

Summit Held To Address Housing Crisis Options

BY KENYA WOODARD
Sentinel Staff Writer

The solutions for attainable housing could come in the form of modular homes that sit on concrete foundations and have the same appearance as traditionally-built, single-family homes.

Or, it could be housing constructed from former shipping containers that are fashioned into one or two-bedroom apartments. Another solution could be micro apartments, a space the size of an average hotel or dorm room.

All three were discussed at a summit Tuesday as viable options to ease the housing crisis in Tampa.

The Summit, hosted by the University Area Community Development Corpora-



Panelists at the University Area Community Development Corporation's summit on attainable housing, from left to right, Sarah Combs, Craig Vanderlaan, Vince Jackson, Mickey Jacobs, Davida Franklin.

tion along with the Hillsborough County Commission on the Status of Women, brought together hundreds of residents and community leaders to learn more about attainable housing solutions.

Finding solutions to attainable housing – housing that consumes no more than

30 percent of someone's income – is a responsibility for the community at-large, not just certain sectors, said Sarah Combs, the corporation's chief executive officer.

"We want to create innovative solutions for attainable housing," she said. "There's opportunity to do it, we just

have to come together."

'One option could be container housing', Craig Vanderlaan, executive director of Davie-based nonprofit, Crisis Housing Solutions, said.

Vanderlaan's organization recently received a grant from JPMorgan Chase Bank to expand its operations to include developing homes using former shipping containers. It's a trend that's already caught on in Europe and Canada.

In the United States, container housing has been constructed in Phoenix and Las Vegas, he said.

"There is definitely a need for tiny housing out there," he said. "A lot of people get it."

The containers are versatile and can be used to create a variety of housing options, including single-family housing or mixed-use development. A 600-square foot one-bed and one-bath apartment can be designed from a container.

Modular housing is another solution that's beginning to catch on, said Vince Jackson, chief executive officer of CTV Capital, a Tampa-based private equity firm that focuses on real estate investment.

Once a scorn of the housing industry – thanks to depictions of houses-on-wheels and other unappealing design – modular housing is more appealing because of its lower cost and contemporary look.

The homes are energy efficient, are required to be anchored to a concrete foundation, and look much like their single-family home counterparts, Jackson said.

"It's a product that should be a beacon in the neighborhood," he said.

Micro apartments can be the answer for young professionals or seniors who want to live affordably in an urban core, like downtown, said Mickey Jacob, chief marketing officer for BDG Architects.

These spaces are small – roughly 450 to 550-square feet – and amenities like bathrooms and kitchens are shared. It's an ideal option for those who are looking for housing where they can live and gather with neighbors, he said.

Micro apartment rents would be less than \$1,000 a month, he said.

But examining attainable housing solutions also means looking at other matters that affect quality of life, such as transportation, accesses to grocery stores, and doctor's offices, Jacobs said.

"Housing solutions don't work unless you look at other components," he said.

Getting the total community on board with attainable housing requires talking about it often, he continued.

"We have to tell the story of what that does for our community," he said. "We have to tell it in the community, we have to tell it in the media."

That includes talking with elected officials and attending public meetings to speak on attainable housing issues, Jackson said.

"They need feedback and input from people of all walks of life," he said. "That makes a difference."