



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

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dana Sohr and Kim Pace of Bridges to Housing Stability presented an overview on the *Bridges Alliance Program* and the *Housing Connections Program*, to the Housing and Community Development Board and staff at the Board meeting on October 11, 2018.

The Bridges Alliance Program provides below-market rental units to households that earn between 30-60% of area median income (AMI) and work in Howard County. By participating in the program, tenants enhance their skills in goal setting, personal finance, leadership development and homeownership.

The Housing Connections Program matches tenants who earn 30-60% AMI with landlords who provide affordable rentals in Howard County. Tenant benefits include resource liaison services, bi-monthly home inspections, security deposit assistance, education workshops and tenant-landlord mediation.

Participants of the Bridges Alliance Program and the Housing Connections Program receive ongoing support, education and coaching to promote self-sufficiency and housing stability. Housing units for these programs are located throughout the County in Columbia, Elkrige, Ellicott City and Laurel. Currently, the Alliance Program operates 31 homes (16 owned, 15 master leased), and the Housing Connections Program serves 16 households.

The Department provides funding to Bridges to Housing Stability each year, including the Bridges Alliance and Housing Connections programs, so it is important for the Board to understand and support their work in our community.

The Community Action Council of Howard County sponsored their annual Holland Awards Dinner at Turf Valley Resort on October 18, 2018. Thank you to HCD Board Member Grace Morris for attending with me. The Humanitarian Award Recipient was Ms. Vivian Bailey. Ms. Bailey is 100 years old and has been a full-time volunteer and community champion in our community for the last 43 years. Ms. Bailey spoke at the event and shared the following message, "Some people seem to think you need a lot of money to do some good. It isn't true. If all of us did a little, it would add up to be a lot". As we all prepare for the upcoming holiday season, these words are especially meaningful.

The Department is pleased to welcome Ms. Faith McCullough to the team. Faith comes to us from the Baltimore City housing department and has many years of experience working with families receiving housing assistance. She will be the MIHU Entry Coordinator in the Housing Opportunities Program division. The number of applicants to the MIHU homeownership program has increased dramatically over the last 5 years and we needed additional staff to keep up. If you have a chance to visit our office, stop by and introduce yourself to Faith.

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 is critical to the success of the MIHU program. Homebuyers must be income-eligible and demonstrate a need for downpayment and closing cost assistance.

We are pleased to announce that FY19 funding is now available. A notice announcing the new funding was sent to all participating lenders on July 2nd. The Department has budgeted \$600,000 for MIHU homebuyer loans. Another \$500,000 has been budgeted for non-MIHU homebuyer loans again this year.

For FY19 so far, 7 MIHU buyers received SDLP loans, including 4 Workforce Initiative loans, totaling \$131,044, and 28 non-MIHU buyers received SDLP loans, including 17 Workforce Initiative loans, for a total of \$480,227. We are cautiously optimistic that funding will be adequate for the entire fiscal year.

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. Two (2) new applications were reviewed this month. Any applicants who are denied are referred to Rebuilding Together and/or the Maryland Whole Home Program. Currently there are five (5) applications in process for loan consideration. One loan closed in September and construction on this project has begun.

MARYLAND WHOLE HOME PROGRAM

The Maryland Whole Home Program (formerly known as 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. The State announced the availability of new funding on July 1st. There are three (3) applications currently in underwriting with the State.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND GRANTS DIVISION

FFY2019 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

The planning stage for writing the County's upcoming application to HUD has begun. The FFY19 Annual Action Plan Timeline has been finalized for the workplan that will lead to submission of the County's application to HUD in May 2019.

FFY2019 Action Plan Dates of Interest:**December 6, 2018 – Public Needs Hearing # 1**

The intended goal of the hearing is to begin to identify whether there are on-going, persistent needs that have continued since the last series of public needs hearings conducted during the FFY18 Annual Action Plan and if there are any new needs that need to be addressed in the upcoming plan.

January 11, 2019 – Public Needs Hearing # 2

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

February 4, 2019 – Deadline for FFY2019 CDBG & HOME Program Applications

February 25, 2019 – 30-Day Public Comment Period begins and runs through March 26th

March 13, 2019 – Public Hearing # 3 – at Department's office

April 11, 2019 – Public Hearing # 4 – at Housing and Community Development Board Meeting

April 15, 2019 (tentative date) – Public Hearing # 5 – at County Council Hearing

May 6, 2019 – County Council votes on resolution regarding Action Plan

May 17, 2019 – County submits the FFY2019 Action Plan to HUD

Anticipated Entitlement Amounts will be based on FFY2018 awarded amounts:

CDBG: \$1,257,864.00

HOME: \$ 491,376.00

CDBG & HOME PROGRAM COMBINED

During the month of October, the Grants team executed all CDBG and Community Renewal (MIHU Fee-in-lieu) grant agreements with eligible sub-recipients. Sub-recipients are now able to submit reimbursement requests to the County for eligible grant expenses.

In October, the Grants team began preparations for the FFY2019 Annual Actin Plan year. This will include conducting several public hearings, conducting a survey for service providers and drafting the report based on the assessment of needs.

The Grants team also met with several non-profit partners and provided technical assistance on topics such as procurement of items and services. The Grants team has been working alongside iHomes Inc. in drafting the RFP for the Hicks Road project. The documents should be completed by the end of the year.

Lastly, the Grants team attended the kick-off meeting for the Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI). At this meeting the selected consultants discussed the goals of all the work groups that will begin convening in November and continue until May when the plan will be drafted.

COUNTY FUNDED PROJECTS

RENEW HOWARD PROGRAM

The Real Estate Charitable Foundation of Maryland, Inc., a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation (the "Administrator"), a supporting organization of the Community Foundation of Howard County, also a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation ("Cfhoco") announces that it is soliciting competitive applications from eligible mortgage lending institutions ("Lenders") to participate in a neighborhood revitalization loan program, Revitalizing Neighborhoods EveryWhere in Howard County "RENEW Howard" (referred to as the "Program") whereby Lenders will be incentivized to make low-interest loans to homebuyers to acquire and improve aging homes in Howard County, Maryland. The purpose of the Program is to encourage new investment in and revitalization of neighborhoods throughout the County.

To incentivize Lenders, Howard County, Maryland (the "County") has provided grant funds to the Administrator to be used as a Loan Loss Reserve Fund for this proposed mortgage program in the amount of approximately \$2,000,000. It is anticipated that this level of funding will be sufficient to induce a private Lender or Lenders to contribute loan funds of as much as \$20 million to the Program.

A pre-application conference to discuss and answer questions related to the Program was held on Thursday, September 13, 2018. Representatives from M&T Bank, Old Line Bank and The Columbia Bank attended. Unfortunately, no applications were received on the RFP due date of October 15, 2018. Lenders are concerned that the program requirements will not provide Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) credits for the participating banks. The Department is working with the Program Administrator and a CRA bank to release an amendment to the RFP in early 2019.

ACQUISITION/REHAB PROGRAM

There are funds in the Department's FY19 budget for the acquisition and rehabilitation of existing scattered site properties to be leased to low-income individuals and families in Howard County. For the second year, the Department granted 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. Last year Bridges acquired 4 units for the Bridges Alliance. We expect the Bridges Alliance to acquire at least 4 units with FY19 funding. Two units were purchased in September.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The Department can 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. In 2017, 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. The home is currently occupied by a full-time house manager. A loan from the County to Bridges to cover operating costs for the property will be funded by the end of the year.

Staff met with the Department of Social Services and Bridges to Housing Stability this past spring to continue discussions regarding potential housing options for youths aging out of foster care. Options currently being discussed include providing rent subsidies or purchasing a house for single room occupancy. Bridges is continuing discussions with all partners to determine next steps.

OUTREACH

HOMEBUYER EDUCATION WORKSHOP

This month's Homebuyer Education Workshop was held on Saturday, October 13, 2018. The next workshop led by Making Change is scheduled for Saturday, November 10, 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. The 2019 workshop calendar will be posted in December. Prospective homebuyers can register to attend a workshop by sending an email to homebuyerclass@howardcountymd.gov.

MIHU WORKSHOP

October is the next open enrollment period for the MIHU homeownership program. The Department will hold informational workshops for potential MIHU renters and homebuyers during that time. Applications for MIHU rental units are available throughout the year. Visit our website for more information at www.howardcountymd.gov/housing.

Attachment: MIHU Report
