

## **A New Strategy for Affordable Housing For a New Class of Developers. Maybe You?**

ASHEVILLE, NC -- In just about every urban neighborhood built before World War II, there was an option for renting we don't see much of anymore: duplexes and small apartment buildings and bungalow courts, sometimes in the same block as single-family homes and located close to just about everything families needed.

Wouldn't it be great if that was a choice for renters again? And even better if there was a chance for local folks to build them and earn the revenue for adding to neighborhood housing options?

Jim Kumon of the non-profit Incremental Development Alliance is coming to Asheville to talk about helping wannabe developers do exactly that.

Kumon's free presentation will be at the US Cellular Center in Downtown Asheville, September 11, at 5:30-7:30 p.m. He'll be explaining the Alliance's approach and inviting attendees to an all-day workshop a month later, on October 11, also at the US Cellular Center. A coalition of sponsors, from the City of Asheville to the regional associations of realtors and builders and to financial institutions, are helping to offset fees and expenses for the events and to provide scholarships to the \$200-per-person workshop for some who might otherwise be unable to attend.

The Alliance's training has a couple key ambitions. The most obvious one is to expand the range of housing, especially the types of small-scale rental housing that went missing in the era of suburban sprawl.

Before the mid-20th century in most older cities, including Asheville and nearby towns in western North Carolina, there were duplexes, triplexes, bungalow courts, and four-unit apartment buildings offering housing options in close-in neighborhoods. Some remain, but few new versions have been built. That's because the car changed everything, including the ways we organized the landscape. Distance became less of a factor in family choices. So Americans spread out. And that middle level of rental housing all but disappeared. In the last few decades, if you wanted to rent a new place, your choices pretty much narrowed to high-rises in the urban core and garden apartments in the burbs.

The designers, planners, builders, and developers in the Incremental Development Alliance are determined to help restore the "missing middle." And because we're talking about a smaller scale for both the building footprint and for the interior size of the units, they're more likely to serve community affordability goals than large-lot, single-family homes. That's especially true if the new units are in places where choices for getting around include walking or biking or taking transit in addition to driving cars.

The other goal of the training is to create real estate income opportunities for people who don't have to figure out ways to finance, build, and manage multimillion-dollar projects. Again, scale helps. Smaller projects, less heavy lifting when it comes to raising the bucks and overseeing the construction and management of the buildings.

Of course, teaching wannabe developers how to recreate components of rental housing in short supply won't solve all of a community's affordable housing challenges. But expanding the pool of housing and of developer/builders at every scale puts more tools in the toolbox of affordability —with the added advantage of providing income for a new class of developers. Maybe in their own neighborhoods.

The best way to learn more? Come to the free presentation by Jim Kumon on September 11 in Asheville.

Find out more about the Incremental Development Alliance here: <http://www.incrementaldevelopment.org>  
And info about the October 11 all-day workshop here: <http://bit.ly/2N00e7z>

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