



NEWS RELEASE

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Wake County hires veteran director to lead its first-ever Housing Department

After a thorough nationwide search, Wake County has hired Lorena McDowell to lead its new Housing Department – a key step forward in achieving the Board of Commissioners’ goal to improve housing affordability for county residents.

“Lorena brings 15 years of executive leadership experience to this new role,” said Wake County Manager David Ellis. “She spent much of that time working to end homelessness in highly populated areas such as Northern Virginia and Atlanta. We’re excited that she’s now bringing her knowledge and skills to Wake County, so we can help more of our residents find safe, affordable places to live.”

“I experienced housing instability myself as a young adult, so I know what it’s like to struggle to keep a roof overhead,” said McDowell. “Those personal challenges are what fuel my passion to help others secure affordable housing for themselves and their families, and I look forward to continuing that work here with the dedicated team at Wake County.”

Before accepting the position with Wake County, McDowell served as Vice President of Programs for Northern Virginia Family Service, a

nonprofit organization that empowers 35,000 people in the area annually to achieve self-sufficiency through its resources and services. Previously, she was the organization's Director of Homeless Services.

Prior to working for NVFS, McDowell served as Deputy Director of The Atlanta Homeless Continuum of Care. She worked for then Mayor Kasim Reed, and was responsible for planning, managing and/or allocating approximately \$32 million in funding for state and federal programs that supported housing services for residents experiencing poverty. In this role, she also worked closely with leaders in Fulton County and other local municipalities on housing issues.

McDowell also led Lorena McDowell Consulting, LLC – a firm dedicated to helping government and nonprofit organizations with strategic planning, best practice development and training, and funding acquisition for crisis intervention and prevention. Her company specialized in creating plans to help cities nationwide end homelessness and implement HUD-approved programs.

McDowell attended Metropolitan State University in Minnesota. From there, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Psychology and Ethnic Studies, as well as a Master's degree in Public and Nonprofit Administration. Her first day with Wake County will be Monday, Oct. 29.

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