



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

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As of January 2017, the area median income in Howard County increased to \$110,892. The Department continues to strive to serve the diverse and complex needs of the residents in our community, especially those groups that are considered to be particularly vulnerable and present with special needs. Howard County, Maryland defines "persons with special needs" as individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness, persons with physical and mental disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, and extremely low-income seniors. The Department's Consolidated Plan directs us to look at special needs populations in terms of 1) households with extreme cost burdens (and potentially at-risk of homelessness); 2) persons with mental or physical disabilities, including the elderly; and 3) other special needs populations.

Some of the recent outcomes for programs and activities that received federal funding in 2016 through the Department's Community Planning and Grant Division to serve those special needs populations are shown here:

The Community Action Council received \$484,524 in CDBG funding to purchase a new building for the Howard County Food Bank to serve income eligible residents, including 11,000 children, which are considered food insecure.

Grassroots received \$46,681 in CDBG funding to assist extremely low income residents at the Route One Day Resource Center.

The North Laurel Multi-Service Center received \$45,017 in CDBG funding to serve extremely low income residents with services such as workforce development, legal aid and veteran assistance.

HopeWorks of Howard County received \$24,000 in CDBG funding to provide emergency support services and shelter to women and children affected by domestic violence.

On January 7, 2017, I presented information in the Renew-Rehab-Replace Workshop held at "The Other Barn". It was sponsored by Oakland Mills Community Association Board of Directors and the Oakland Mills Neighborhood Enhancement Advisory Committee. I presented information about the proposed RENEW Howard loan program for new homebuyers to purchase older homes, the soon to be released new and improved Rehabilitation Loan Program, and the State's Housing Repair Loan Program. Some possible improvements may include heating and cooling system replacement, lead paint remediation, modifications for persons with disabilities, and persons looking to age in place. Some programs will require exterior improvements that could enhance the appearance of overall neighborhoods too. The Department continues to offer opportunities for new families to move to the County as well as resources for current residents to stay in the County.

Kelly Cimino, Director

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

MODERATE INCOME HOUSING UNIT PROGRAM

Please see the attached MIHU Report.

SETTLEMENT DOWNPAYMENT LOAN PROGRAM

The Department's FY 2017 budget includes funding for the Settlement Downpayment Loan Program (SDLP) for both MIHU buyers and market rate homebuyers. For FY17, 27 MIHU buyers have received SDLP loans, including 9 workforce loans, for a total of \$668,276. These low-interest, deferred payment loans are essential to the success of the MIHU homeownership program.

Beginning in July 2017, the Department also made \$400,000 available through the Settlement Downpayment Loan Program to help working families to buy non-MIHU homes in Howard County. The Department will use the funds to make deferred second mortgage loans that can be used to pay for the settlement costs and down payments needed for home purchases. For FY17, 23 non-MIHU buyers have received loans to assist with closing costs under the Homestarter and Workforce SDLP programs for a total of \$314,506. In recent years, funds in the program were only available to households purchasing properties through the County's Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU) program.

Interested homebuyers should contact a participating first mortgage lender to begin the application process. The Department's website has been updated to provide current program information.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM (NSP)

The NSP program focused on purchasing foreclosures in zip codes 21045 (East Columbia) and 20723 (North Laurel) to help stabilize those areas. All four of the homes purchased with the grant funds have been renovated and resold. Program income from the sale of the previous homes was used to purchase a fifth property. Rehab of the 5th property is complete and the Commission is making plans to sell this home to an income-eligible family. The NSP grant will be closed out once the last home is sold.

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. Applications are available by phone, mail and online. Homeowners must be current on their mortgage, insurance and property tax payments to be eligible for the program.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND GRANTS

Identified During FFY2016-2020 Consolidated Planning

Based on an analysis of U.S. Census data and information contained in Howard County's FFY2016-FFY2020 Consolidated Plan, lower income renter and owner households; elderly persons; frail elderly; single person households; large families; victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking; and persons with disabilities were more affected by housing problems cost overburden than other groups.

Concern The concern about rent and mortgage overburdened households is that low-income residents that experience rent or mortgage overburden can become unstable and face homelessness with a first-time crises, loss of income or health issues.

Information Gathered through the FFY2017 Action Plan Survey Tool

Information gathered through a web based survey tool taken by 21 respondents that spanned human service agencies, healthcare providers, housing providers and community advocates (*respondents could choose all that apply*):

Identified the top two barriers to affordable housing in Howard County:

1. The cost of housing in the county
2. The lack of available housing stock

Identified the housing types most needed in Howard County:

1. Housing for Special Needs Populations – 85.71%
2. Rental Housing – 80.95%
3. Temporary Shelter – 42.86%
4. Single Room Occupancy Units – 42.86%
5. Senior Housing – 33.33%
6. Group Homes – 33.33%
7. Homes for Purchase – 14.29%

Staff will use this information to help draft the FFY2017 Annual Action Plan in February.

FFY2017 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

The Community Planning and Grants Division held its second Public Needs Hearing (Public Meeting #1) on January 5, 2017. The Division discussed the FFY2017 Action Plan process and included a Power Point Presentation that highlighted past projects as examples of what is eligible under the CDBG and HOME Programs. After the meeting, the RFP/Application for both programs was distributed to attendees. The RFP/Applications were then posted to the Division webpage.

The RFP/Applications were due on January 27, 2017. CDBG received 9 applications and HOME received 2 applications.

The Division held the initial Grant Review Committee (GRC) meeting on January 31, 2017. The four (4) members of the GRC were given the tools to review and score the RFP/Applications based on individual merit. The second and last meeting of the GRC is scheduled for February 10, 2017. The recommendations from the Division will be presented to the Housing Director after the meeting.

FFY2017 Action Plan Dates of Interest:

February 14, 2017 – 30-Day Public Comment Period begins, running through March 15th

March 14, 2017 – Public Hearing # 3 – Department of Housing and Community Development office

April 13, 2017 – Public Comment # 4 - Housing and Community Development Board Meeting

April 17th or 18th – Public Hearing # 5 – County Council Hearing

May 1, 2017 – County Council votes on resolution regarding Con Plan

May 17, 2017 – County submits the FFY2017 Action Plan to HUD

Anticipated Entitlement Amounts Howard County will be applying for based upon FFY2016 awarded amounts:

CDBG: \$1,034,767.00
HOME: \$ 334,275.00

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM

The Division was invited to attend the Grand Opening of the new Howard County Food Bank operated by the Community Action Council of Howard County. CDBG funds of \$450,000.00 were utilized in the food bank acquisition.

The Division provided CDBG funds to Help End Homelessness HC, Inc. (HEH) to acquire one (1) unit for their Affordable Homes for the Homeless Program. FFY15 and FFY16 funds were awarded to HEH in the amount of \$150,000.00 for the acquisition. Brian Perry attended the loan settlement and a tour of the new unit. The HEH Board and volunteers appreciate the use of federal funds for their program.

The Division has met with Bridges to Housing Stability to review and approve their rental lease for the two (2) properties purchased in December 2016. The Division will continue to meet with Bridges to ensure federal compliance with CDBG funding.

HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (HOME) PROGRAM

In January, the HOME Program Specialist requested the Annual Rent and Income verification from all property managers that managed units with HOME Program funds. The review of the annual rents and income is statutorily required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Properties that have HOME Program funds are required to be monitored once every three years, but the annual review of rents and incomes ensures that residents and landlords remain in compliance with HOME Program income and eligibility requirements.

Ten (10) environmental reviews were completed in January. This signifies that the settlement and down payment assistance for eligible homebuyers is now available, and the County will be on schedule to satisfy its commitment of 2015 program funding. The HOME Program has a two-year commitment deadline for each year's allocation.

COUNTY FUNDED PROJECTS**SUPPORTIVE HOUSING/DAY RESOURCE CENTER**

The Leola Dorsey Community Resource Center on Guilford Road in Jessup is under construction and is expected to be completed in June 2017. The Housing Commission, along with the support of the Department, its partners, stakeholders and neighbors, is proud of this project's progress and looks forward to its opening. When completed, the three-story center will provide services three days a week by Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center; and offer homeless persons access to meals, showers, laundry,

email, and visits to the center's pantry to receive donated necessities. Medical, counseling and social services will also be made available.

The project is owned by the Housing Commission and will be operated by Volunteers of America. Construction has begun and the building is 40% done. The target completion date is June 2017.

RIVERWATCH

The Housing Commission received a donation of land in Elkridge as part of an MIHU alternative compliance plan. The developer of Annapolis Junction Town Center project in Savage transferred 31 MIHUs to this project. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on October 26, 2016. The 84-unit, mixed income rental community is nearing completion. The units are leasing up and there is a waiting list for interested tenants.

ACQUISITION/REHAB PROGRAM

The Department's FY17 budget includes funds for the acquisition and rehabilitation of existing scattered site properties. The Housing Commission entered into a Master Lease Agreement with Bridges to Housing Stability, Inc., a local non-profit housing agency, to use some of these funds to provide much-needed permanent supportive housing for the community. As of December 31st, the Housing Commission has purchased, renovated, and leased thirteen condos to Bridges for this program. These units have been turned over to Bridges for rental to households earning up to 60% of Howard County area median income.

OUTREACH

HOMEBUYER EDUCATION WORKSHOP

This month's Homebuyer Education Workshop was held on Monday, January 23, 2017. The next workshop is scheduled for Monday, February 13, 2017, from 6-9 p.m., at the Columbia Gateway building. Pre-registration is required. The Department's website provides ongoing workshop dates through 2017 and FAQs. Call 410-313-6328 for more information.

MIHU WORKSHOP

January was an open enrollment month for the MIHU homeownership program. An MIHU Renters Information Workshop was held on January 17, 2017 at the Columbia Gateway building. The Homebuyers Information Workshop was held the next night on January 18, 2017. Separating the workshops into one for potential renters and one for potential homebuyers was well received by those in attendance. Staff is available to partner with builders and nonprofits to present MIHU workshops throughout the year. Interested partners or applicants should visit our website or call 410-313-6343 for more information.

Attachment: MIHU Report
