

Guest essay: Don't make salary sole factor for housing

<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/glencoe/news/forum/1664164.glencoe-essay-071609-s1.article>

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Kudos to the Village of Glencoe for looking into ways this small community could add to its stock of housing for people of modest means. There is a lot of confusion about what "affordable housing" is and how much of it Glencoe is required to have under state law.

To clarify, "affordable housing" is defined by the state of Illinois according to family size, and is based on the median income in the Chicago metropolitan area. For example, a family of four earning \$60,300 would qualify for this housing. This would be a house priced between \$167,000 and \$201,000.

What type of family would qualify for this? The families that would be best suited for "affordable housing" in Glencoe would be part of the local work force. For example, this could be a family composed of a child care worker and a licensed practical nurse. Also, many other young professionals in fields ranging from divinity to education to engineering may fall into this category and they may also want to raise their family in Glencoe and eventually move into a different home when their income grows. Many other people may have grown up in Glencoe, but can not afford to return to live here because it is too expensive. Building "affordable housing" would allow families to start their lives in Glencoe and become strong contributing members to the community.

Just because people cannot afford market rate units does not mean that they don't contribute to Glencoe's social and economic vitality. In fact, they make for a richer and more inviting community. They work hard too, and far from "getting something for nothing," they are exchanging the right to market appreciation for the privilege of living in Glencoe.

The cost to the taxpayer is practically nil because the number of units is so small and the costs will be borne largely by the developer. No, Glencoe is not obligated to create 300 units. It need only capture a portion of units in multi-unit buildings which would have been created anyway as affordable. The state of Illinois does not penalize communities that don't hit 10 percent affordable housing. The state is simply looking for evidence of progress.

Finally, this housing may be a benefit for other residents of Glencoe who suffered life changes. Perhaps they have become disabled and unable to work; therefore they may have to move. Maybe a spouse passes away and they can't afford their current living situation this could allow those members to remain in the community they know and love.

Let's remember that that size of a person's salary does not make them a contributing citizen. "Affordable housing" can help bring in new community members, bring back former community members, and protect current neighbors. And yes, it can even increase property values.

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