

Southwood Redevelopment Frequently Asked Questions

What is Habitat's relationship to the Southwood Mobile Home Park?

Habitat for Humanity is supporting the redevelopment of the Southwood Mobile Park as the non profit owner, developer, and property manager. Habitat purchased the park in 2007 to prevent massive and catastrophic resident displacement and has invested more than \$25M to stabilize operations ever since. Long term, Habitat's goal is to turn over complete ownership to the residents themselves in a redeveloped community of sustainable, permanent housing. [Read more](#) about the story of how and why Habitat purchased Southwood in 2007.



Aerial view of 315 homes in Southwood

Does Habitat have staff working in Southwood?

Habitat has two teams of staff working out of Southwood; four Community Engagement and three Property Management staff. Staff are available to help residents with any questions or concerns they have about redevelopment, property management or other issues or challenges they face. Email southwood@cvillehabitat.org or call 434-202-0805.

Why is Habitat pursuing redevelopment in Southwood?

Redevelopment of Southwood is addressing the results of decades of neglect. The underground

infrastructure is failing and the mobile homes are unsustainable, declining or even negative assets. Additionally, intense redevelopment pressure in 2007 put the residents of Southwood in significant harm's way. The mobile home park was for sale and, had Habitat not stepped in, close to 1,500 of our most vulnerable neighbors would have been displaced. This challenge is epidemic. Approximately 20 million people live in trailers nationally, most of whom own their homes but not the land underneath them. Southwood is providing a blueprint at an unprecedented scale for working with residents to improve their long-term housing, financial and social conditions while achieving secure housing tenure. This unique project will be a model for how to achieve redevelopment equitably, sustainably and attractively, both here in Central Virginia and nationwide.

In what ways have Southwood residents been involved in the planning process for redevelopment?

Families have invested more than 2,500 hours working with engineers, architects, county planners, and Habitat staff as part of the redevelopment process. A resident planning team has steered the efforts through the rezoning process to the site planning. Southwood residents have also taken the lead in many other community-wide initiatives, such as building a youth soccer field, planning community festivals and painting the community center.



Resident planners working on the site plan.

What has been promised to Southwood residents?

Registered families living in the Park in November 2019 were promised non-displacement, meaning that each of them would have a range of affordable rental and/or home ownership options in the redeveloped Southwood.

Will families living in Southwood be able to afford to live in Southwood once it's redeveloped?

The 317 families who were living in the Park in November 2019 will have the option of an onsite affordable home to purchase through the Habitat Homebuyer Program or an affordable rental. Habitat never charges more than 30% of a family's income toward housing. By December, the first 45 Southwood families will be accepted into the Habitat homebuyers program. In the first phase alone, more than 80 Southwood families will purchase a home with another 10-20 likely choosing to move into affordable rentals.



Village One aerial rendering.



Habitat homes in redeveloped Southwood



Village One currently under construction.

Is Habitat accepting new renters to Southwood?

No. With land development activity well underway and the Park's infrastructure already strained, as of March 1, 2021, Southwood stopped accepting pad rental applications and registering new tenants to Southwood.

Did Habitat allow residents to move into the Park after November 2019?

Habitat's Board of Directors contemplated disallowing any new residents after it provided the 317 families living in the park in November 2019 with a formal right to stay notice. However, given the severe shortage of local, affordable options, the board voted to allow in new renters until such time as physical redevelopment activities began, thereby making accommodating new residents impossible. After November 2019, anyone who wished to register to live in Southwood was issued a Move-In-Notice (MIN) notifying them that redevelopment of the park was going to take place soon and that unfortunately there would come a time in the near future when their pad would no longer be available for leasing.

What are the rules for families who moved in after November 2019?

Applicants who registered to live in the Park after November 2019 signed a Move In Notice (MIN) that indicated their pad would only be available for a short time due to redevelopment. Once physical redevelopment began in early 2021, Habitat stopped accepting new renters. In the fall of 2021, physical redevelopment activities - including extensive health and safety remediation efforts - required that Habitat begin issuing its first few notices to post-November-2019 arrivals letting them know that they would need to move. Seventeen families moved in after November 2019 and Habitat will continue to accommodate as many of those families for as long as it is feasible. Additionally, Habitat will offer housing navigation assistance to anyone who seeks it.



SW trailer before renovation (above); SW trailer after Habitat trailer rehab work is completed (below).



How are families and their trailers being impacted by the first phase of redevelopment? Are any trailers currently being moved or demolished?

There are 66 families whose trailers need to be relocated or removed as a result of the current phase of redevelopment. For families whose trailers are still in moveable condition, Habitat covers the cost for this trailer to be moved into a vacant pad elsewhere in the park. For the families whose trailers are not in a condition to be moved, Habitat offers the option to move into a Habitat-owned trailer elsewhere in the Park (see pictures on the left). Habitat pays all demolition and moving costs for these families. As of October 2021, 26 families have been relocated and rehoused within the Park. No one's housing expenses will increase as a result of this move.

How does Habitat manage documentation status at Southwood?

As a responsible landlord, homebuilder and loan originator, Habitat does not ask about the documentation status of Southwood residents. As is the case with other private landlords, homebuilders and mortgage lenders, U.S. citizenship is not a requirement for renting a pad at Southwood, purchasing a Habitat home or renting an affordable Habitat unit.

When will the first homes in Phase 1 be complete, and what will be the breakdown between affordable and market rate units?

The first five Habitat homes are scheduled to be completed summer 2022. There are 335 total units in Phase 1 including ~80 Habitat units for purchase, ~six Habitat units for rent, and 121 Piedmont Housing Alliance (PHA) restricted income units for rent. Via its rezoning, Habitat was required to create a minimum of 50 affordable units (15%). However, we are delivering a total of 207 affordable units (62%) and 128 market rate units (38%).



The first Habitat homes to be completed by summer 2022



Five Pillars Park at the center of Village One

What is the outlook/timeline for the project in Phase 2?

In October 2021, Habitat submitted a rezoning application to Albemarle County for Phase 2 which encompasses the remaining area of the property, including the existing mobile home park. In addition to residential units, plans for Phase 2 include a large central park and a Neighborhood Commercial Center.

Initial plans for the Neighborhood Center include space for an early childhood education center, an afterschool facility, a business incubator including storefronts for Southwood resident-owned businesses and other services to support Southwood residents and the surrounding community.

What can the community do to support Southwood residents and the redevelopment project as a whole?

There are a number of upcoming projects that could use the support of bilingual volunteers. Additionally, Habitat is always looking to engage donors and volunteers to support rezoning, funding and building at Southwood. To get involved, please contact Selena Espindola at sespindola@cvillehabitat.org or call 434-202-0805.

Southwood is a very large and complex project. We are taking steps to proactively communicate with the neighborhood and community at large, but we know tensions can run high during periods of transition and misinformation and/or incomplete information can be a challenge. If you or someone you know has questions about the project, please connect with a Habitat staff person. We are deeply committed to transparency and appreciate any opportunity to hear your concerns and to share accurate information about work at Southwood.



Habitat supporters gathering at the Southwood Groundbreaking in Fall 2020.