



## **Affordable Housing: What You Should Know**

### **What is Affordable Housing?**

The term “affordable housing” refers to a family’s financial ability to rent or to purchase and maintain a home close to where the family members work, where their children go to school, where they worship, or simply where they would choose to live. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines housing as affordable if it costs no more than 30% of a family’s annual income.

### **Why is Affordable Housing Important?**

A family that spends too much of its income to pay for rent or mortgage is considered “cost-burdened”. This means that the family will probably not have enough money to provide for other necessities such as food, clothing, medical care, child care, and transportation because the family is paying so much for housing.

While both homeowner and renter households can be cost-burdened, the numbers for renter households are particularly troubling. According to data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), a SC household would have to earn at least \$12.98 per hour (working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year) in order to afford to pay the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment. Based on the average actual wages and housing costs across the state, this means that approximately 45% of SC renters are cost-burdened.

### **How Can I Help to Promote More Affordable Housing In My Area?**

State law requires that local governments address an area’s affordable housing needs as part of its local comprehensive planning process. Residents of a local area have the right to review the comprehensive plan, as well as to provide comments on the proposed plan at the public hearing that must be held before the plan is adopted by the local government.

Residents can also contact their local government officials to voice their opinions about the need for safe, quality affordable housing in their area. Residents may choose to attend council or commission meetings that are open to the public, or to contact their local officials by telephone, mail, or email.

Finally, because funding for affordable housing is of utmost importance, it is critical that residents urge their local governments to devote funds to addressing the housing needs of their community. Local governments have various options to fund affordable housing, including the creation of a housing trust fund (HTFs). HTFs are distinct funds established by legislation, ordinance, or resolution that dedicate sources of public revenue to support affordable housing. According to the Center for Community Change, HTFs leverage approximately \$9 in private, nonprofit, and other government sources for every \$1 spent by the HTF. This means that housing trust funds not only promote affordable housing, but also economic growth in the community.

For more information on affordable housing law and policy, contact Clanitra L. Stewart at 803-779-1113 ext. 104 or by email at [cstewart@scjustice.org](mailto:cstewart@scjustice.org).