

Willamette West Habitat for Humanity helps city councilors look four years and 40 townhomes ahead in Beaverton

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The local Habitat for Humanity aims to build 40 affordable townhome units for Beaverton families in the next four years or so, a representative told the Beaverton City Council Tuesday evening.

Mark Forker, executive director of Willamette West Habitat for Humanity, gave an update of the nonprofit's work in Beaverton during the council's regular Tuesday evening meeting.

Willamette West has been in the region for 25 years and has built 86 homes in that time, 10 of them in Beaverton, according to city documents.

The nonprofit, one of 32 Habitat affiliates in Oregon, collects funds and donated building supplies to construct homes with volunteer labor. Low-income families looking to purchase the home put in "sweat equity," working a total of 500 hours on building their home or otherwise volunteering with Habitat. The organization then finances a zero-interest home loan for the family, Forker said.

"We don't give away houses, and we don't give away money," he said.

Two projects are underway or pending in Beaverton: Allen Estates and Denney Gardens. Both were originally slated for development by private for-profit developers that dropped the projects several years ago. Habitat scooped them up and now owns 40 residential lots for future home construction in Beaverton.

"I think these two sites will keep us busy for probably four years," Forker told the council. "So we'll be in Beaverton for a while, and we think you should be really happy about that."

The city approved design plans for Allen Estates, located in Beaverton's Vose Neighborhood, in July. Beaverton citizen Henry Kane appealed the approval before the Planning Commission on Sept. 4, arguing that the design review was not thorough enough and that there should have been a formal public hearing prior to the city's decision. Planning Commissioners denied Kane's appeal and upheld the approved designs.

Along with the plans to build 24 townhome units at Allen Estates and 16 units at Denney Gardens, Willamette West Habitat for Humanity is working on several other programs. One program, "A Brush with Kindness," provides painting and minor repair services for current homeowners. More major repairs for low-income families, disabled seniors and other qualifying individuals can be financed with zero-interest loans through Habitat programs, as well, Forker said.

Beaverton city councilors commended Habitat's efforts in the city.

—Kari Bray