

Habitat for Humanity project is inching closer to providing homes in Oradell for four needy families.

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ORADELL — A Habitat for Humanity project is inching closer to providing homes in the borough for four needy families.

Habitat for Humanity of Bergen County has presented preliminary plans to the council for building two duplex houses on two Westervelt Place lots.

Each of the four families who are ultimately chosen to live in the homes would have to help build them and carry an interest-free mortgage on the property, said Executive Director Jacey Raimondo.

Volunteers would provide most of the remaining labor required to build the homes, Raimondo said.

Oradell Mayor Dianne Camelo Didio said that the project could help the borough meet the state's affordable-housing obligations. Habitat's requirements that the eventual residents have a mortgage and provide "sweat equity" by helping to build the houses would help ensure that the homes are well cared for, she said.

"You'll have homeowners living there who really have a vested interest," Didio said. "I think it's a piece of property that will be improved and be maintained."

The state Council on Affordable Housing has not yet approved Oradell's plan for meeting its affordable-housing requirements, and the borough is still in mediation talks with the Fair Share Housing Center, said state Department of Community Affairs spokeswoman Lisa Ryan.

Habitat already owns the two lots slated for development. The borough donated a vacant Westervelt Place lot that it owed to the non-profit organization. Habitat bought the other lot with a \$300,000 grant from the Bergen County Division of Community Development, said Simone Sinisi, an attorney who represents Habitat.

Each home would have three bedrooms and two bathrooms, according to a presentation to the council last month by Hamilton and Keith Lesser, an architect on the Habitat project.

The project, which is in a single-family residential zone, would require several variances, including front-yard setbacks, a side-yard setback and permission to build a two-family attached home in a one-family residential zone, said Bill Hamilton, an engineer working on the project.

The borough has asked its planner, Joseph Burgis, to determine whether the proposal should go before the zoning board for approval or if the council should consider rezoning the property.

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