



Western North Carolina
Community Health Services

January 25, 2021

Asheville City Council
70 Court Plaza
Asheville, NC 28801

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of Western North Carolina Community Health Services, WNCCHS, I write to express our support and endorsement of the proposal for deeply affordable housing on Asheland Avenue envisioned by the Haywood Street Community Development Corporation.

WNCCHS has served Buncombe County since 1995 and has worked with our patients through a variety of housing programs since the beginning. We understand how stable housing impacts both physical and mental health outcomes of our patients. WNCCHS serves approximately 3,221 homeless individuals ranging from under one to over 85. 2,625 fall below 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines which makes affordable housing unattainable for many.

Housing instability affects health outcomes and increases morbidity and mortality of the those who are homeless. WNCCHS has partnered with Haywood Respite since 2015 working with our primary care providers, disability, and care coordination in providing services to individuals at the respite. The proximity of HSCD will enable WNCCHS to continue to care for our homeless friends.

We are aware of the urgent need for all forms of affordable housing in general, and deeply affordable housing in particular, in our community. We are familiar with the plans of HSCD to fill some of that unmet need by constructing 42 deeply affordable apartments on a lot on Asheland Avenue currently owned by the City of Asheville.

We support this project because more deeply affordable housing options are needed in Asheville and this location would be very convenient for lower income people who need to live near the city center to access essential services. We also note the following more specific reasons:

- The Bowen Report underscored the significant deficit in housing available to those at the lowest AMI levels, including that 90% of subsidized housing operates with a waiting list, and that there is no availability of affordable housing units in our city.
- Housing like that envisioned on the Asheland Avenue property is essential to address the unmet needs of those living in poverty in our community. In particular, we endorse the vision of HSCD to provide housing “designed with dignity, built for belonging, and created to frustrate poverty.”

- The plan allows for community meeting space and engagement with community partners to address needs such as access to food, legal services, health care, mental health services, and other critical support.

We support and endorse this project and appreciate Council's consideration of the many ways it will address the critical need for housing in our community. Should you have any questions or concerns, please be in touch.

Sincerely,



Kim Wagenaar, MSN, CEO
Western North Carolina Community Health Services
257 Biltmore Ave
Asheville, NC 28801