

County leaders discuss lack of housing options

BY SARAH HANCOX
STAFF WRITER

With the issue of affordable housing more pressing than ever, the Orange County Human Relations Commission kicked off Human Relations Month with a forum on affordable housing Sunday.

The panel addressed many challenges and potential solutions to the issue.

Orange County Commissioner Margaret Brown stated the matter simply when she said, "It's expensive to live in this county."

An affordable house is defined as a dwelling that does not cost more than 30 percent of the monthly income of the persons and families living there.

The average sales price for new and existing homes in Orange County in 2003 was \$264,229. In order to afford a rental property, one must have an income of at least \$15.37 per hour — almost \$4 higher than the rental housing wage for the rest of the state.

Chris Estes, executive director of the North Carolina Low Income Housing Coalition, said higher prices came as the town became a more desirable location.

"I came to Chapel Hill in 1983 as a freshman at UNC," he said. "When (Interstate) 40 was completed, Chapel Hill became more accessible to surrounding areas, and everyone started moving here."

But Chapel Hill's popularity has made it harder for developers to create affordable housing and still profit.

Bonnie Gates, a realtor with Orange Realty and a contractor, said developers profit more from building homes in the \$170,000 range than the \$120,000 range.

"Developers need incentives to build affordable housing."

But Brown was quick to point out the work that has been done to create less expensive housing. Since 1988, a total of 1,205 affordable housing units either have been built or created out of existing housing.

Estes said good design was key to creating attractive, affordable places to live. "A shortcoming of many federal programs is they create concentrations of poverty, are poorly designed, are isolated from services, jobs, shopping areas and schools."

Robert Dowling, executive director of Orange Community Housing and Land Trust, said he is particularly concerned about people forced to commute from outside the county because of the high cost of living.

"When people can't afford to live in this county it is creating clogged roads with people commuting and polluted air," he said. "This is no longer a problem just for 'poor' people. It's a problem for 'normal' people too."

Dowling says part of the problem of affordable housing is that it eventually becomes unaffordable as homes change hands. The land trust, created in 1999, was designed to sell homes while keeping them affordable by retaining the title to the home. Buyers are required to live in the house, and if they decide to sell it, it must be at a price set by a formula in the contract.

The policy is designed so that the property will remain affordable for 99 years.

The Chapel Hill Town Council approved a policy that requires developers to put 15 percent of their new homes in the land trust.

Contact the City Editor
at citydesk@unc.edu.

Vendors shower Inn with bridal fare

BY KRISTEN WILLIAMS
ASSISTANT FEATURES EDITOR

Hundreds of future brides, in-laws and families swarmed the Carolina Inn on Sunday for their Bridal Fair 2004.

Sponsored by the Inn, The Chapel Hill Herald and Traditions of Chapel Hill, the event presented a wide array of vendors for families and husbands- and wives-to-be to peruse as they chomped on hors d'oeuvres and wedding cake, washed down with champagne served by the wandering Inn staff.

Each of the rooms featured various vendors from Chapel Hill and surrounding areas, including Hillsborough. Court Square Shops, located in historic downtown Hillsborough, provided a jewelry display and has had a spot at the fair for the past few years.

Manning the table was Rebecca Manuel who has been in her business for years and enjoys supplying brides and other customers with the store's array of "invitations, accessories, antiques, home decor and gorgeous jewelry."

"I've been doing this for 21 years, and I just love it — it keeps me on a high," Manuel said. "I never get tired (of it), it's a part of me."

While each business vied for customers from the crowd, Holly Bretschneider from Salutations in Meadowmont Village said that her store was "distinct," and cited the "friendly personnel" as a reason.

Salutations offered a wide variety of invitations on its table, which was decorated with polka dots, bows and floral arrangements. Prominently placed on display were different bridal kits, including the Crafty Girls Keepsake Kit, which was featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show, Bretschneider said.

Nestled among the vendors were various tables arranged in wedding regalia, each boasting a unique and beautiful wedding look. Couples and brides stopped to gaze, some even taking pictures, to garner ideas or company names.

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DTH/KATHY SHUPING

Hayley Wood, Rebecca Ross and Alyson Bobbitt (left to right), employees of Traditions of Chapel Hill, model bridal gowns at the Carolina Inn's Bridal Fair 2004 on Sunday. Hundreds of people attended the event.

Shelly Rhodes and her mother, Lucy, were just two of the patrons who paused to look at the tables.

"We came just to see what was going on and get any new ideas," said Shelly Rhodes, a 1996 UNC graduate in business. While the fair offered ideas for Shelly Rhodes and her mother, her fiancé chose not to come to the fair because "today's Super Bowl Sunday."

"He's coming for the wedding, and that's it," Lucy Rhodes said.

Unlike Shelly Rhodes' fiancé, Kimberly Judge's groom Norman Sandridge accompanied his fiancée to the fair, citing his attendance as a "token of devotion."

"He's very good about it, it's the third one we've been to," Judge said.

"We came to find out things to get — invitations, transportation, music," Sandridge said. "And free food."

While many of the vendors were inside various ballrooms and halls, the hallways connecting the crowd from one display to another also boasted wedding options. Pat Jingoian from Twigs & Sprigs placed a re-creation of the wedding from the reality show "The Bachelorette" in the hallway outside the Inn's Hill Ballroom.

Twigs & Sprigs has held the same location for the past 3 years and this year decided to re-create the pink wedding aisle setup used in the television wedding of Trista Rehn and Ryan Sutter.

"The wedding brought in 13 million viewers, and I thought people would like to see it recreated, and pink is in," Jingoian said. "I like to re-create something whimsical and magical, so we didn't use a booth."

Wedding mania took over the Inn, with more than 50 vendors

showcasing their stores' talents. Many of the guests are holding their weddings at the Inn, with help from Amy Hammond, the social catering manager and wedding specialist for the Inn.

"The fair is a great opportunity for area brides to visit with area vendors and see the Inn dressed to the nines," Hammond said.

While many choose to marry in their hometowns or exotic destinations, some UNC alumni might choose to hold their special day where they spent their college years or even met their future spouse.

"The University and the Inn go hand in hand," Hammond said.

"With a wedding at the Inn, you can share your college years with your family."

Contact the Features Editor
at features@unc.edu.

DTH to host SBP forum

STAFF REPORT

The Daily Tar Heel will host a forum for student body president candidates at 8 p.m. Tuesday in 209 Manning Hall.

The DTH editorial board will endorse a candidate for student body president, but the board will do so primarily based on interviews with the candidates.

The board will not endorse at

the forum, which is being conducted by the news side of the paper.

The forum will be open to the public, and audience members will be given an opportunity to question candidates.

Audience questions will be limited, so feel free to e-mail questions beforehand to Elyse Ashburn at eashburn@email.unc.edu.

The Kaplan-Brauer Lecture on the Contribution of Judaism

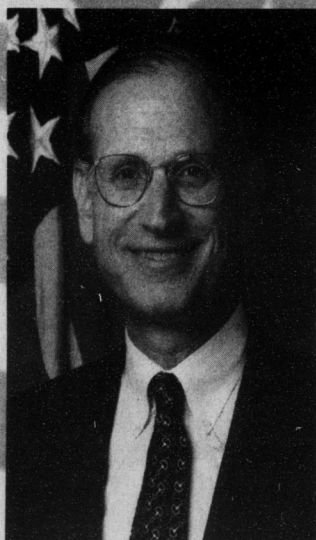
"IMPERFECT JUSTICE:

LOOTED ASSETS, SLAVE LABOR AND THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF WORLD WAR II"

A discussion of the political and ethical issues raised by the legal and diplomatic efforts to acquire over \$8 billion in Holocaust-related compensation from Swiss, German, Austrian and French companies.

Introduction by Eli N. Evans ('58)

Stuart Eizenstat ('64)



Former Deputy Secretary
of the Treasury
Ambassador to the
European Union
Expert on Holocaust
Restitution
Author of Imperfect Justice

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Costs put prepaid tuition in peril

BY AMY THOMSON
STAFF WRITER

Prepaid tuition plans, offered by about 20 states and complemented by a 1996 federal law, were heralded as a convenient way for families to make college more affordable.

But as tuition at state universities has skyrocketed, some state governments are finding the programs increasingly difficult to fund. Others have shut them down entirely.

Although they vary, most prepaid programs allow parents essentially to buy stock in a state university, purchasing a percentage of tuition or tuition for a certain number of years until the student is ready to attend college. As tuition rates for the university change, so does the value of the tuition certificate.

Joan Marshall, executive director of College Savings Plan of Maryland, said the state's prepaid tuition planners foresaw that tuition would continue to increase and set aside reserves accordingly.

But Maryland's reserves ran out two years ago.

Marshall said that while this is

cause for concern, Maryland can continue covering plans until the year 2020 at current rates. There is no discussion of ending the plan, which she calls a boon for about 1,000 students in college now.

Colorado, a state that discontinued its prepaid plan, did so because the program went so far into the red that it couldn't accept new participants.

Other states that have had to discontinue enrollment in their plans, Marshall said, have had to do so because of extenuating circumstances.

Texas' Guaranteed Tuition Plan was discontinued after the state legislature gave the power to set state tuition rates to individual colleges.

Marshall said the real problem is soaring tuition prices, not the planning of the prepaid tuition programs.

Many states might have to stop the plans because of the rates, although students and families who already have locked into the plans will be covered.

Some states chose to rely on other college savings programs written into the same legislation

that allows tax free savings for college and gives more flexibility if a student opts not to attend college or goes to an out-of-state school.

North Carolina decided against offering prepaid tuition plans.

"It does lock a family into only certain institutions," said Shera Hube, vice president of marketing, savings and student services for the N.C. College Foundation.

Instead, she said North Carolina offers a variety of investment and tax-free savings plans. Varying in aggressiveness and risks, Hube said, the plans give families a choice and may be used at any institution in the nation.

While none of the plans guarantee that a family will have enough money to cover tuition, Hube said, the state tries to accommodate lower income families when tuition increases.

"North Carolina is doing a very good job of ... increasing financial assistance as tuition is going up," Hube said. "Certainly tuition increases are a concern for all families."

Contact the State & National
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