

CharMaine Hines in the hallway of her new home in the Stone School Townhomes development. Hines wanted to live in Ann Arbor but thought the city's high-priced housing might prevent her from doing so. She just moved in to her new home last week.

Many priced out of downtown

City's efforts at affordable housing shift to subsidized construction on outskirts

BY TOM GANTERT
News Staff Reporter

CharMaine Hines remembers when a woman helping her find a home told her she was on a committee that promoted affordable housing in Ann Arbor.

"I said, 'There is no such thing,'" recalled Hines, who says she had searched for years for a home in the city that fit her budget.

But Hines moved into a new home last week in the Stone School Townhomes on the city's southeast side. The townhomes

sell for \$105,000 to \$132,000, or about half of the market price of an average home in the city.

As city officials ponder how to get more people living in downtown Ann Arbor, they have to decide how families who make \$35,000 to \$50,000 a year will fit into their plans. Stone School Townhomes – built by a private developer but partially subsidized by the city with local and federal funds – may be the future of how Ann Arbor tackles its affordable housing dilemma.

Hines, who moved from Ypsilanti, bought one of the 55 units

on Stone School Road near Ellsworth Road. She lived on the outskirts of town in a rental property, but she says she can now keep her two children in the Ann Arbor Public Schools and "in a safe environment."

"I'm going to just settle in and pray and be thankful for having a home and the opportunity to be able to afford it and provide a safe and secure place without having to go to a less desirable place," said Hines, an adjunct professor at Washtenaw Community College.

Until recently, developers

Affordable housing at a glance

Affordable housing has been a concern of the Ann Arbor City Council for years. It recently voted to allow developers to contribute to an affordable housing fund rather than build affordable housing units on their project site. Some facts:

- Affordable Housing Units: 700 units added by city from 1992-2004
- Tax dollars spent on affordable housing: \$7.58 million, from 1992-2004 including community development block grants, housing trust fund, HOME program.
- Average 2003 residential sales price: \$258,926
- City median income: \$77,700

Sources: City of Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor Area Board of Realtors

who asked for rezoning for residential or mixed-use projects in Ann Arbor were often required to sell some units at a fraction of their market value and absorb

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