

Tackling Affordable Housing in the Bay

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2 min read August 2019 — Growth in the Tampa Bay region has been twofold, with a significant boom in the economy and the population. As the population grows so does the need for more affordable housing options in the region. While there has been a notable increase in the development of luxury apartments and multifamily units, which are popping up all over Downtown, there is a notable deficit of affordable housing options. Mayor Jane Castor, her administration and community organizations like the **Tampa Housing Authority** recognize that they must work together to find- a solution for this problem.

Since her election in April, Mayor Castor has identified access to affordable housing solutions as one of her top priorities, as noted when she spoke with *Invest.* “In reality, the most pressing issues in our community are transportation, affordable housing and workforce development.” She has since taken action to address the housing issue with the recent formation of the Affordable Housing Advisory Team as part of her “Transforming Tampa’s Tomorrow” transition. The role of the advisory team will be to ensure home ownership for all residents in Tampa regardless of economic status. It will be one of five advisory teams guiding the mayor’s strategic vision for addressing key issues in Tampa Bay.

One of the members of the Affordable Housing Advisory Team is Leroy Moore, the senior vice resident and chief operating officer for the Tampa Housing Authority. The Authority is not only focused on providing housing assistance to low-income residents. Its role has evolved over the years to better address the affordable housing issue in the region. *Invest.* recently spoke with Moore, who discussed how the Authority is addressing this need. “The Housing Authority has evolved to not only manage affordable housing, but also to redevelop this housing into real estate that functions as more than just a roof over someone’s head. We consistently ask ourselves what else does a community need? A community needs jobs, quality food and transportation accessibility, which brings in the need for collaboration with transportation agencies in the region. We can meet the needs of the community by developing housing, especially affordable and attainable housing, around accessible transit options. Great transit translates into better housing costs.”

The Authority’s actions to tackle affordable housing include the redevelopment of a 28-acre superblock of public housing that will be known as the Encore District. In his discussion with *Invest.*, *Moore spoke* about the Authority’s approach to this development and how it differs from the original construction., “Seventy-five years ago, the Tampa Housing Authority developed a 28-acre superblock of public housing on the doorstep of what is now Downtown. Seventy-five years later, we are redeveloping that site and realizing that its potential today is far greater than what was ever imagined back then. Instead of just having a 28-acre single-use affordable housing community, we now have 12 city blocks of diverse development called the Encore District.” He continued: “Encore will be a LEED Gold neighborhood development community. All the buildings have a commitment to be LEED Silver or higher. We replaced the affordable and workforce housing and increased the number of affordable units on that exact same footprint. We are also adding other uses like hotels, museums, schools, market-rate housing and grocery stores all within the same 28-acre area.”

The need for more affordable housing is not an issue that will resolve itself and will only continue to manifest into a larger challenge as the population in Tampa Bay grows. The solution is not clear-cut, but community leaders like Mayor Castor and Moore are working to find actionable answers.

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