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Marcia Webster retiring from Davidson Housing Coalition after decades of service

DAVIDSON, N.C. -- Marcia Webster, who has championed the cause of affordable housing in one of North Carolina's most expensive real estate markets for a quarter-century, announced Wednesday that she will be retiring early next spring as executive director of the Davidson Housing Coalition.

Webster has been associated with the organization since it began in 1996 to help the Town of Davidson address concern that gentrification and rising property values were pricing many people out of the local housing market. Under her watch, more than 70 affordable rental units have been developed in the town to serve a diverse range of clients who earn 80 percent or less of the area median income. Most clients are locally employed at service jobs, Davidson College or other businesses, are retired military or disabled.

None of the other five satellite towns of Charlotte have such a program.

Webster also oversaw the development of the HAMMERS program, which provides emergency home repairs to low-income residents of Davidson, Cornelius, Huntersville and Mooresville. More than 100 households have been served.

Under Webster, the DHC also developed pro-bono programs to connect local residents with jobs and in 2012 launched a homebuyer education program that has placed more than 150 families in Davidson homes.

"Growing up in High Point in the 1950s and '60s, I was uncomfortable with the disparity between the privileged and the poor," Webster says. "I've never lost that feeling and it gave me the impetus to love the work we do."

DHC's innovative 32-unit Bungalows project, opened on Jetton Street in 2000 during Webster's tenure, has received national recognition from key organizations, including the Maxwell Award of Excellence by the Fannie-Mae Foundation, the Best Small City Development Award by the NC Housing Finance Agency, and the Partnership Award by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta.

It established DHC's template for creating affordable units that blend in seamlessly with their surrounding neighborhoods. Webster has led jitney-bus tours for a decade of the DHC properties to demonstrate the program's achievements.

"One thing that always touched me was to see people who were not considered supporters of affordable housing come around on what we've done," Webster says. "It

changed their understanding of what affordable housing is and the benefits it brings to our community."

Webster, a native of High Point, attended Queens College (now Queens University) in Charlotte, is an elder at Davidson College Presbyterian Church, co-chair of the social justice committee and former chair of the church's community missions committee. She has also chaired the Lake Norman Community Development Council and served on the Lake Norman United Way board of directors.

"Few people in our area have had the impact that Marcia, through her dogged determination, has brought to the social consciousness of Davidson," said Mark Washburn, DHC board chair. "She has served our community in so many roles through the decades."

A search committee will be formed and start work in October to find Webster's successor. Webster plans to step down in April 2021 after her 25th anniversary with the DHC.

DHC is located at 220-A Sloan St. in Davidson. For more information, www.davidsonhousing.org.