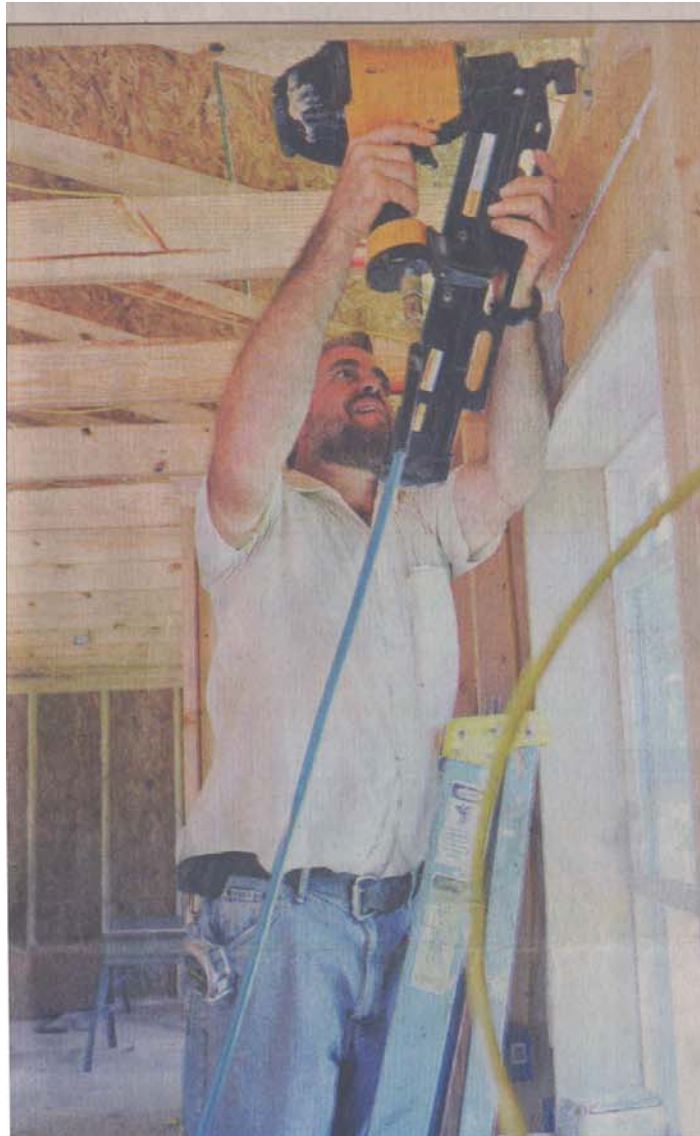


Fauquier Times-Democrat

Article on FHC- June 11, 2010



LET IT BLOW: Tim Miller attaches hurricane straps to the rafters of a house that Foothills Housing Coalition is building in Turnbull, a replacement for an existing home.

Housing coalition looks to future

By BILL WALSH
Times-Democrat Staff Writer

So much accomplished, so much left to do.

Even in a county as well-to-do as Fauquier, there are still more than 350 homes that lack running water and indoor plumbing, Chris Moyles said last week.

That astonishing number follows 40 years of rehabilitative effort by the non-profit Fauquier Housing Corporation, recently renamed Foothills

Housing Coalition for which Moyles serves as executive director.

The organization now does work in six counties — Fauquier, Page, Rappahannock, Madison, Orange and Culpeper.

Under its previous name, Foothills Housing Coalition has done its part to forward the cause of affordable housing in Fauquier and the other five counties of its service area.

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DETAILS

- Name: Chris Moyles
- Age: 36
- Education: St. Andrews College, Laurinburg, N.C., B.A. in ethnomusicology.
- Home: Rappahannock County



COALITION COORDINATOR: Chris Moyles has worked for Foothills Housing Coalition for nine years, three as executive director.

Times-Democrat Staff Photos/Randy Litzinger



Times-Democrat Staff Photo/Randy Litzinger

OUT WITH THE OLD...: When the FHC house under construction in Turnbull is complete, the one it is replacing, right, will be demolished.

HOUSING

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The work includes providing water and plumbing to homeowners in need under its Indoor Plumbing and Repair Program; fixing damaged houses under its Emergency Home Repair Program; building and managing workforce housing in The Plains and housing for the elderly at The Oaks and The Oaks II; and working with the county government on its recently launched Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

But he'd rather look forward than backward, Moyles said, and he is much more excited by the coalition's more recent work in energy efficiency.

"Last year, we started doing our design work to be much more sustainable," Moyles said last week. "We took some building classes with the folks at Earthcraft, and we have a good consultant from Commonwealth Sustainability Works. What we

are trying to do is be affordably efficient."

That eliminates solar panels and other high-tech, high-dollar items. When money is a consideration, "energy efficiency is about sealing houses up, making them airtight and getting the proper number of air exchanges," Moyles said.

Foothills Housing Coalition's new model is about 30 percent more energy efficient than the old. And it doesn't cost a lot; the energy improvement comes at a cost increase of about two percent.

"The efficiency work is caulking, it's proper insulation, it's sealing around drainpipes. It's not high technology," Moyles said.

"This is great, because we can tell our clients pretty much what they are going to pay in utility bills when we do the work," he said.

FHC sets up zero-interest revolving loans for qualifying homeowners. There currently is a backlog of 14 houses, just within Warrenton town limits, that are eligible.

Going forward, Moyles and FHC's half-dozen or so full- and part-time employees are interested in promoting sustainability when it comes to

affordable housing.

Not only in energy efficiency, but also when it comes to siting their work and incorporating affordable and workforce housing into the larger scheme of things.

"Some years ago, we helped build 17 units in Botha with Habitat for Humanity," Moyles begins by way of explanation.

"That was before we understood or thought about the larger picture of sustainable life for those folks. There are no services out there. When we built those and got those folks in, it was like we put them away," he said.

Developers, then and now, are in the habit of proffering space for affordable housing to municipalities in exchange for greater densities, Moyles said. More often than not, that isn't going to work.

Back when residential building was still booming, "there were six or eight of these developments that were trying to get higher density, so they would come and talk to us about what they could do," in terms of their proffers, Moyles said.

"We'd say, OK, that's great, but we don't want your lots because they are not affordable, they are not sustainable, they are not for someone getting their first house. Pay us, and then we can buy property in a more urban area. Not one of those proffers ever went through," he said.

"Our push now is for sustainability. If you are going to do a new commercial center, make it mixed use. Put apartments upstairs. That's something that we are going to work on more, to try to find and show municipalities modes of design that work."

In parts of the country, particularly in New England, planners are doing some interesting things with accessory dwelling units (ADU), sometimes called mother-in-law suites, Moyles said.

"The way the economy is and the way folks are living now, the family is condensing again. The percentage of people coming home after college is crazy. The nuclear family model is changing, and ADUs are great."

Building accessory dwelling units in Fauquier is...difficult.

"Fauquier is very unique," Moyles said, "because we do have density, but we also have this rural landscape, which

everyone loves, and we also still have viable agriculture functioning in the county. Those things are important, and how we can keep the balance of commercial and residential and industrial space intact here is

very important."

The only way to do it, he added, is to "take the assets we have here and look at them in a new light. We have to start looking at housing as part of a larger picture."