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### City Council heats up over words

**Author(s):** JASON HARDIN **The Post and Courier** **Date:** September 18, 2000 **Section:** B

Fueled by a volatile mix of race, money and politics, rhetoric about the issue of gentrification has been running hot in Charleston lately. Some say too hot.

Tossing terms such as "ethnic cleansing" onto the already smoldering debate is creating a superheated atmosphere not conducive to solving problems, they say.

But others, such as Councilman Kwadjo Campbell, whose comment equating gentrification with ethnic cleansing sparked the debate, say the rhetoric is a way to focus attention on the problem - and to get action.

The debate about rising property values in peninsular Charleston has been gaining steam lately. Many fear that a large percentage of the city's poorer residents, largely blacks, are being shoved out of neighborhoods they have inhabited for generations as wealthier whites buy up desirable downtown property.

But The Beach Co.'s plan to evict hundreds of residents of the **Shoreview** apartment complex seems to have pushed the debate close to the flash point.

Few argue that there is not a problem. But some say the issue is in danger of becoming overheated, fueled by what they see as provocative and inflammatory comments from gentrification foes.

City Councilwoman Anne Frances Bleeker addressed the issue of rhetoric at last week's council meeting.

She cited Campbell's remark that the process is akin to the "ethnic cleansing" practiced in areas such as the former Yugoslavia, where ethnic groups removed rivals using violence and murder.

The process of gentrification, where poorer residents find their rents and taxes increasing as wealthier residents move into an area, is not about race, she said.

"I have to urge my colleagues on the council to stop using words like 'ethnic cleansing,' " Bleeker said.

Councilman Robert George agreed that is not the term that should be used.

"You can't help but tie it back to the Holocaust or to Bosnia-Herzegovina where we're talking about the most extreme, inhuman acts a person can perform on another," he said. "Ethnic cleansing literally means you're killing somebody. Gentrification means you're displacing someone because of an economic disadvantage that they have."

The language can put off those who might be allies in the fight against gentrification, he said. "Very

often people will talk far beyond the point where they should have been quiet to the extent they will snatch defeat from the jaws of victory," he said. "The last little statement, that last little icing they want to put on a dialogue can actually alienate people that want to help you."

But Campbell did not back down from his comment, although he modified it by adding that "class cleansing" of lower- and moderate-income groups also is taking place on the peninsula.

"It's ethnic and it's class cleansing," he said. "No, it's not with the threat of a gun or with arson. But it's just as tragic and the results are just the same."

He said there is no reason not to say it as he sees it.

Campbell said that others are worried about not offending The Beach Co., but that is not his concern.

"I'm not here to appease anyone. I'm here to be the voice of my community," he said. "This is how my community sees it and this is how I plan to articulate it."

Councilman Louis Waring didn't directly mention the "ethnic cleansing" comment at the meeting. But he said results, and specifically the result of negotiations with The Beach Co. on the sale of the property, are easier to achieve in a less charged atmosphere.

He also appealed for a general calming of the rhetoric.

"I would like for council to start restraining themselves. What people are saying is that we are posturing on television," he said.

But Campbell said words can spark action. He cited the city's proposal that the housing authority buy the property and negotiations with The Beach Co. to delay the eviction dates as examples.

"If we had not organized a general call to action ... none of this would have happened," he said. "It would have been business as usual."

Campbell is not the only council member who has been taking on the issue of race bluntly.

"Charleston has a long way to go with race relations. Racism is alive and well and we know that," Councilman Wendell Gilliard said at Tuesday's meeting.

Others agreed that racial problems are present in Charleston but said city leaders need to be careful when talking about them.

Campbell said people need to get over their discomfort about discussing the issue.

"We have to stop dancing around the problem, acting like we don't have a problem, and deal with it," he said. Jason Hardin covers the city of Charleston. Contact him at (843) 937-5549 or at [jhardin@postandcourier.com](mailto:jhardin@postandcourier.com).

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### Beach Co. plans unpopular but legal

**Author(s):** JASON HARDIN The Post and Courier **Date:** October 9, 2000 **Section:** A

The Beach Co.'s plan to raze the 160-unit **Shoreview** apartment complex might be unpopular with Charleston City Council and might infuriate residents forced to find new homes - but it doesn't violate federal guidelines regarding subsidized housing. Although more than half of the complex's residents receive monthly Section 8 vouchers from the federal government, it isn't the sort of assistance that comes with many strings attached.

That's because the vouchers - which help pay the difference between what tenants can afford and what is charged as rent - aren't tied to the complex.

Instead, they are so-called tenant-based vouchers, which means residents can use the vouchers to rent apartments anywhere that property owners accept Section 8 tenants.

It also means The Beach Co. is under no obligation to preserve the Wagener Terrace complex, which overlooks the Ashley River, as affordable housing.

If The Beach Co. wants to tear down the complex to build higher-priced condominiums, as many have speculated the company plans to do, that is its right.

The situation might have been different if The Beach Co. had taken federal money directly, rather than through the complex's tenants.

But the complex was built more than 50 years ago, and no one even remembers if any such financing was used in the construction of the dozens of pastel units.

Even if subsidized financing was used in the construction, any restrictions would have expired with the debt decades ago, according to Charleston Housing Authority Director Don Cameron.

The Beach Co. President John Darby said the company owes no money on the complex. It did take out loans about 10 years ago to renovate the units, but they were repaid and the money was borrowed from commercial lenders.

While there are no restrictions on property owners' longer-term plans for apartments, they must abide by agreements spelled out in leases.

A federal Department of Housing and Urban Development lease add-on spells out when property owners can evict tenants after the initial lease term, generally a year.

According to HUD's rules, "A business or economic reason for termination for the tenancy (such as the sale of the property, renovation of the unit, the owner's desire to rent the unit for higher rent)" is acceptable.

Darby said the company didn't need to take advantage of the rules because the leases, after a year, are month-to-month anyway.

But that still leaves some tenants in the first year of their lease.

Charleston City Councilman Paul Tinkler, a lawyer, said he reviewed one tenant's lease and could find no justification for The Beach Co. to evict her before the lease runs out in May of next year.

"They don't have the right to ask her to leave," he said.

Darby acknowledged that tenant and others in a similar situation have a legal right to remain until their leases expire.

But he said The Beach Co. will work around them and that the evictions, which will begin at the end of the month and continue in phases through February, will take place.

While the evictions should be completed by February, other work will need to take place before all the units are demolished. Honoring the valid leases won't be a problem for the company or the tenants, he said.

But that still leaves the tenants with the difficult task of finding a new place to live.

The housing authority is attempting to purchase the complex as affordable housing. But Darby said more such housing could be created if the city allows The Beach Co. to develop the area to its "fullest potential."

That would generate some \$600,000 in property taxes that could be used for affordable housing elsewhere on the peninsula, he said.

The margin of affordability rapidly is becoming slim.

Residents who use vouchers pay 30 percent of their income, and the vouchers provide the rest - up to about \$500, a limit set by the federal government.

New federal rules prohibit tenants who use Section 8 vouchers from putting a larger percentage of their income toward rent.

Rent at Shoreview ran a little bit higher than \$400. Rents in a similar range elsewhere on the peninsula are hard to find. Eight of the nine residents who have moved so far have gone to North Charleston. "Insight" is a regular feature in which Post and Courier writers take a look at the news behind the news. Is there a topic or an issue you'd like for us to explore? Please send suggestions to Insight, c/o Steve Knickmeyer, The Post and Courier, 134 Columbus St., Charleston, S.C. 29403.

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### City will replace lost housing units, Riley says

**Author(s):** JASON HARDIN The Post and Courier **Date:** October 25, 2000 **Section:** A

Whatever hopes **Shoreview** apartment residents had that the Charleston Housing Authority would purchase the 160-unit complex to preserve as affordable housing died Tuesday, killed by the cost of buying and renovating the complex. But Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. said the city will more than replace the lost units with new affordable housing on the peninsula, easing the fears of some who said the loss of **Shoreview** would spark an "exodus" of poorer blacks from downtown.

Riley said that the city and the housing authority have determined that purchasing the land, which overlooks the Ashley River, would be far too expensive to work.

But the mayor also said that the city has reached a deal with The Beach Co., which plans to demolish the aging Wagener Terrace complex. With the deal, some of the land will be redeveloped as mixed-income housing.

Riley said 50 units of such housing will be included in whatever replaces the **Shoreview** complex. He also said the city plans to create 50 units of affordable housing at a site near the intersection of King and Grove streets and 100 more units elsewhere on the peninsula.

The city received other concessions from The Beach Co. as well, Riley said.

**Shoreview** residents with children in school will be allowed to stay until July rather than move out as soon as next week, and the city will receive part of the land The Beach Co. owns near **Shoreview** to create a small park, he said.

"I'm very proud of what we have been able to achieve," Riley said. "It would have been easy for all of us to say, 'That's nothing we have any control over.' What we all did together is we said, 'No. We're going to take this challenge and turn it into a positive.'"

The announcement received a favorable reaction from City Council.

"My joy right now is to say that there is a way that we can keep low-income, affordable housing and keep families on the peninsula," said Councilman Jimmy Gallant, whose district includes **Shoreview**.

Gallant said it is imperative that **Shoreview** residents, who will be evicted in phases beginning next week and continuing through next year, be given the first shot at moving into the new units. Riley assured that would happen.

"I'm going to hold your feet to the fire on that," Gallant said.

Many **Shoreview** residents have said that they doubted that the housing authority would purchase

the complex.

**Shoreview** resident Felicia Smalls agreed Tuesday, saying she was not surprised the deal didn't materialize.

"Something is better than nothing," she said. "They're going to give us a little more time. There's really nothing else we can do, but I hope we can find some affordable housing."

Councilman James Lewis thanked Riley and city staff for their work. But he said rising housing prices mean a constant battle is necessary to prevent the city's less wealthy residents from being forced to move off the peninsula.

"We have a big challenge, not just for **Shoreview**," he said. "We have a big challenge ahead of us."

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### Plans for Shoreview draw little criticism

**Author(s):** JASON HARDIN The Post and Courier Staff **Date:** April 19, 2001 **Section:** B

While The Beach Co.'s decision last year to raze the **Shoreview** apartment complex touched off howls of indignation, redevelopment plans presented publicly for the first time Wednesday drew scarcely a whisper of complaint. The plans call for about 135 new units to be built, with a mix of single-family homes, town houses, duplexes and multifamily structures. Fifty of the new units would be reserved as affordable housing under a deal the company reached with the city.

Architect Gary Collins of LS3P Associates told the city's Planning Commission that both the site plans and the buildings will be designed with the Wagener Terrace neighborhood in mind.

"We're talking about the seamless nature of driving through this property from the other property," he said. "We want to maintain the architectural elements that exist in the neighborhood."

The commission unanimously voted to approve a rezoning request that gives The Beach Co. more flexibility in developing the site while also requiring some open space in the design.

Collins noted that the overall density will be less than had been the case at the old **Shoreview**, which is in the process of being demolished.

The plans drew a favorable review from the only member of the public who commented.

"For the most part, we're pleased with what's going to happen there," said Valerie Perry, head of the Wagener Terrace Neighborhood Association. She added that she would prefer to see primarily single-family units.

Darby said most of the units will be single-family, but that the exact proportions have not yet been determined. The prices of the units also are up in the air, he said.

Wednesday's meeting might have been quiet, but the recent history of the complex, which provided affordable housing for decades, has been less so.

Residents of the complex's 160 units were shocked last year when The Beach Co. announced plans to raze the buildings and began issuing eviction notices.

That decision, for many, served as a prime example of

the forces of gentrification - middle and upper-income residents displacing working-class, largely black residents - at work on the peninsula.

The city and the Charleston Housing Authority debated whether to condemn the land to preserve the entire complex as affordable housing, but ultimately decided the cost would be prohibitive.

The city ultimately worked out a deal with The Beach Co. that will allow a nonprofit group or the housing authority to purchase 50 units to preserve as affordable housing. Former **Shoreview** residents get priority.

Darby said the new complex will not be called **Shoreview**. A name has not been selected yet, but possibilities include names that relate to the site. Some of the street names in the complex, such as Alberta and Amelia, come from the names of the wives of former Beach Co. executives, he said.

Jason Hardin covers the city of Charleston. Contact him at (843) 937-5549 or at [jhardin@postandcourier.com](mailto:jhardin@postandcourier.com).

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### **Remaining residents watch demolition Dismantling of Shoreview apartments begins amid last renters**

**Author(s):** JASON HARDIN The Post and Courier Staff **Date:** May 13, 2001 **Section:** A

There's nothing like watching your next-door neighbor's house being torn down to remind you that in this life, nothing is certain. Especially when you know yours might be next.

That's a piece of wisdom Helen Fulmore could have done without learning.

But there's no escaping it - not when every time you look out your kitchen window you see a wrecking crew reducing buildings to rubble.

Still, Fulmore, a small woman with a grave manner, is sticking it out to the end. She's one of just a handful of residents of the **Shoreview** apartment complex who haven't moved out yet, even as demolition work has begun.

Now the time is ticking down for her to move. Everyone must be out by July 1, according to The Beach Co., which is tearing down the Wagener Terrace complex that housed lower-income families for the last five decades.

For Fulmore and the few others watching the complex's pastel-colored buildings rapidly disappear, it's an unsettling time.

Vandals have been at work in many of the vacant units. Residents have reported suspicious behavior at night. And most of all, the security of being part of a community has been replaced with isolation.

"Strange isn't the word for it," Fulmore said quietly. "In the daytime, it's not so bad. At night, it's a little scary. It's deserted."

#### **A SCARCE COMMODITY**

Fulmore's lesson began last fall, when the word came down that all of the 160-unit complex's residents soon would be evicted.

For most, that started a mad scramble to find new housing they could afford - not easy in Charleston's superheated real estate market.

But she didn't want to leave, at least not right away. Her son, Daniel, 12, had just started the year at Rivers Middle School. He didn't want to switch schools, and Fulmore knew the middle school years are tricky enough to navigate without having to fit into a new environment.

Others felt the same way. Under pressure, The Beach Co. agreed to allow residents with school-age children to stay until the end of the school year.

But that just dragged out the agony for many.

"It took me a long time," said Felicia Smalls, who, like many former Shoreview residents, moved to North Charleston. "A long time. A lot of blood, sweat and tears."

The problem is that few places have rents as cheap as Shoreview's at around \$400 a month.

Debby Waid, assistant director of the Humanities Foundation, a non-profit organization involved in providing affordable housing, said she received a call recently from a woman who said she had about \$450 a month to spend on rent.

Housing that inexpensive in Charleston is a scarce commodity, she said.

"I don't know where to refer her," Waid said. "It's getting worse. We've had a rude awakening that there is not an endless supply of affordable housing."

City Councilman Jimmy Gallant, whose district includes Shoreview, said investment in the city's housing stock is skewed toward high-end condominium projects along the peninsula's edge.

He can tick them off one by one, moving down the Cooper River and back up the Ashley. They're beautiful places to live - if you can afford them, he said.

"Everyone on the peninsula is not a millionaire," he said. "They can't afford a million-dollar condo. Some developer needs to say, 'I'm going to make housing for the working people.'"

Despite all that, Fulmore has found a place, a place that feels like home: the Silver Hill neighborhood, high on the peninsula between the interstate and the Cooper River.

She was born there in the 1940s, and it's where she lived until she moved to New York City for a time. She still has family in the neighborhood. Now that she's back in Charleston, it seemed like the best place to go.

"I didn't look no place else," she said.

But the house she's looking at renting still needs some work. She hopes it's ready soon.

## PRESSURES

Everyone concerned about the housing situation in Charleston agrees on one thing: The best security is to own your home.

During the last decade, the peninsula experienced a net loss of 5,000 black residents. And while the number of whites increased, the phenomenon of gentrification - the wealthy displacing middle- or working-class residents in desirable neighborhoods - arguably transcends race.

Whether black or white, it's clear that those most vulnerable to the market pressures sending real estate values skyward are renters.

Fulmore is a renter. And she doesn't see that ever changing. At 55, she says, it's too late for her.

"There's just some people that were born in this world that were never meant to own their own house," she said. "I truly believe I am one of those people."

She might be right.

Even though the city of Charleston and several non-profits, including the Humanities Foundation, are working to create more affordable housing, the demand is still high.

The Beach Co.'s plans for redeveloping **Shoreview** call for mainly upscale single-family houses overlooking the marsh and the Ashley River.

The deal the company struck with the city calls for the creation of 50 affordable units for first-time homebuyers. Former **Shoreview** residents will get first shot at the homes.

That still may not benefit Fulmore, who is on a fixed income.

The costs of creating new affordable housing, particularly on the peninsula, are growing, Waid said. Often, the units are out of reach for the city's poorest residents.

"Affordable housing is a relative term," she said. "I'm not sure that those 50 new units at **Shoreview** will be available for someone like Helen Fulmore."

## LEARN TO LIVE WITH IT

A big chunk of **Shoreview** is gone or lies in piles waiting to be hauled off to the landfill.

Heavy demolition equipment starts early in the morning and steadily crunches buildings all day, while workers strip most of the remaining buildings bare.

It's noisy and dirty, even though workers spray water on the debris to minimize dust.

Beach Co. President John Darby said the demolition crews are working around the remaining residents.

But the process can't help being disruptive.

"It's aggravating," said a member of the Charleston Swamp Foxes arena football team, several of whom are living at **Shoreview** during the season.

"First thing in the morning, you hear it: boom, boom, boom," said the player, who declined to give his name.

The last days of the **Shoreview** complex are visible in other ways, too.

Many empty apartments still have small piles of clothing and other items their owners apparently deemed not worth the trouble of moving. A pile of children's toys, used tires and assorted junk lies in a section of marsh near the edge of the complex.

Fulmore has a front-row seat at the demolition. She can peek out the window by which she keeps her gospel music tapes and watch. Seeing the machinery so near made her son nervous, she said.

"He tried to say, don't stand close to that window, you don't know what kind of accident could happen," she said. "I told him that when the good Lord is ready for you to go ... when it's my time, it's my time."

There's little Fulmore can do.

"You learn to live with things. Some things in this life, you can't change and you just have to accept them."

## MOVING OUT

The Humanities Foundation's most recent survey showed that fewer than 10 **Shoreview** apartments are still inhabited. Hundreds of former neighbors have been scattered through the city and beyond.

Rosina Martin wound up in North Charleston.

She lives in the Ashley Shores complex, which, like **Shoreview**, sits along the river.

It's not bad. She's happy to have found a place. But it's not as quiet as **Shoreview**, and sometimes Martin is a little dissatisfied.

"The children up here are unruly and some of the adults are just as bad as the children," she said.

Luckily, her longtime friend, Margaret Roper, moved to Ashley Shores with her. The two live next door to each other and visit every day.

Roper agrees her new home is a decent place to live. But she, too, has some qualms. There seem to be more people just hanging out than she was used to at **Shoreview**, particularly at night.

"I close my door and I come back out the next morning," she said.

But Fulmore is looking forward to moving to Silver Hill. Her sister lives there. And Midway Baptist Church, where she has worshiped since she was a little girl, is right across the street from where she plans to move.

On the other hand, she didn't plan on having to move from **Shoreview**, which she has grown to like. It has a certain atmosphere she missed when she lived in New York - tree- shaded streets, not too much traffic and a sense of being close to nature.

"The birds sing all night long," Fulmore said. "I've never known birds that sing all night long, but down here they do."

The birds might stay to sing for the new residents. But the **Shoreview** she knew soon will be gone for good.

"Once they clear it out it's like it was never there," she said.

Jason Hardin covers the city of Charleston. Contact him at (843) 937-5549.

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### The gates of Charleston

**Author(s):** JASON HARDIN Of The Post and Courier Staff **Date:** April 5, 2002 **Section:**

\$10 million housing plan goes to voters Charleston's peninsula has for centuries been the heart of a diverse city, a place where roughly equal numbers of whites and blacks lived and worked, where two cultures have both clashed and mingled.

But for the first time in more than 40 years, black residents might soon become a minority on the peninsula. If the trend of the last two decades continues, with more white residents moving to the peninsula and black residents leaving in droves, the lines on the graph will cross. That event might well have happened already.

Taken alone, it's a trivial demographic detail. But it's also a reflection of the changes wrought by the city's astounding real estate boom of recent years - and the corresponding lack of affordable housing.

From one perspective, such a change is as natural as the ups and downs of the free market. From another, it may alter the soul - the feel - of the old city.

"We've got to be careful we don't become a gated community," said City Councilman Wendell Gilliard. "There's a great exodus going on here and we have to do things to defuse that."

"I don't know how you're going to keep them downtown," said Councilman Larry Shirley. "You've got a real complex problem that you don't have a simple answer to. But I don't think keeping everyone downtown is going to be possible. It's being driven by money."

The ongoing changes in the city's demographic makeup raise several questions, and in a practical sense, the voters will be asked to answer some of them through Tuesday's referendum on a \$10 million affordable housing plan.

What should be done?

#### SHOULD ANYTHING BE DONE? THE CHOICES

The issue of gentrification - of poorer residents, often black, being displaced by the wealthy - has become an increasingly hot topic over the last few years. The city created a task force on gentrification, which recommended several aggressive steps to address the trend.

Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. doesn't believe that major demographic changes will continue. He points to a multifaceted city effort to provide more affordable housing as a way to keep diversity on the peninsula. The \$10 million bond issue for affordable housing is part of that effort.

But not all of that money would be spent on the peninsula. Rather, it would go toward creating affordable housing at sites scattered throughout the city. In fact, the question of where affordable

housing efforts should be focused is something of a thorny dilemma for city officials.

Some say focusing too closely on the racial balance of the peninsula might be both futile and counterproductive. They question how much money should be spent on the peninsula, where steeper land and construction costs generally mean housing dollars don't stretch as far as they would elsewhere.

## A NUMBERS GAME

At latest count, the city had a nearly perfect balance of black and white residents living on the peninsula, home to roughly 36 percent of the city's population, according to the 2000 Census.

The 2000 Census counted 16,796 whites and 17,614 blacks living in the historical heart of the city. But the census also shows that this balance keeps changing.

As Charleston emerged from a decades-long economic slumber and property values rose over the past 20 years, more than 10,000 of the peninsula's black residents moved elsewhere. During the same period, the white population of the peninsula grew by more than 1,500.

Project those same trends forward a decade. In 10 years, the number of black residents would drop to about 14,000. Whites would outnumber blacks by about 4,000.

Whether this is purely a function of gentrification remains speculation. There is no hard evidence to say whether black residents left the peninsula generally because they were priced out of the market or because they wanted to live in the suburbs, which saw increases in black residents.

Neither mass movements out of city centers are without precedent. From 1950 to 1970, 25,000 whites left the peninsula for the suburbs. In that case, the exodus might have been more social than economic - many moved to taste the suburban lifestyle for the first time, and property values on the peninsula certainly were not rising.

But with land becoming increasingly expensive on the peninsula, the cost of housing is clearly a relevant factor in the new demographic shifts.

Housing costs have soared in all parts of the peninsula. Below the Crosstown Expressway, the average sales price for a house in 2000 was \$503,638, according to the Charleston Trident Association of Realtors. Rents have spiked alongside the rise in sale prices.

Above the Crosstown, the average sale price was a more moderate \$114,963, although that represented a 24 percent increase from 1998. Furthermore, many upper peninsula neighborhoods, such as Wagener Terrace, are much pricier.

Very few black residents live on the peninsula's most expensive real estate.

For example, Charleston City Council's District 1, which includes much of the peninsula south of Calhoun Street, contained 5,578 residents in 2000. Only 161 were black, most of those housed by the Robert Mills Manor public housing complex.

## THE GOAL

If current trends hold, that pattern could be repeated across the peninsula with dramatic results on the racial makeup of the city's historic center.

Although values have risen across the peninsula, real estate prices in predominantly black neighborhoods still offer relatively affordable housing. For those who hope to keep a racial balance in the peninsula city, the fear is that eventually gentrification will eliminate virtually all the market-rate affordable housing, leaving only those units that are subsidized in some manner.

City planner Tim Keane estimated that about 4,500 subsidized housing units now exist on the peninsula. City officials say they don't know exactly what percentage of those units are inhabited by black residents, but no one disputes that few white residents live in subsidized local housing.

Ninety-eight percent of the city's public housing residents are black, said Don Cameron, executive director of the Charleston Housing Authority. Furthermore, most of the residents in areas with large percentages of subsidized housing are black, according to 2000 Census data.

If fewer blacks are able to afford non-subsidized housing on the peninsula, then continued increases in housing costs could lead to steep drops in black population. Using an average of 2.4 residents per household, the city's 4,500 subsidized units would equate to as few as 10,000 black residents on the peninsula - less than a third of the black population in 1960.

Many city officials shy away from discussing the issue in racial terms. They note that both black and white residents have been affected by the rise in property values and that affordable housing should not be seen as only for black residents.

"I think we need to get away from the term 'affordable housing' and talk about 'housing for working people,' " said Councilman Henry Fishburne. "There is a perception in the community that 'affordable housing' may mean housing projects for the population that might be people on welfare, people who are unemployed. We're talking about people who work."

Fishburne said he sees affordable housing as a race-neutral issue that is driven by impersonal market forces.

But other city officials don't hesitate to portray the issue in racial terms.

"The city needs to stay diverse," Gilliard said. "The balance needs to stay, and the only way it's going to stay is if we aggressively seek to create affordable housing."

Riley and city staff members generally discuss the issue in terms of diversity, which they use broadly to mean traits other than race.

"A good healthy city is one where there's room for everybody," the mayor said. "By that, I mean people of different backgrounds, experiences and income levels. That's a healthy city, a more just city, a better city."

Still, maintaining something close to the existing racial balance is very important to Riley. Black institutions on the peninsula depend on nearby residents to support them, and vice-versa, he said.

## GETTING PERSONAL

For many, the changes haven't been abstract figures on a chart. They've been personal.

"It came through just like Hugo hit. It was like that," said Fred McKinney, who lives on the East Side and has seen many people head for cheaper housing in West Ashley or North Charleston. "I've missed my friends. Everybody knew everybody."

Rosina Martin has seen the changes from the opposite perspective. She lived at **Shoreview** apartments, a large, privately owned complex that provided affordable rents, until it was torn down last year to make way for higher-priced housing.

Unable to find a suitable home that she could afford on the peninsula, she moved to North Charleston.

Martin had spent her whole life in the old city where she was born. Now retired, she said it's odd to be elsewhere.

"It does feel strange," Martin said. "They need to find a place for us in Charleston."

Mary Louise Heyward counts herself among the lucky ones. She is living in brand-new subsidized apartments for the elderly on Rutledge Avenue, close to her doctors and her church.

"It's a nice place," she said. "I'm satisfied."

But the demand for such units, housing experts say, far outstrips the supply.

The implications go beyond the individual lives that have been altered. Institutions at the heart of black Charleston are grappling with the changes.

Churches, such as Macedonia AME on Alexander Street, have moved or are planning to move off the peninsula. They are following the population drift to West Ashley and North Charleston in search of their congregations.

The enrollment at Burke High School has been dropping for years. Nearly 1,200 students attended the school in 1989. This year, enrollment is less than 700.

## MITIGATING FACTORS

Riley and city planners contend that recent trends represent an anomaly, not the future of the city.

Off-the-chart increases in property values aren't sustainable, they argue. Recent indicators suggest that the real estate market has slowed as the economy has sputtered.

"The experience of the last eight or nine years arguably is not going to continue," Riley said.

Keane, head of the city's planning and neighborhoods department, maintains that one reason the trend won't continue can be found in the existing buildings in upper-peninsula neighborhoods.

Many of the changes in the past 20 years occurred in neighborhoods with large, grand houses, such as Ansonborough. Large historic homes that had been converted into multi-unit rental housing were purchased by white families and converted into single-family residences.

In contrast, many neighborhoods north of the Crosstown contain more modest housing stock. They don't have the fancier homes that attracted much investment in lower-peninsula neighborhoods, Keane said.

"You're talking about different kinds of neighborhoods," he said. "They're just built to be more diverse. There are not as many big houses that could be converted to single-family homes."

## WHERE DOES IT END?



While the neighborhoods above the Crosstown might be less vulnerable to wholesale changes, there are competing factors at work. Sometimes, the value of the dirt rises so high that the size or condition of the existing house on top becomes irrelevant.

When bulldozers razed the **Shoreview** complex, more than 150 families - nearly all black - were displaced. The **Shoreview** property overlooked the Ashley River, which gave it extra value, but it exemplified what can happen when market forces come into play.

In theory, such trends could make most of the peninsula unaffordable for low- and moderate-income residents at some point. What's hard to predict is when, if ever, that point might arrive.

College of Charleston political science professor Jeremy Browning believes there is a limit to how many people want to move to peninsular Charleston. Many newcomers want to live in suburban areas, while retirees often prefer to avoid the high-maintenance homes of the city's older neighborhoods.

Furthermore, the college has pledged to hold enrollment at its current level. That would stabilize the number of college students, who are often blamed for pushing up rents.

"I wonder how much more gentrification could really take place," Browning said. "It seems to me that there's a cap, although it's impossible to predict where that cap kicks in."

However, Browning considers it likely that subsidized housing will eventually become the vast majority of affordable housing on the peninsula. Few builders aim for a lower- or even moderate-income market on the peninsula, and already nearly all affordable projects are being done by nonprofits or local government.

Riley said the city's efforts to provide more affordable housing will have the effect of preventing further drops in the city's black population.

The city has been aggressively buying up homes near the Crosstown as part of a multi-million-dollar homeownership program. Ultimately, the project is aimed at renovating and creating as many as 200 new housing units in the area.

City officials say the units would be available to both white and black homebuyers without preference.

## A TUG-OF-WAR

On Tuesday, voters will be asked to approve a \$10 million bond issue that would go toward creating a similar number of affordable apartment units.

Such efforts will likely continue during the next decade. City Council recently approved a resolution that set a goal of creating 3,000 new affordable units throughout the city.

But there is a tug-of-war between two competing priorities.

For some, the highest priority is to maintain the racial balance on the peninsula. For others, it is to provide the most affordable units possible, regardless of where they are located.

Some argue that proponents of affordable housing focus too closely on downtown.

"There are a lot of areas we can look at, but we're so afraid that if we move X amount of people out of downtown, it's going to get less and less black and more and more white," said Shirley, who represents the suburbs on the city's western fringe. "I know that some say we're pushing people west of the Ashley. Well, what are we west of the Ashley? Chopped liver?"

Shirley said that some peninsula residents might want to move to West Ashley for the suburban lifestyle and should at least have the option to do so.

Some advocates of preserving the racial balance acknowledge that there might be only so much that can be done.

"The peninsula right now is just getting filled up," said Robert Mitchell, a housing counselor who represents a downtown council district. "We might be able to create a few (downtown), but we also have to look over at West Ashley and have it scattered around."

Mayor Riley said that affordable housing should be provided in both the city and the suburbs. He pointed to other factors that might help cool the housing market on the peninsula.

He said that the new condominiums beginning to ring the peninsula, such as the Bristol near the Ashley River bridges, will help as well. While affordable to only a comparative few, they help soak up the demand that otherwise might push up prices in established neighborhoods.

Those measures will go a long way toward preventing large-scale displacement in neighborhoods such as the East Side and Cannonborough and Elliotborough, Riley said.

"Those neighborhoods are likely to continue to be substantially affordable," he said. "It's reassuring that the numbers of subsidized (housing units) will increase, and I think it should increase. The reason we've worked so hard is because of the pressure of rising land values."

Riley and other city staffers predict that these efforts will prevent significant changes in the racial makeup of the peninsula. In 2010, there still should be a roughly equal number of black and white residents, they maintain.

"It would be hard for me to believe that you'd see significant changes looking forward 10 years that you've seen looking back 10 years," Keane said.

## LEARNING TO COEXIST

Making sure those changes don't happen is critical, some say.

There are residents who worry that demographic changes could create a tension between poor and rich, between white and black.

Gilliard cited the lingering perception that the construction of Dockside condominiums on the Cooper River waterfront during the mid-1970s led to the demolition of the Ansonborough Homes public housing complex. Those homes were torn down after they were damaged during Hurricane Hugo and pollution was found under the soil, but many blacks think the residents were forced out to allow for redevelopment.

Residents of the Gadsden Green complex have voiced similar fears about the nearby Bristol condominiums, he said.

Housing Authority officials say that won't happen, but Gilliard said there needs to be a recognition that Charleston is a place where a mixture of residents with vastly different incomes can live together.

"We have to learn to coexist, and we can coexist," he said. "The major impact is going to be keeping the diversity here, keeping the balance here and not separating the poor from the rich."

But the changes aren't going to stop anytime soon, C of C's Browning said.

"There will continue to be money coming in," he said. "I don't think it's finished."

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## Longborough poses challenge to designers

**Author(s):** JASON HARDIN Of The Post and Courier Staff **Date:** August 12, 2002 **Section:** B

It's been more than a year since the Shoreview apartment complex met the wrecking ball, and nothing remains of the low-income neighborhood but a sweeping view of the marsh along the Ashley River. But a new neighborhood is about to take shape on the 27-acre site, which is on the northwest side of Charleston's peninsula.

In the place of a few dozen pastel apartment buildings, the Beach Co., which is developing the site, plans a mix of about 150 townhouses and single-family homes.

It's one of the largest infill projects in the city, and it poses a challenge to designers: How do you make what is essentially an entire new neighborhood fit into the fabric of the city?

In this case, the new neighborhood, dubbed "**Longborough**" - after Beach Co. founder J.C. Long - will be done in a style designed to blend in with the Wagener Terrace neighborhood, which borders the site.

"We're trying to keep all of those things where it's not an abrupt difference when you go into **Longborough** from the surrounding area. It should all look similar," said Ron Sirisky of the Beach Co.

Specifically, design guidelines are in place that govern the appearance of the houses. Generally speaking, they will share features with many homes in Wagener Terrace, such as porches with square columns and a mix of brick and wood siding, he said.

It's a look that's increasingly popular, Sirisky said.

"People are finding more authenticity in the past. Trendy things tend to go out of style," Sirisky said. "People moving to Charleston and the peninsula are really looking for that classic style."

The project hasn't generated any real public opposition from Wagener Terrace residents. "I think most of the folks think that it's going to turn out being a good thing for the neighborhood," said Joe Wolfe, president of the area's neighborhood association. "It looks like it's going to be a good job."

The lack of objections to **Longborough** contrasts with a similar project in Wagener Terrace, a smaller residential development at the end of Sunnyside Avenue.

There, neighbors have objected to the style of the houses, which look more like houses downtown, and to a planned dock. Developers originally asked for a 29-slip dock, but residents and others complained it would spoil the view from the Ashley River, and the state eventually permitted a smaller facility.



The difference, Wolfe said, is at least partially in the architecture.

"I think that's going to be a tough one to make it look right," he said. "I think they're going to look like a sore thumb stuck out there."

The calm surrounding **Longborough** also differs with the decision to demolish Shoreview, which involved evicting the complex's residents.

Many held up the decision as a classic example of gentrification - the displacement of poorer residents as property values rise.

Since then, the city struck a deal with the Beach Co. to set aside some of the new townhouses as affordable housing units. The units would be indistinguishable from the market-rate units from the outside, said Robert Miller of the Beach Co.

While it's possible that some Shoreview residents could return to the redeveloped complex, which sits at the north end of Tenth Avenue, it won't look like home.

In addition to having a new name, Miller said the project's architecture will not include a nod to Shoreview, which he said was built to provide cheap housing during World War II. That complex jarred, rather than blended, with the neighborhood, he said.

"That was built back in the 1940s for a special reason," he said. "We're bringing it to a residential state that complements the neighborhood. It's going to look like what's around it."

Right now, **Longborough** consists of piles of dirt surrounded by heavy equipment, as utilities are being installed. Miller said that work will wrap up later this year, clearing the way for the construction of the townhouses and the sale of individual lots.

The lots cost from \$80,000 or so to more than \$300,000 for sites bordering the marsh, he said.

**JASON HARDIN** Jason Hardin covers the city of Charleston. Contact him at 937-5549 or at [jhardin@postandcourier.com](mailto:jhardin@postandcourier.com).

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## Views lure residents to Longborough

**Author(s):** JIM PARKER Of The Post and Courier Staff **Date:** January 3, 2004 **Section:** REAL ESTATE

**PHOTOS:** On the cover- A sweeping front porch and side stairs accentuate a two-story, pitched-roof home at **Longborough**, the new peninsular neighborhood north of Hampton Park. Brick columns front this Hardiplank-sided home on Mary Ellen Drive.

The custom builders in **Longborough** pay attention to details, such as the stylish design of a porch railing.

**Longborough** gets its name from the Long family, which has been a key player in The Beach Co. for more than 50 years.

### END PHOTOS

Like the weather in Charleston, sometimes it pays just to wait awhile for a dramatic turn. Look at **Longborough**, the new peninsular neighborhood on the site of the former Shoreview Apartments.

Sales in October were "lousy," admits David Nelson, broker with The Beach Co., which is developing the community. "All of a sudden (about 45 days ago), the floodgates opened up."

The company sold all but four lots in the 30-unit first phase, then released another 19 more that were gobbled up in a week and a half. A third offering is planned for early spring. Lots range from \$82,000 to \$250,000. "It's your typical downtown lot, 45 to 55 feet wide," he said.

Nelson isn't sure the exact reason for the recent buying binge, but "interest rates are still down." Also, **Longborough** prices - \$380,000 to \$685,000 for 1,600-square-foot to 3,400-square-foot homes - are attractive.

"You get a lot of home compared with other parts of downtown," he said.

Billed as "Charleston's newest 'old neighborhood,'" **Longborough** will include 82 homes in the semicircular, palmetto- and live oak-lined Mary Ellen Drive and environs. The houses, expected to be two stories and a few three stories, are American bungalow design "with a few Charleston single homes thrown in," Nelson said.

"We are trying to keep with what (adjacent neighborhood) Wagener Terrace is," he said.

The company also has space to construct 50 townhomes in the \$200,000 range, although there are no immediate plans to do so, he said.

The single-family houses will all be custom-built or "spec" homes. Contractors include Opus Development, Custom Homes of Carolina, Palladio Homes, JAC 2000 and Integrity Homes. Front

porches, marble-framed fireplaces and detailed woodwork are popular features. Architectural shingle or metal roofs top the homes, which typically include 10-foot ceilings downstairs and 9-foot ceilings on upper levels. The development permits detached garages that are large enough for an efficiency apartment.

Since the homes are custom-designed, buyers can choose from a host of features. Custom Homes of Carolina is finishing up one home that includes Australian cypress floors and splashes of Italian tile and Brazilian cherry, builder A.J. Conger said.

He has a special interest in the project. His grandfather, Lawrence Conger, was the barber for 30 years at the Francis Marion Hotel. One of his regular customers was developer J.C. Long, who founded The Beach Co. and is Longborough's namesake.

"It shows Charleston is a small town," Conger said.

Longborough's chief amenity is its up-close views of scenic marsh and the winding Ashley River. Homeowners do not have direct access to the tributary, but "there is still talk about a common dock" that can be used by the neighborhood residents, Nelson said. The developer also plans to set aside open space for a passive park.

Other attractions: Sidewalks on both sides of the streets make it easy for neighbors to walk or stroll around the community, and granite curbs accent driveways.

Thus far, builders have completed one home and a handful are in various stages of construction. Another dozen home starts are planned shortly.

Early purchasers were specialists at the Medical University of South Carolina or other mature professionals who wanted to reside downtown. In the past few weeks, the community has lured younger families, including the owner of a local restaurant chain.

The project is a long-awaited unveiling of The Beach Co.'s plans for the Shoreview Apartments property. The developer two years ago stirred controversy when it demolished the lower-income complex, leaving residents without a place to live, in order to design the subdivision.

The company muted concerns when it agreed to set aside some of the proposed townhomes as affordable housing.

Longborough can be reached from downtown Charleston by taking Ashley Avenue north to Hampton Park. Travel around the park to Tenth Avenue and make a right. Follow Tenth to the Longborough sign and turn left.

Jim Parker covers real estate and automotive news. Contact him at 937-5542 or [jparker@postandcourier.com](mailto:jparker@postandcourier.com).

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## Charleston City Council approves housing deal

**Author(s):** ADAM FERRELL Of The Post and Courier Staff **Date:** May 26, 2004 **Section:** LOCAL/STATE

The city of Charleston is finishing a deal that will create housing for first-time homebuyers near the Ashley River on the peninsula. City Council approved a plan Tuesday that will allow the city to purchase up to 50 units of multi-family housing that a developer, the Beach Co., should complete in about a year and a half on the site of its residential development in-progress named **Longborough**.

This will close an agreement the city struck with the Beach Co. three years ago after it announced plans to demolish the Shoreview apartment complex as part of a redevelopment scheme.

The residents of the 160 units of low-income housing were evicted and displaced in 2001, but some may purchase these new homes. They'll be contacted at their forwarding addresses and will have the first shots at the properties, according to city attorney Adelaide Andrews.

Under the housing plan, the new units will be sold for \$125 per square foot, which altogether could add up to as much as \$6.25 million.

Ideally, the buyers would purchase the homes directly from the developers through special financing.

The city would purchase however many unsold units remain once they're completed and then sell those to first-time home buyers as well.

The city of Charleston Housing Authority will loan the city \$4.25 million, and the other \$2 million the city might need would come through some city land sales. So it's in the city's best interest to move the new units as quickly as possible.

"Obviously, we'll be working very hard to market these," Mayor Joe Riley said.

The new units are still being designed, and Andrews said the city hopes to create as many as possible, up to \$50,000 square feet worth. Floor plans for what will likely look like townhouses should offer one-, two- and three-bedroom versions, Riley said.

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### **Affordable town houses in final stages of design Charleston hopes to have first-time buyers lined up when homes are ready next year**

**Author(s):** DAVID SLADE Of The Post and Courier Staff **Date:** September 4, 2005 **Section:** LOCAL / STATE

Charleston's \$6.25 million plan to develop affordable housing across the street from the pricey new **Longborough** development, near Wagener Terrace, is taking longer than planned but is in the final stages of design. The plan is part of a 2001 agreement that followed The Beach Co.'s decision to demolish the Shoreview low-income apartment complex and turn the 15-acre site by the Ashley River marsh into **Longborough**, where new homes sell for up to \$700,000.

The agreement called for The Beach Co. to sell the city up to 50,000 square feet of new housing for \$125 per square foot, including the land. The city plans to develop 42 town homes with two or three bedrooms each and sell them to first-time homebuyers at cost, with additional subsidies possible.

The price of a three-bedroom, two-bath, 1,100-square-foot town home, for example, would be \$137,500 without any additional subsidy or financial aid.

A long-term deed restriction would prevent those who buy the homes from selling them for large profits. Future selling prices would be tied to increases in the area's median income, in order to keep the homes affordable.

Permits for the new housing were supposed to have been sought by the end of last year, but the city and the developer are still designing the units.

"We're getting real close," said Kent Johnson, The Beach Co.'s vice president of development for **Longborough**. "The city is designing the units, and it's really their project."

Michael Maher, director of Charleston's Civic Design Center, said the city wants to make sure the units are desirable and integrated into the neighborhood. They also have to be built for the price reached with The Beach Co. more than four years ago.

"It's kind of down to the details," Maher said. "The last set of revisions involved changing some of the bathrooms to have bathtubs instead of showers."

He said the plan calls for 10 buildings, most of which will be comprised of four two-story town homes. All of the buildings will look onto a street, and each unit will have a porch element and gable roof. Two of the buildings will be three stories high, in order to accommodate a ground-floor unit that meets Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

"I think everyone is pretty comfortable with the product," Maher said.



Charleston's Department of Housing and Community Development has been accepting the names of people interested in the **Longborough** homes since last fall.

The department's acting director referred questions about the waiting list for **Longborough** to city spokeswoman Barbara Vaughn, who said there are about 10 names on the list. Attempts to learn how the city will allocate the units if demand exceeds the number available were unsuccessful.

The development is not intended for low-income buyers, who could likely not afford the units, but for middle-class workers who have been priced out of Charleston's housing market. First-time buyers with incomes up to 120 percent of the area median income, which is \$55,900 for a family of four, would qualify.

The city's goal is have pre-qualified buyers ready to buy the units as soon as they are built, likely next year, according to city attorney Adelaide Andrews.

"We talked about hoping to have construction documents in the next couple of months," Andrews said in August. "We're expecting that it will be a smooth review and approval process."

David Slade covers the city of Charleston. Contact him at 937-5552 or at [dslade@postandcourier.com](mailto:dslade@postandcourier.com).

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### Homeownership program focuses on affordability

**Author(s):** DAVID SLADE Of The Post and Courier Staff **Date:** September 23, 2005 **Section:** LOCAL/STATE

LeClair Lighthouse is just the sort of person Charleston officials are talking about when they discuss the need for more housing that working people can afford. Lighthouse is a teacher at a public elementary school who has found herself priced out of Charleston's increasingly unaffordable housing market. She knows how to look for a house - her father is a real estate agent - but everything she's seen is too expensive.

"I am going on my 10th year of teaching and would very much like to buy a house," said Lighthouse, who recently contacted the nonprofit Homeownership Resource Center to learn about Charleston's homeownership initiative.

"I'm 36 years old and I don't want to live in an apartment forever," she said.

The city and its nonprofit partners have been building or renovating homes that will be sold at below-market prices. From 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday, 13 of the 31 available properties will host open houses aimed at attracting buyers and providing information about the initiative.

Orlando Newkirk is a big supporter of the program. The nonprofit group he directs, PASTORS Inc., has built several homes for the city initiative, and Newkirk is in the process of buying a city-renovated home himself.

He said people looking for an affordable home should drop by the new houses built by PASTORS, such as 33 America St., to see the quality construction.

"It's a nice-sized house for a family," Newkirk said of the 1,500-square-foot home, which is listed at \$135,000.

The available houses are scattered around Charleston's East Side neighborhood, and on the West Side north of the Crosstown Expressway. The Homeownership Resource Center also is taking names for a waiting list, for townhouses the city is building near the **Longborough** Development above Wagener Terrace.

Debbie Kidd, director of the center, said people interested in the **Longborough** homes or the houses now on the market need to sign up for the center's free, homebuyer-education course. Credit counseling is available, and the city of Charleston can subsidize the homes for up to \$50,000, depending on income.

When the current houses are gone, more will follow. The city just reached an agreement with the developers of Morris Square that will fund 14 additional houses downtown, and three affordable units at Morris Square.

"We already have more than enough candidates for that one," Kidd said, referring to the waiting list for the yet-to-be-built Morris Square units.

David Slade covers the city of Charleston. Contact him at 937-5552 or at [dslade@postandcourier.com](mailto:dslade@postandcourier.com).

#### HERE'S SOME OF THE FINE PRINT

The houses will be sold to first-time home buyers with incomes that don't exceed 120 percent of the area's median income. Median income varies by family size, and 120 percent of median income is about \$67,000 for a family of four.

City subsidies of up to \$50,000 are available, in order to reduce the prices of the homes to an amount the buyers can qualify to borrow. The subsidies are essentially no-interest loans that the city recoups when the houses are resold.

The houses come with long-term deed restrictions aimed at keeping the properties affordable for generations. Buyers must agree that if they later sell one of the houses, they must sell either to qualified first-time home buyer or sell back to the city, at a price linked to the area's median income.

For more information on affordable housing in Charleston, call the Family Services' Housing Resource Center at 744-1348 ext. 25.

#### PROPERTIES OPEN FOR INSPECTION SATURDAY ARE:

3B Dingle St., 3-bedroom, 2-1/2-bath, 1,434 square feet, \$155,000.

7 Dingle St., 2-bedroom, 1-bath, 750 square feet, \$130,000.

10 Dingle St., 3-bedroom, 2-bath, 1,279 square feet, \$130,000, under construction.

27 Strawberry Lane, 3-bedroom, 2-1/2-bath, 1,434 square feet, \$155,000.

33 America St., 3-bedroom, 2-bath, 1,500 square feet, \$135,000.

1 Sheppard St., 4-bedroom, 2-bath, 1,600 square feet, \$143,139.

109 Harris St., 3-bedroom, 2-bath, 1,262 square feet, \$130,000.

26 Kennedy St., 3-bedroom, 2-bath, 1,262 square feet, \$170,000.

226 President St., 3-bedroom, 2-bath, 1,262 square feet, \$145,000.

72 Lee St., 2-bedroom, 1-bath, 1,033 square feet, \$104,228.

74 Lee St., 3-bedroom, 1-1/2-bath, 1,438 square feet, \$115,000.

3 Drews Court, 2-bedroom, 1-bath, 1,025 square feet, \$125,000.

4 Middleton Court, 2-bedroom, 1-bath, 950 square feet, \$104,228.

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### Affordable housing plans raise questions

**Author(s):** DAVID SLADE The Post and Courier **Date:** November 14, 2005 **Section:** LOCAL & STATE

When the Shoreview low-income apartment complex in Charleston was demolished in 2001 to make way for a pricey new development on the peninsula, the city made a \$6 million deal with the private developer to include dozens of lower-priced homes for first-time buyers. Four years later, the new **Longborough** community in Wagener Terrace is dotted with expensive houses, but ground hasn't been broken on the affordable units, and some recent arrivals to the neighborhood are questioning the project.

The city has long planned to build at least 42 housing units on a 1.6-acre site bounded by 10th Street, Alberta Avenue, Hester Street, and the Ashley River marsh. Last week, however, when City Council moved to approve some zoning changes for the plan, several **Longborough** residents raised concerns.

"I think all of us are for affordable housing, and I'm for as many units as we can fit," said Marlon Kimpson, who worries that the city hasn't planned for enough off-street parking.

Kimpson bought a house in August on **Longborough's** Mary Ellen Drive, where many homes sell for a half-million dollars or more. He said putting 42 homes on a small lot with one parking space each could make it hard for others to find on-street parking.

Several **Longborough** residents echoed Kimpson's parking concerns, and also questioned drainage plans for the site.

Some City Council members reacted defensively, saying the situation reminds them of a controversy on Daniel Island, where some residents oppose plans for a low-income apartment complex. While some **Longborough** residents think the city is trying to put too many homes on the small site, some council members question why there won't be more units.

"If people don't want low- to moderate-income people moving in because they bought \$400,000, \$500,000, or \$600,000 homes, well, I'm sorry," Councilman James Lewis said Tuesday.

"We worked a long time to get here, and this needs to go forward," said Councilman Jimmy Gallant, who noted that 160 low-income families were displaced in order to clear the way for the Beach Company's **Longborough** development. Councilman Paul Tinkler defended residents who raised parking concerns, saying they shouldn't be painted as not-in-my-back-yard opponents of affordable housing.

Charleston's acting planning director, Chris Morgan, said it's common for Wagener Terrace homes to have one parking space, and the city's units at **Longborough** will blend in.

In 2001 the city signed a deal with the Beach Company's Longborough subsidiary to buy up to 50 homes, or 50,000 square feet of finished housing, for \$125 per square foot. The 42 units will total 46,000 square feet.

The homes planned by the city are not low-income housing. They are designed for middle-class working families who can't otherwise afford homes on the peninsula. Housing agencies have said people with low incomes, like former Shoreview residents, won't be able to afford the units.

"I support the plan," Wagener Terrace Neighborhood Association past president Joe Wolfe told City Council. "These plans have been there all along."

The townhouse-style quadruplex units will be 900 to 1,200 square feet, and will be sold to first-time buyers for \$112,500 to \$150,000. The city expects them to be completed in about a year, which is about a year behind the original schedule.

The 10 mostly two-story buildings will be on very small lots, with each facing a street, and each unit having a porch element and gable roof. Two of the buildings will be three stories high, in order to accommodate a ground-floor unit that meets Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Each four-unit building will be roughly the size of one of the single-family homes across Alberta Avenue.

For more information on the city units at Longborough and other affordable housing opportunities in Charleston, call the Family Services' Housing Resource Center at 744-1348 ext. 25.

Contact David Slade at 937-5552 or [dslade@postandcourier.com](mailto:dslade@postandcourier.com).

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## Development celebrated

**Author(s):** DAVID SLADE The Post and Courier **Date:** May 13, 2009 **Section:** LOCAL & STATE

The long-awaited completion of a condominium complex for first-time homeowners was celebrated Tuesday in Charleston, and few people could have been more pleased than Louise Mitchell, who used to live in a rundown housing project nearby. The Cottages at Longborough is a unique city initiative in which a private developer, The Beach Co., agreed in 2001 to build the housing as a part of a plan to redevelop an area north of Hampton Park. The company agreed to sell the condos, located at 10th and Alberta streets, to the city at the low price of \$125 per square foot.

The city is selling the condos to first-time homeowners at cost, with restrictions on future resale prices aimed at allowing the buyers to profit modestly when they sell, while keeping the homes affordable for another generation of first-time buyers.

The deal was made after The Beach Company demolished Shoreview Apartments, a low-income housing project with Ashley River views, in order to develop Longborough, a neighborhood now filled with single-family homes that can sell for prices in the high six figures.

The Cottages condos are modest in size and priced for middle-class families, at \$112,500 to \$150,000. Former Shoreview residents were promised the first chance to buy one, but Shoreview residents had low incomes and few were expected to qualify.

Mitchell turned out to be the only one.

On Tuesday, she proudly gave a tour of her three-bedroom, two-bath condo to reporters and Mayor Joe Riley, and said she had been working three jobs in recent years in order to qualify for the mortgage.

Mitchell and the other buyers are expected to close on their new homes during the next two months.

"I just hung in there and waited," Mitchell said. "I'm proud of me, but I'm a little sad that I'm the only one (from Shoreview) who followed through."

Construction of the new homes was initially due to be finished in 2006. The long delay has turned into a large benefit for the purchasers because the federal stimulus package includes an \$8,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers.

There was no public subsidy involved in the construction of the condos, but the city is giving the buyers \$10,000 each in down-payment assistance.

In October, more than 100 people filled out applications in hopes of getting one of the homes.

The condos are being sold to those who completed the paperwork first.

Mitchell, now a semi-retired senior, said she's looking forward to getting the keys after a lifetime of renting.

"When I move in I'm going to just go from room to room and thank him," she said, casting her eyes skyward.

Reach David Slade at 937-5552 or [dslade@postandcourier.com](mailto:dslade@postandcourier.com).

On the Web: For more information about the Cottages at Longborough project, go to [postandcourier.com](http://postandcourier.com).

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# The Post and Courier

## City pushing bargain condos

David Slade

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Posted: Friday, November 12, 2010 12:01 a.m., Updated: Friday, March 23, 2012 1:11 p.m.



Leroy Bumell / Nine of the Cottages at Longborough condominiums developed for first-time homebuyers by the city of Charleston remain unsold.

When the city of Charleston was developing condominiums in the desirable Wagener Terrace area of the peninsula for first-time homeowners with middle-class incomes, hundreds of people were on a waiting list to buy.

### Previous coverage

**Development celebrated**, published 05/13/09

**Affordable city condos draw dozens of applicants**, published 10/15/08

**Some homes prove hard to sell**, published 04/03/06



Today, nine of the 42 units remain unsold, despite their location, bargain-basement prices and interest rates that are the lowest in many decades.



"A number of persons who wanted to purchase at Longborough were not able to," said Geona Johnson, head of the city's Department of Housing and Community Development. "In most cases, it was due to (problems with) employment."

The city will hold an open house Saturday to try to stir up some interest in the remaining units, which start at \$111,375 for a two-bedroom, two-bathroom condo. With the city using federal grants to kick in \$10,000 toward a down payment, that price would mean a mortgage payment of about \$500 a month, plus a \$251 monthly condo fee that covers flood insurance and maintenance.

## If you go

The Cottages at Longborough open house is 1-5 p.m.

Saturday at Alberta and 10th avenues.

There are nine condos available, mostly three-bedroom units selling for \$140,750.

For information, call Florence Peters at 724-7353.

"This is just an awesome opportunity for someone who thought they could not afford (to buy)," Johnson said.

The condos at Alberta and 10th avenues sit on the edge of Longborough, an upscale development of single-family homes near the Ashley River.

On Thursday afternoon, Cottages at Longborough home-owner Harriet Hall had just returned from a walk to the small public park on the river when she stopped to discuss her experience living there.

"The people have been wonderful," she said. "We know most of the neighbors."

Harriet and her husband Chuck, a retired couple, bought their condo more than a year ago and said they've been pleased with the decision. Harriet Hall said she could understand, though, how some of the city rules and stipulations could keep some buyers away.

Because the development was created for first-time home-owners, buyers must not have owned a home within the past three years. They must have good enough credit to obtain a mortgage, a down payment of at least \$2,500, and must have incomes that fall within federal guidelines, such as a single person earning \$52,200 or less, or couple earning no more than \$59,640.

If the buyer decides in the future to sell the condo, they can sell the home for no more than what they paid plus an increase in value pegged to either the consumer price index or area median income, whichever was higher, and they can sell only to people who meet the buyer

**guidelines.**

For those willing to deal with the red tape and restrictions, it's an opportunity to live a few blocks north of Hampton Park in a neighborhood of quiet streets lined with Live Oaks.

The Beach Company built the Cottages at Longborough as part of a 2001 development agreement with the city, which was partially aimed at quelling public criticism of the company's decision to tear down its Shoreview low-income housing complex and build Longborough in its place. The condos went on the market in the summer of 2009.

The city bought the cottages for an agreed-upon \$125 per square foot and is selling them at cost. Aside from the \$10,000 in down payment assistance, which is a forgivable loan, there are no taxpayer subsidies involved.

The Cottages at Longborough development was a finalist in the national 2009 Urban Land Institute's Jack Kemp Workforce Housing Models of Excellence Awards and a winner of a 2009 South Carolina Housing Achievement Award from the South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority.

With income limits for buyers set at 120 percent of the area median income, potential buyers can earn more than most people in the region and still qualify for the affordable housing.

Reach **David Slade** at 937-5552.



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### **RACIAL SHIFT**

#### **Charleston peninsula's makeup reverses in 30 years, with blacks leaving for suburbs, area becoming two-thirds white**

**Author(s):** DAVID SLADE [dslade@postandcourier.com](mailto:dslade@postandcourier.com) **Date:** March 29, 2011 **Section:** NATION

The racial makeup in the heart of Charleston County's principal city has been reversed in just 30 years, going from roughly two-thirds black in 1980 to two-thirds white in 2010. "It's so obvious, all you have to do is get in your car and drive," said Louise Mitchell, a longtime upper West Side resident and part of what was once the black majority population there.

"It was happening for a long time," Mitchell said. "Then, you wake up one morning and walk outside and say, 'Wow, what is going on?' "

What's going on is the black flight from the Charleston peninsula continued during the past 10 years, while the white population rose sharply, leaving the downtown area with a large white majority for the first time in memory.

The peninsula's population has been falling since the mid-20th century, dropping from more than 70,000 in 1940 to about 32,000 today. But the big change since 1980 has been the large decline in the number of black residents. Every 10 years the Census showed another big loss, with the black population falling by about 5,000 each decade.

Meanwhile, the already much-reduced white population on the peninsula bottomed out in 1980 at 15,134, then started rising, and jumped by more than 4,000 during the past decade.

Gentrification and rising downtown rents, along with a broader national trend of urban black families moving to the suburbs, are believed to have played key roles in the population changes.

Peggyann Godfrey, a retired teacher, watched the neighborhood around her family's house on Rutledge Avenue near Cannon Street change

dramatically.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, college students moved in, popular restaurants opened, property taxes soared as property values increased, and parking became scarce.

"I think that what happened with a lot of blacks in the city was that they rented," Godfrey said. "The house across the street, there were blacks living up and down, and they had to move when the owners decided to do something different."

Downtown City Councilman Robert Mitchell, also a housing counselor for the United Way, said that's certainly what happened.

"A lot of people moved out because of rents and housing costs," he said. "I know a lot of people who moved to the Summerville and Goose Creek areas.

"Some people look at it like other people are moving in and forcing them to move out," said Mitchell, who is not related to Louise Mitchell. "If you can't afford something, you can call that gentrification."

Godfrey owned her home - her parents had bought it 35 years earlier - but by 2005 she was living there alone in a big house with big expenses.

"I thought maybe I can do a little better if I move and get something smaller," she said. "I loved the big house, with the high ceilings, but I was by myself and getting close to retirement."

So Godfrey did what the national Census suggests countless urban blacks decided to do during the past decade: she moved to the suburbs. Now, she lives on a cul-de-sac in the Melrose subdivision in West Ashley.

Godfrey said her new neighborhood is nice, and quiet, but doesn't have the same sense of community she recalls from living downtown.

"Nationally, it's certainly a trend that African-American populations in center cities have been going down," said Tim Keane, director of Charleston's Department of Planning, Preservation and Sustainability. He cites Atlanta, Chicago, Cleveland and St. Louis as examples.

In a counter-trend, whites have been returning to urban centers in large numbers, although the suburbs still get most of the growth. The peninsula's white population shot up by more than 24 percent in the 10 years through 2010.

Keane noted that the city as a whole gained more population than any city or town in the state during the past decade, even as the population on the peninsula declined slightly. Some of the nearly 5,000 black residents who no longer live downtown may still be within the city limits but in West Ashley, or on Johns Island, James Island or the Cainhoy peninsula.

"I think it is part of a trend, that is not unusual in this country, of people at a certain stage in their lives decide to move to the suburbs," Keane said. "Larger yards, more affordable housing, easier parking - all the things that make the suburbs desirable for people."

Dot Scott, president of the Charleston branch of the NAACP, said she was not surprised by the Census numbers, but she said the trend of black residents leaving downtown areas now is quite different from when whites left cities for the suburbs in the 1960s.

"When you had whites going to the suburbs, they chose that because they thought they would have a better quality of life," she said. "I think when you see African-Americans move, it's because of gentrification, and not being able to afford to live there anymore."

There's no doubt that some of the black residents who no longer live on the peninsula did not choose to leave.

Louise Mitchell was among hundreds, for example, who lost their homes when the privately owned Shoreview low-income apartments were demolished by The Beach Co., which built the upscale single-family home development Longborough in Shoreview's place.

The city, in one of many initiatives aimed at creating downtown homes middle-class families could afford, reached an agreement with The Beach Company to build 42 condos for middle-income residents, next to the Longborough development. Former **Shoreview** residents got first dibs on the condos, but Mitchell was the only former **Shoreview** resident to return and buy one, which sold for about \$115,000.

"I think it's about different levels of affluence," she said. "There's some racial in it, too, but that's not the main thing."

"It used to be **Shoreview**, and there was nobody back here but blacks," Mitchell said. "You have to move with the times."

The results of the downtown racial realignment have broad implications for urban planning and political power, and point to the changing face of the suburbs as well as the urban core of the city. The Census results will be used to redraw political boundaries, including Charleston City Council districts.

The last time district lines were redrawn, the city went from six black-majority council seats to five, and with the Census that number could drop again.

Robert Mitchell lost his seat after the last redistricting, when his district was merged with another, then later returned to the council. He said he'd be surprised if the city doesn't lose another black-majority seat after this Census.

But ultimately, he said, voters will decide if black or white really matters.

"You can have a majority white district and still win," he said, "if people look at a council member and see that he's working for the betterment of the whole community."

Reach David Slade at 937-5552.

Read more

For more coverage about the 2010 census and its impact on the Lowcountry, go to [postandcourier.com/census](http://postandcourier.com/census).

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