

City plans forums to provide housing information

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

The impact of current redevelopment efforts in Orange have been on the minds of some residents, so city officials will present two programs to provide some information.

Forums are scheduled for Wednesday evening inside the Oakwood Avenue School and Oct. 25 at Lincoln Avenue School. Both sessions will begin at 6:30 p.m.

“While the recession has stalled redevelopment in other cities, Orange continues to attract developers and new development because of our strategy of aggressively marketing the advantages of our city,” said Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. “I invite residents to attend these forums to learn about the new housing stock and programs available to assist residents and people who work in Orange.”

The forums come on the heels of an earlier effort last month by at large council members Donna K. Williams and Elroy Corbitt.

“A lot of people in the East Ward were asking about the redevelopment at Walter G. Alexander, the family housing that sits on the corner of Thomas Colson Woody Plaza, formerly Wilson Place, and Parrow Street. I hosted a panel discussion at Union Baptist Church to answer their questions,” Williams said. “Residents were coming to us at City Council meetings and asking questions: how is it going to impact Oakwood Avenue School; will there be any jobs for residents; when will the units be available for occupancy.”

Williams said she and Corbitt assembled the panel discussion because they wanted to answer the questions. While there was a low



Eldridge Hawkins Jr.

turnout, she said that she believed it went well.

“We didn’t get the kind of attendance we wanted, but a lot of times you have a lot of former Orange residents who left the city in the

past, but now that they have heard about the redevelopment going on in the city they would like to know if and how they might come back,” Williams said. “I have plans for future forums for the community. I don’t think that most people really understand what’s going on with the redevelopment and how it affects them and the rest of the city. We need to do more to get the information out to the public — because it’s all about transparency.”

Hawkins is hoping for a much better turnout for the city’s programs. He said the events will focus on much of the redevelopment information about housing programs for current and potential homeowners will be available.

The programs include down payment and closing-cost assistance, financial assistance for

homeowners wanting to make home improvements, and other assistance for homeowners struggling to keep their homes.

Information about outside, local, state and federal residential programs also will be available, said Hawkins. These programs include the state’s Live Where You Work, Home Plus, Smart Start and HMFA Home Buyer Mortgage, mortgages through the state’s Police and Firemen’s Retirement System, and the federal Office of Housing and Urban Development.

Williams said residents interested in learning more about upcoming forums can call her at 973-609-9355 or log onto Facebook and look for “Councilwoman Donna K. Williams.”

Contact Valerie Jackson at 973-266-4051 for more information about the city forums.