

East Brunswick Wins State OK of Affordable-Housing Plan

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EAST BRUNSWICK - The state Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) has approved the plan submitted by East Brunswick to satisfy the township's affordable-housing mandate.

East Brunswick is one of only 31 state municipalities to have its plan certified by COAH.

"We're extremely pleased with this certification," said East Brunswick Administrator Jim White. "Our housing office, which is in the Department of Planning and Engineering, works very hard to comply with all of the obligations that we have to provide with affordable housing.

"The fact that so few municipalities as of this date received their certification shows that East Brunswick is, and continues to be, a leader in this type of effort."

COAH, created by the Fair Housing Act of 1985, was the state Legislature's response to a series of New Jersey Supreme Court cases known as the Mount Laurel decisions. The Supreme Court established a constitutional obligation for each of the state's 566 municipalities to establish a realistic opportunity for meeting fair-share low- and moderate-income housing obligations, generally through land-use and zoning powers.

Certification is granted for a 10-year period and may be withdrawn if a municipality fails to continue to meet its fair-share housing obligation. East Brunswick has established its own housing corporation, which is responsible for implementing the township's affordable housing obligations.

The East Brunswick Community Housing Corporation (EBCHC) is a private nonprofit corporation that owns and manages 49 rental units. The EBCHC evaluates affordable-housing eligibility based on a sliding scale that factors in the number of persons in a household and annual income. For example, a four-person household would need to have a minimum annual income between \$33,845 and \$48,350 to qualify for affordable housing in East Brunswick.

In July 2008, Gov. Jon S. Corzine signed a bill promising the creation of 115,000 additional affordable housing units within the state by 2018. A number of New Jersey municipalities, however, are now involved in a joint lawsuit filed against COAH to protest how it has calculated each town's projected growth share of affordable units.

Under the plans certified for these 31 municipalities 6,460 newly constructed affordable units have already been completed, with another 2,028 proposed. Additionally, 513 units have already been rehabilitated, with another 784 proposed.

"Each month we are seeing more and more municipalities receiving their certification," said Department of Community Affairs Acting Commissioner and COAH Board Chairman Charles A. Richman. "This is a testament to the record participation seen during COAH's third round and to these municipalities' desire to provide their fair share of affordable housing."

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