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Lyles: Great job Phoenix for a great need in the city

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By Robert Lyles

This month, the Phoenix City Council unanimously approved an incredibly important new affordable housing initiative.

With Phoenix being the nation's fastest growing city, and housing costs outpacing wages, the need for attainable rental housing has never been more urgent.

The city's new initiative is a positive step in accommodating the housing needs of Phoenix residents.

This plan will address several critical pieces of the housing puzzle, including prioritizing new housing in areas of opportunity, redeveloping city-owned land with mixed-income housing and reforming zoning ordinances to allow for new housing efforts.

The City of Phoenix's plans show great promise, but they cannot work alone to execute these plans. Efforts from private developers will be required to achieve the greatest success in providing new and attainable housing for hard working Phoenicians.

Greenlight Communities recognized the need for attainable housing years ago, and has been diligently working towards a solution since.

As president of Greenlight Communities, along with my partners, Pat Watts and Dan Richards, Greenlight is already using innovation and creativity to address the housing issues Phoenix is facing by developing new attainable housing for middle class workers. We recognize these individuals make up the backbone of our economy and communities and attainable housing should be available in the cities they work.

Pat, Dan and I have worked in the Arizona real-estate development space for over 25 years and are proud to have created the Greenlight concept. We have developed a new private-sector business model offering new communities with attainable rental rates, in contrast to the all too familiar new "luxury" apartments that are driving up rents and making it harder and harder for middle income residents to afford to live in Phoenix.

The Greenlight Communities model is effective because we have streamlined our design and building process through removing the middle man, allowing us to eliminate cost and time constraints we would otherwise face. We use our own construction and administration staff, the same Cabana design and the same blueprint for each project, effectively removing permit delays and decreasing construction costs.

This innovative design process allows us to pass on a great deal of savings to our Cabana residents.

Arizona Teacher of the Year for 2019 Kareem Neal knows the challenges of high housing costs seen by teachers and others on the frontlines of serving our communities.

Neal, a special education teacher at Maryvale High School for 23 years, explained how he had to work two jobs during his career just to afford rising rent costs.

“For 23 years I’ve worked two jobs and struggled to pay increasingly high rents for a one-bedroom apartment,” Neal says. “Greenlight Communities is doing what we’ve needed developers and others in the country to do for a long time. Finally, we have a company who is willing to serve the great middle class and build attractive attainable rental housing hard working professionals will be proud to live in and call home.”

Phoenix residents faced some of the highest rent increases in the country last year with rents having risen more than 40% since 2014. Greenlight offers market-based rents that will keep hardworking Phoenicians’ money in their pockets.

Attainable housing is critical now more than ever with the economic turbulence our country is facing. Phoenix residents deserve access to rental housing that doesn’t leave them strapped at the end of the month. We have set out to ease the burden of having strictly high-cost rental options. Our first responders, nurses, and health care workers on the frontlines of helping our communities deserve it.

We have recently opened our first two new Cabana communities in Phoenix.

We also have additional developments under construction and in Scottsdale, Mesa, Glendale, and Goodyear.

Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego has been a strong leader and advocate for addressing the rising tide of housing costs. She graciously welcomed our Cabana on 12th and Cabana on Washington communities to Phoenix upon their opening in May.

Now it is our turn to applaud the mayor, the Phoenix City Council and U.S. Housing Urban Development Secretary, Ben Carson, who visited Phoenix and toured the city with Mayor Gallego to highlight the need new housing options.

Phoenix is a great city. We want its residents to be able to afford to live in communities they can feel proud to call home.

Editor’s Note: Robert Lyles is president of Greenlight Communities.

Comments