



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Director's Report

December 2017



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Homebuyer education is important to the success of many of the Department's programs. The Department contracts with Making Change, Inc. to provide monthly homebuyer education workshops for first-time homebuyers. In the past, the workshops consisted of a 3-hour group session and a 1-hour one-on-one budget counseling session. Once completed, potential buyers received a certificate that met the County's requirements for MIHU home purchases and SDLP assistance loans.

In 2016, the mortgage lending industry, including HUD, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, changed the homebuyer counseling requirements for first-time homebuyers. Potential buyers must complete a 6-hour group workshop and a 2-hour one-on-one budget counseling session to receive a certificate. Another change is that the credit counseling agency must be HUD-approved. The Department and Making Change will work together to implement these changes and begin offering the extended workshop on the second Saturday of each month beginning in January 2018. These workshops will be held at the George Howard building and the class schedule can be found on the Department's website.

A 2015 rule from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), based on many court rulings under the Fair Housing Act, says, **“Affirmatively furthering fair housing means taking meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics.”**

The rule also requires that jurisdictions and PHAs prepare and submit an Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) to HUD, and have HUD accept it, before developing their next 5-year plans for using HUD funds. In this region, we must submit the assessment in October 2019 and then include the action steps from the AFH in our individual five-year plans for using HUD funds that will start July 1, 2020. The jurisdictions and PHAs are voluntarily cooperating and working with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) to submit one Regional AFH.

Howard County is participating in the Regional AFH along with the Housing Commission. Staff will continue to attend AFH meetings and provide data for the report. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) detailing each jurisdiction's responsibilities should be signed in February 2018.

On December 14th, the County Executive announced plans to file legislation that would, when fully implemented, provide a \$2,500 annual property tax credit for public safety members who reside in Howard County. If approved by the County Council, the legislation would provide a partial tax credit for county police, sheriff, correctional officers, emergency medical personnel and paid and volunteer firefighters in 2019 with full credits implemented in 2020. The legislation was pre-filed with the Council in December.

Kittleman also announced that Howard County residents have taken advantage of more than \$2.2 million in new property tax credits since the beginning of fiscal year 2018 which began July 1. Most of those credits were given to residents who applied for the senior and aging-in-place tax credits. Other tax credits assist those living on agricultural land and making homes more accessible or environmentally friendly.

These tax credit incentives, along with the Department's new housing repair program, Reinvest*Renovate*Restore, and the upcoming RENEW Howard program, are just some of the ways the County is working to help make Howard County a great place “to come home to”.

Kelly Cimino, Director

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMS DIVISION

MODERATE INCOME HOUSING UNIT PROGRAM (MIHU)

Please see the attached MIHU Report.

SETTLEMENT DOWNPAYMENT LOAN PROGRAM (SDLP)

The Settlement Downpayment Loan Program is funded by the Department's Community Renewal fund. This program is responsible for increasing homeownership in the County and critical to the success of the MIHU program. Homebuyers must be income-eligible and demonstrate a need for downpayment and closing cost assistance.

For FY18, 15 MIHU buyers have received SDLP loans, including 8 Workforce Initiatives loans, for a total of \$341,451. The Department has set aside \$400,000 to help working families buy non-MIHU homes in Howard County as well. For FY18, 27 non-MIHU buyers have received SDLP loans, including 9 Workforce Initiative loans, for a total of \$375,009. Due to increased demand for these loans, the Department is planning to increase the available funding for non-MIHU buyers in January 2018.

REINVEST*RENOVATE*RESTORE HOUSING REPAIR PROGRAM (RRR)

The Reinvest*Renovate*Restore Housing Repair Program is funded by the Department's Community Renewal fund. This program can help income eligible homeowners make repairs to enhance safety, accessibility and livability in their homes. Since the program's launch in October 2017, 21 pre-applications have been received. 6 of the applicants were over income for the program and 1 application did not meet the minimum \$5000 loan requirement. Currently, there are 6 full applications in process for loan consideration

MARYLAND HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The Maryland Housing Rehabilitation Program (MHRP) can be used to assist eligible homeowners secure low interest loans to make home repairs and bring properties into compliance with applicable building codes and standards. The program is designed to benefit households with incomes that are at or below 80% of the statewide median income. Homeowners must be current on their mortgage, insurance and property tax payments to be eligible for the program. Staff is currently processing 2 MHRP applications.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND GRANTS DIVISION

FFY2018 ANNUAL ACTIONPLAN

The Community Planning and Grants Division officially kicked off preparations for Howard County's FFY18 Annual Action Plan, the upcoming application to HUD, with a Public Needs Hearing on December 7, 2017. This session was an opportunity for human service agencies and advocates to inform the County about the needs and concerns of their clients. The group presented a broad spectrum of needs which service providers in the continuum encounter while serving vulnerable, at-risk sub-populations.

The intended goal of the hearing was to begin to identify whether there are on-going, persistent needs since the last series of public needs hearings conducted during Howard County's FFY17 Annual Action Plan or if new needs have been identified over the past year. Along with the comments taken during the needs hearing, a survey was completed by each participant. The event was well attended by 13 non-profit

partners in Howard County. The Needs Assessment Survey was made available following the Needs Hearing and has garnered great responses to date.

Action Plan Survey

To continue the planning phase of the Howard County's FFY2018 Annual Action Plan, staff has again created an online survey to acquire additional feedback from human service and housing providers, as well as advocates serving clients in the county. Anyone that is interested in taking the survey can access the online link on the Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Planning and Grants division web page.

The survey will be accessible until February 5, 2018.

FFY2018 Action Plan Dates of Interest:

January 11, 2018 – Public Needs Hearing # 2

Application workshop – Request for Proposals announced. RFP's and application posted on the website.

February 5, 2018 – Deadline for FFY2018 CDBG & HOME Program Applications

February 26, 2018 – 30-Day Public Comment Period begins and runs through March 26th

March 15, 2018 – Public Hearing # 3 – at Department of Housing and Community Development office

April 12, 2018 – Public Comment # 4 - at Housing and Community Development Board Meeting

April 16, 2018 – Public Hearing # 5 – at County Council Hearing

May 7, 2018 – County Council votes on resolution regarding Action Plan

May 17, 2018 – County submits the FFY2018 Annual Action Plan to HUD

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program funds were issued to Heritage Housing Partnership for the redevelopment of a 50-unit senior housing development in Columbia. Renovations at Shalom Square will bring energy-efficient appliances, windows, doors, heating and cooling systems to the residents in 2018. The CDBG funds are essential to preserving the affordable housing units in this community for its residents.

HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (HOME) PROGRAM

Staff continued conversations with iHomes Inc. on the development of a vacant piece of land on the Route 1 Corridor. The HOME Program Specialist is working with the School of Architecture and Planning at Morgan State University to solicit architectural designs for the project. This project will provide special needs housing units for persons with mental and physical disabilities. The School is working to provide an energy efficient design that will be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

COUNTY FUNDED PROJECTS

ACQUISITION/REHAB PROGRAM

There are funds in the Department's FY18 budget for the acquisition and rehabilitation of existing scattered site properties to be leased to low-income individuals and families in Howard County. In the past, the Department provided these funds to the Housing Commission to work with Bridges to Housing Stability, Inc. Beginning this year, the Department will grant the funds directly to Bridges. Bridges will acquire units to lease them to households earning up to 60% of Howard County area median income as part of their Bridges Alliance program. The first grant agreement is complete and will be signed in January. Bridges has already signed contracts to purchase 2 condo units in late January with these funds.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The Department will use MIHU fee in lieu funds to provide rental assistance to populations at risk of homelessness such as youths aging out of foster care and inmates leaving the County's detention center. The Department funded the acquisition of a property by Bridges to Housing Stability to house ex-offenders when they are released from the detention center. This home will be occupied by a full-time staff person and 3-4 tenants beginning in January 2018. The Department is currently working with the Department of Social Services and Bridges to Housing Stability to lease a home for youths aging out of foster care. More details to follow.

OUTREACH

HOMEBUYER EDUCATION WORKSHOP

This month's Homebuyer Education Workshop was held on Monday, December 18, 2017. The next workshop is scheduled for Saturday, January 13, 2018, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the George Howard building. Pre-registration is required. The Department's website provides ongoing workshop dates through 2018 and FAQs. Prospective homebuyers can register to attend a workshop by sending an email to homebuyerclass@howardcountymd.gov.

MIHU WORKSHOP

January is the next open enrollment period for MIHU homeownership. Applicants may apply for MIHU rental units throughout the year. Staff is available to partner with employers, builders and nonprofits to present MIHU workshops throughout the year. Interested partners or applicants should visit our website for more information at www.howardcountymd.gov/housing.

Attachment: MIHU Report
