surviving a bout with cancer, she felt like now was her time to run. “I’m well aware that life can become very short very quick,” she said. She plans to use what she’s learned from the Foundation to serve the city.

Donors, grant recipients and members of the community gathered Tuesday evening in the Clay Center to learn from the Foundation’s past and look to its future during the Foundation’s 14th annual report to the community.

When Ceperley came to the Foundation in 1999, she was told she couldn’t fail. The stock market was doing great, the Foundation had plenty of money in the bank and she had plenty of leadership experience. After 2002’s stock market “adjustment,” as she calls it, she learned that she can indeed fail.

In 2014, the organization distributed $7,175,984 and received $12,716,557 in contributions, which Ceperley said has not been audited yet. Approximately $337,000 less was distributed the year before, according to the annual report.

She attributes the growth of the Foundation to its commitment to innovation.
Her co-workers and colleagues were quick to praise Ceperley for her hard work and the audience was even quicker to give her a standing ovation.

Sheri Ryder, a senior program officer at the Foundation, has worked closely with Ceperley since coming to work there in 2002, just three years after Ceperley.

“When I first met her, I was somewhat intimidated by just knowing who she was,” Ryder said. From 1992 to 1998, Ceperley served as president of the League of Women Voters at the national level. In 1996, Ladies’ Home Journal named her one of the most powerful women in politics.

“I thought, ‘Wow, this woman’s dynamite.’”

Ceperley’s work week doesn’t stop after the usual 40 hours. Coworkers said late night meetings and other engagements can sometimes make her work upward of 60, 70 and 80 hours. “I got up everyday and thought, ‘I can’t believe they’re paying me to do this.’”

“I don’t know if she ever turns it off,” Ryder said. “But she also knows how to have a good time. She’s fun to be around. You know how some people are kind of like a light bulb? She kind of just glows.”

Under Ceperley’s leadership, the Foundation has been lauded nationally.

In November 2014, it was included with 29 other groups in a national study which featured philanthropic Foundations and the ways they are building community wealth. In the report, released by the Democracy Collaborative, Ceperley is quoted as saying the investment into industrial wealth has not been matched by the investment in community wealth.

An example of investing in community wealth she gave at the event was the Foundation’s partnership with the Charleston Area Medical Center to create a local foods value chain. Locally grown food from Corey Brothers is purchased by CAMC and used in meal preparation for patients.

Ceperley was also invited to speak at the Aspen Institute in Washington, D.C., during an “advancing economic success” workshop.

Recently, the organization developed a new strategic plan addressing how it disseminates discretionary funding, promising to no longer be a “reactive grant-maker” but a “proactive” one. Much of the grant structure and application was changed to emphasize collaborations between community organizations that contribute to the Foundation’s three goals: education, health and leadership and civic engagement.

Ryder said so far, the strategic plan has been bumpy, likening it to “building the plane while flying it.”

Ceperley isn’t worried about her replacement coming in at such a crucial time in the plan, and said it’s far enough along where she believes it will succeed but it’s still new enough that a successor can put their fingerprint on it.

The Foundation serves Kanawha, Putnam, Clay, Fayette, Lincoln and Boone counties by providing grants to non-profit organizations and scholarships for students applying to college.

Kittleman and Associates, LLC, was hired by the Foundation to conduct a national search for Ceperley’s replacement and is still accepting applications.

Reach Jake Jarvis
at jake.jarvis@wvgazette.com

Reprint from the Charleston Gazette May 19, 2015
The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation has a bold agenda to address the root cause issues that continue to undermine better outcomes for the families and communities we serve. Through our new mission of “making thoughtful and proactive investments that grow the multiple forms of wealth necessary for our community to thrive,” we believe the foundation and our grantee partners can have a more substantial and lasting impact on our region.

Our analysis of the root cause issues was done in collaboration with over 300 of our grantees, partners, and advisors. During this process, our partners not only helped identify the root cause issues, but also defined the places where the Foundation can have the greatest impact on these hard-to-solve problems. This process resulted in our new Strategic and an organizational shift to being a more proactive and deliberate investor in social change.

During the planning process, the Foundation Board and staff also realized that the issues we seek to address are too deep and complex for any one organization to solve. For this reason, we seek to fund collaborative efforts that target the goals and objectives found in TGKVF Strategic Plan. By working together, we can make significant progress on our most entrenched issues while growing the multiple forms of community wealth to ensure our progress sticks.

The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation is pleased to announce the four grants that will be funded for the 2nd quarter of 2015. All of the three focus area goals: Education, Health, and Civic Engagement/Leadership will be met by at least one grant. There are 27 collaborative partners involved in the approved projects and we see these collaborative efforts as the key to achieving the goals of TGKVF’s new strategic path. These four grants total $203,086.

Below please find the descriptions of these grants as well as a list of the Basic Needs grants which total $306,930 and one Special Interest grant totaling $137,750. The Basic Needs grants are responsive and can only cover food, shelter, and clothing. In total, TGKVF funded $647,766.00 for the 2nd quarter of 2015.

**Second Quarter Civic Leadership Grant**
**WV Healthy Kids and Families Coalition-Our Children Our Future Project-$57,000**

The Our Children, Our Future Project will engage community members and young people with the confidence to freely participate in policy work. Civic Engagement Centers (CEC) which are already established within the community, will serve as the point within the county for meeting project goals. Through various activities, community members will learn how to change their community issues to action. Currently there are centers located in 5 of the counties served in the TGKVF area. Each center will:

*organize a local collaborative to complete a local community assessment
*complete a healthy lifestyles project of their choosing,
*participate in the Our Children, Our Future Policy Symposium
*host a community meeting to surface statewide issues
*send at least 20 people to Kids and Families Day at the Capitol
*host a regional forum with legislators during the session
*host leadership development training
*organize a team to attend the 2016 Try This Conference
*develop a student chapter that is comprised of young people within the community to help with activities

**Second Quarter Health Grant**
**WV Health Right, Inc. - Dental Care for Low-Income Pregnant Women and Veterans-$52,436**

The purpose of this program is to improve the oral health status of low-income pregnant women and veterans through access to dental services. Women’s Health Center will incorporate enhanced dental education into its home-based Right from the Start program- it is anticipated that 70 prenatal clients will receive dental screenings and care and 185 pregnant women/parents of infants will receive dental health education. Additionally, by working with Roark Sullivan Lifeway Center, WV Health Right will provide 60 low-income veterans with screenings, preventative care, treatment, and restorative care.
Robert O. (Bob) Orders of Charleston is CEO of Orders Construction Company, Inc., a highway, utility and industrial construction company with operations in West Virginia and Virginia. Mr. Orders graduated from West Virginia University with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, in 1972. He is a registered professional engineer in West Virginia, Virginia and Maryland. In the past, Mr. Orders has served as president of the Contractors Association of West Virginia and as a trustee for the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Currently, he serves on the Advisory Board of BB&T in Charleston, is a trustee of The Nature Conservancy of West Virginia, is a member of the Board of Directors of the West Virginia University Foundation and is a trustee at First Presbyterian Church of Charleston. Mr. Orders resides in Charleston, West Virginia with his wife, Ann.

Second Quarter Leadership Grants

Lincoln County Schools-Afterschool and Community Learning Centers- $65,000
The Lincoln County Afterschool program will serve approximately 200 children at two afterschool sites: West Hamlin and Duval PK-8 for two days a week for 25 weeks. The afterschool centers will focus on STEAM education through programs such as Lego robotics, mad science, Zulu science, and scholastic literacy. The centers will also increase family participation through programs like Dropout Prevention and events such as family movie night.

Southern Appalachian Labor School- Accent Education- $28,650
This project will have summer and school year components that will provide STEAM relevant education to elementary and middle-school aged students throughout western Fayette County. The after-school component will serve approximately 30-40 at-risk students with a focus on homework help coupled with STEAM education, including a trout classroom project, water quality monitoring, horticulture, and aeronautics. The summer component will serve approximately 40 students through Energy Express coupled with artistic expression explorations.

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<th>Basic Needs</th>
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<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Development Outreach Ministries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daymark, Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Habitat for Humanity of Kanawha and Putnam County</td>
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<td>Kanawha Valley Fellowship Home, Inc.</td>
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<td>Manna Meal, Inc.</td>
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<td>REA of Hope Fellowship Home, Inc.</td>
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<td>Southern Appalachian Labor School</td>
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<td>Tyler Mountain/Cross Lanes Community Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Way of Central West Virginia-Boone County</td>
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<td>United Way of Central West Virginia-Putnam County</td>
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<tr>
<td>WV Food and Farm Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>YWCA Resolve Family Abuse Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>YWCA Sojourner’s Shelter for Homeless Women &amp; Families</td>
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<th>Special Interest</th>
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<tr>
<td>WVU Eye Institute (WVU Foundation, Inc.) Children’s Vision Rehabilitation Program (CVRP)</td>
<td>$137,750</td>
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How do you want to be remembered?

If you want to start a fund to support the Vision, Mission, and Goals featured in these pages, contact the Foundation at 304.346.3620.

TGKVF, one of the top 100 community foundations in the nation.