

Bishop's Committee on Affordable Housing: Preserve Homeownership

Protect homeowners from losing homes to deterioration or financial distress.

Homeownership provides stability and can build generational wealth, but low-income homeowners can face financial and safety risks as they struggle to maintain their homes.

Property Tax Relief

Homeowners may be unable to pay substantial increases in property taxes when luxury residential or commercial development significantly increases property values in the surrounding neighborhood. Already pressured to sell their homes to make way for high-end development, they cannot afford to move or to stay in their own communities.

Churches and nonprofit organizations can work together for property tax relief policies and can raise funds to assist with a portion of the tax bill increase.

Keeping people in their homes and neighborhoods allows them to pass assets to future generations, preserves community, and fosters relationships across economic circumstances.

Predatory homebuying business practices

Homeowners receive dozens of phone calls and mailings about selling their properties, frequently from businesses offering immediate cash with no need for repairs. Homeowners with high debts, deferred maintenance, and limited income sometimes respond to the solicitations and get locked into sales contracts without an opportunity to fully understand the terms.

Churches can alert their members and communities of the risks and assist them with factual information about other ways to resolve their financial difficulties, including legal counsel. When selling their homes are the best option, churches can recommend seeking reputable real estate professionals.

Warmer Safer Drier

When homeowners are no longer able to physically and financially maintain their homes, churches volunteer to make necessary repairs and safety modifications. Insulation, ramps, roof and plumbing repairs make it possible for aging homeowners and people with disabilities to safely live in their own homes. The relationships and hope that grow out of hammering and caulking are life-changing for both homeowners and volunteers.

Churches partner with their local Habitat for Humanity, repair nonprofits like Community Housing Solutions, and mission trips to Glory Ridge to make homes warmer, safer, and drier.

Reverse Mortgages

Reverse Mortgages are a financial tool that enable older adult homeowners (62 years or older) to access the equity in their homes to supplement their income or possibly pay off their outstanding home mortgage. While this is a good option for some older homeowners, it is not for everyone. Churches can encourage members to learn more before signing up.

North Carolina law requires that reverse mortgage lenders must be licensed by the North Carolina Commissioner of Banks and that borrowers must have a certificate of counseling by an independent certified counselor working in a HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) approved Housing counseling agency prior to loan closing. Counseling is required to help borrowers better understand other community public and private nonprofit programs and resources that may be available to assist them. Also, it can clarify questions regarding a reverse mortgage and practices by some lenders that may be considered predatory.