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AFFORDABLE HOUSING ENHANCES COMMUNITY

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By Murray O. Duggins

Fayetteville
I am the developer of the Longview Green Apartments being built in north Fayetteville.

These apartments have been the subject of considerable controversy, perpetuated by the myth that affordable housing devalues property and brings crime.

Private ownership of affordable housing should not be confused with public housing, which is designed for those with very low incomes and is managed by public housing authorities.

Private ownership of affordable housing offers many advantages. Properties are well landscaped, offer great curb appeal, blend into the community and pay full property taxes (\$25,000 on Longview). Competent, experienced management helps maintain good tenants by strict enforcement of leases, rules and regulations, plus quarterly inspections to assure the proper upkeep of all units. Developers of affordable housing must be experienced, financially stable, and willing to stand behind the development. Studies have shown that good, well designed, upscale affordable housing actually increases property values. Longview Green was selected by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency as one of the top developments in the state in 1997. It is considered state-of-the-art and a model for the future. Longview Green will have 48 two-bedroom units with 830 square feet and is designed for small working families and the elderly. Forty percent of our units are occupied by elderly tenants. Rents are from \$279 to \$379 per month for families with incomes up to \$22,000. Exteriors will be brick. There will be upscale landscaping, a playground, centipede sod and a sprinkler system.

As the fourth largest Metro in North Carolina, we should be committed to affordable housing. There are more than 4,000 families in Cumberland County in need of affordable housing. All other North Carolina cities highly promote affordable housing. Less than 2 percent of the \$1 billion expended on affordable housing in North Carolina in the last 10 years has been spent in Cumberland County. We must be committed to fair housing opportunities by promoting the welfare of all citizens.

Probably the greatest tragedy in this situation is the damage done to the future tenants of

Longview Green Apartments, who have been labeled as undesirable.

After enduring two public hearings and an appearance before the Fayetteville Redevelopment Committee on Longview Green and after having received an affirmative eight-to-one approval vote from the City Council, the Longview neighborhood continues to disseminate inaccurate, ambiguous and prejudicial information. I want to applaud the council for taking the time to separate the facts from the myth. I am grateful I've been given the opportunity to inform the City Council and citizens of Fayetteville about the need and desirability of good affordable housing. It is an integral part of the growth of any community and I am proud to provide good housing for all citizens.

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