

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Many Ways You Can Help

Citizens for affordable housing in Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie, Kalkaska and Antrim counties

From drywall hanging to homeowner education, there's plenty to do!

Like so many other people, Skip Brown grew up in Traverse City believing that critical shortages of affordable housing only existed in other, far-away places. In fact, he spent years leading house-repairing missionary trips to other states before he finally realized that Grand Traverse had a serious housing problem, too.

Regionally, one in four homeowners—and one in three renters—spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, leaving them little money for fixing the roof, repairing the furnace, maintaining the car or even seeing the dentist.

In our region, the problem is particularly acute: Wages here are lower than the state average, while housing prices are higher, creating a gap that makes it hard for working families to find decent housing they can afford. Local nonprofit housing providers and government agencies face an immense challenge in helping out such families.

So Mr. Brown founded Freedom Builders, a local Christian nonprofit organization, and he's been busy helping out ever since. He's trying to meet the urgent need for affordable housing by encouraging citizens to swing hammers, help raise funds and recruit volunteers.

"There may not be enough money, but there are enough people," he says.

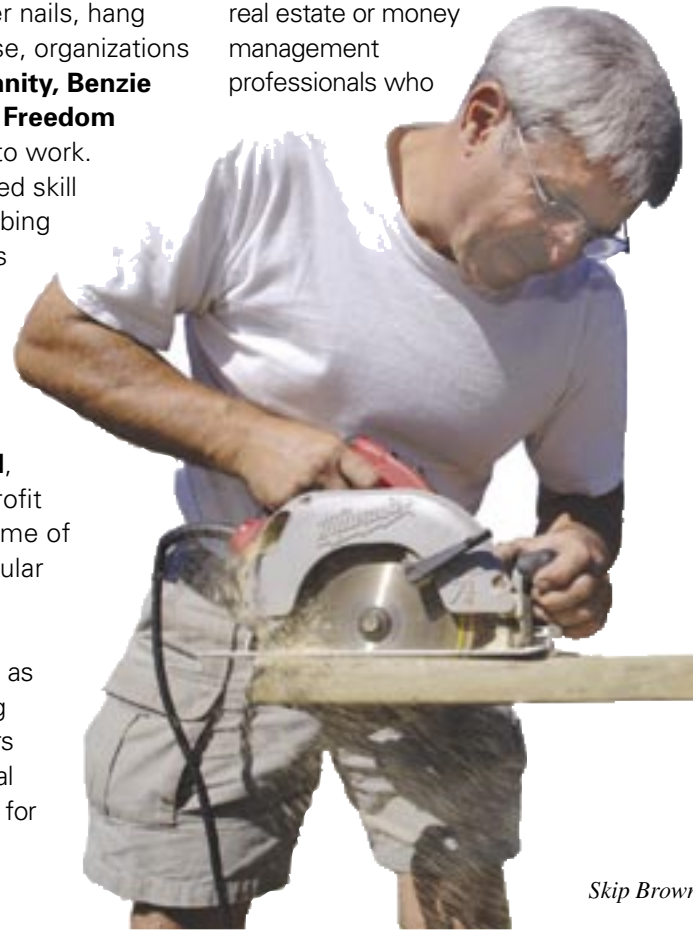
HELP OUT!

Many organizations depend on people's labor and sweat equity to help keep housing prices low. If you'd like to hammer nails, hang drywall or paint a house, organizations like **Habitat for Humanity, Benzie Housing Council** and **Freedom Builders** can put you to work.

If you have a specialized skill like architecture, plumbing or roofing, a few hours of your labor and expertise can really help any of these organizations—as well as **HomeStretch** and **Leelanau REACH**, two other local, nonprofit housing providers. Some of them have very particular needs, so call ahead.

These groups are recruiting brains as well as brawn. They are looking for good communicators who can provide general homeowner education, for

good listeners who can help clients find appropriate resources, for information gatherers who can do research for housing agencies, and for real estate or money management professionals who



Skip Brown

Pick Up the Phone

To find out how to support affordable housing, call one of these agencies:



The **Benzie Housing Council** builds five or six new homes each year, rehabilitates others, provides homeownership training and helps low-income families find low-cost rentals. **231-325-6400**



Freedom Builders repairs and rehabilitates more than 100 homes each year, making them handicapped accessible, safe and warm. **231-941-4171**



Habitat for Humanity has chapters for Antrim County and for the Grand Traverse area. Each builds new houses and operates a Restore—a place to purchase recycled appliances and building materials. **231-264-0022** (Antrim)
231-941-4663 (Grand Traverse)



HomeStretch operates a community land trust and builds 15 or 20 new homes each year around the five-county region. **231-947-6001**



Leelanau REACH, an independent, nonprofit housing provider, sold its first low-cost, high-quality house to a local family this year. **231-256-9812**



HomeStretch sold the McKenna family an attractive, three-bedroom home in Traverse City.

can help first-time homebuyers wade through paperwork.

Building relationships with new homeowners and fellow volunteers is very rewarding. So invite your family, friends, neighbors, church or club to share the work—and the fun.

CHIP IN!

Donating money and materials can help make housing more affordable by bringing down purchasing and rehabilitation costs. The Antrim and Grand Traverse chapters of **Habitat for Humanity** each operate a “Restore,” where people can buy recycled building materials and appliances at sharply reduced prices. Donating a load of lumber or a working refrigerator or stove to the Restore can help a family set up its household at an affordable price.

Nonprofit housing organizations like the **Benzie Housing Council, HomeStretch, Habitat for Humanity, Leelanau REACH** and **Freedom Builders** can use donated materials too. Call them to see if they need what you have.

Cash always helps, of course. You can help any organizations listed on this page buy land and building materials, hire architects, electricians and plumbers and help families achieve homeownership by donating money and by raising money from others.

SPEAK UP!

Unless we push for change, affordable housing will remain an invisible but significant problem that harms our community. Stand up for affordable housing developments in your own neighborhood, speak out at community meetings for pro-affordable policies, or write your legislator or local newspaper and explain why you care.

learn more • get involved • speak out

communityhousingchoices

By volunteering to help families find decent, affordable housing you help them improve their lives and build a better community.

JOIN US!

We are a group of committed citizens and business, civic and elected leaders speaking out for decent, affordable housing for working families in our community. Visit our Web site or call us to find out about ways you can learn more, get involved and speak out.

communityhousingchoices.org
231-947-6001

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