



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

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The Real Estate Charitable Foundation of Maryland, a supporting organization of the Community Foundation of Howard County, signed a grant agreement with the County for the RENEW Howard program on May 24, 2017. The Department will manage this program for the County. Staff began working on the logistics of securing lenders for the loan pool and marketing the program this month. This program will provide a financing option for homebuyers that want to purchase and renovate older homes in the County. This program will be an opportunity to bring new buyers to the County and improve neighborhoods at the same time. More details will be announced as they become available.

On behalf of the Department, the County signed a Memorandum of Understanding with MakingChange, Inc. in June. MakingChange is a local non-profit that provides financial education and counseling to Howard County residents. MakingChange will begin leading the monthly first-time homebuyer workshops sponsored by the Department. They will also provide one-on-one budget counseling sessions with workshop attendees as they prepare for homeownership. For the last several years, the Department partnered with Guidewell Financial Solutions for the first-time homebuyer workshops.

MakingChange, Inc. received CDBG funds in 2016 to provide credit counseling services to credit-impaired applicants in the MIHU database. We were very pleased with the services they provided and decided to expand their scope of work with the Department. We are looking forward to continuing this positive partnership.

The Department began attending meetings at the Health Department regarding CAREAPP in May 2017. CAREAPP is a web-based risk assessment screening tool that contains a searchable community resource directory that will allow for referral tracking by Howard County agencies and organizations based on where people seek assistance. The program is administered jointly by the Howard County Health Department, Healthify, and the University of MD. This referral tool should help participating agencies coordinate services more efficiently for County residents. Staff has started the training series and hope to be fully trained in the next few months.

Justin Tyler, a graduate of Reservoir High and student at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, began his internship with the department this month. Justin is majoring in Urban Planning and Policy and is interested in housing issues. We have several projects lined up for him this summer.

I recently attended meetings about a new project known as the Howard County Autism Housing Initiative. This initiative will unite adults with disabilities, families and older adults in an inclusive, intergenerational community with the potential to emerge as a national model. The concept is very innovative and I am looking forward to learning more about it in the coming months. Stay tuned for details.

Kelly Cimino, Director

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMS

MODERATE INCOME HOUSING UNIT PROGRAM

Please see the attached MIHU Report.

SETTLEMENT DOWNPAYMENT LOAN PROGRAM

For FY17, 43 MIHU buyers received SDLP loans, including 16 Workforce Initiatives loans, for a total of \$1,028,070. One additional MIHU homebuyer received an SDLP loan of \$33,467 with HOME funds. This homebuyer's household income met the HOME requirements based on 80% of Baltimore HUD AMI. This is significantly less than the County's AMI.

The Department also set aside \$400,000 to help working families to buy non-MIHU homes in Howard County. For FY17, 33 non-MIHU buyers received loans to assist with closing costs for a total of \$438,528. In past years, funds in the program were only available to households purchasing properties through the County's Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU) program. Due to an increase in demand, these funds were depleted earlier this year than in previous years.

SDLP funding for FY18 will be available after July 1, 2017.

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. The Commission requested assistance from the Department to sell this home to an income-eligible household. The Department awarded the unit through a lottery in April 2017. A contract was signed, but the buyers decided not to move forward. The Department is in the process of selecting a new buyer. The NSP grant will be closed out once the last home is sold. Any proceeds from the sale of the home will be returned to the State as program income.

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

FFY2017 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

To maintain compliance with the requirements and timing for submission of the Annual Action Plan to HUD, the County has chosen to move forward with the planning, writing, and 30-day public comment period using the anticipated amounts for these programs. Howard County had completed the planning and writing of the FFY17 Annual Action Plan using the awarded amounts from FFY2016 for both the CDBG and HOME programs.

In mid-June, Howard County received official notification of the FFY2017 allocations for the CDBG and HOME programs. While the County anticipated either reduced or flat-funding from FFY2016, we received increased amounts for both programs:

FFY2017 Entitlement Funding for Howard County:

CDBG: \$1,082,979.00 (increase of \$48,212.00)

HOME: \$ 355,837.00 (increase of \$21,562.00)

As identified during the planning and writing of the plan, the additional amounts were identified and would be adjusted for the following projects:

- CDBG Affordable Housing Initiative (AFI) and the
- HOME Future Affordable Housing projects.

All other projects will be funded at the amounts outlined in this Action Plan.

FINAL SUBMISSION TO HUD – FFY2017 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

The Community Planning and Grants division finalized and submitted its plan electronically on 7/7/2017. The originals were then mailed to HUD. The 45-day review period began when HUD received the documents on 7/10/17. The plan will be deemed approved 45 days after HUD receives it, unless there is a problem with the plan and HUD notifies the County that the plan is disapproved. Day 45 for the plan is Thursday, August 24, 2017.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM

Staff have been evaluating several properties owned by the County. The purpose of the analysis is to determine eligible sites for future affordable housing projects, that could utilize either Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) or HOME Investment Partnership (HOME) funds or even both. These future projects will not only encourage partnerships with other affordable housing partners, but will utilize some of the Department's program funds.

CDBG AT WORK. HIGHLIGHTING A PROGRAM RECEIVING CDBG IN FFY2016

Rebuilding Together Howard County, Inc., a local nonprofit, provides free home repairs for low income Howard County homeowners. The Rebuilding Together program preserves affordability for low income homeowners in Howard County. The program activity is a key tool in our toolbox to help these homeowners maintain affordability.

In addition to making repairs to help homeowners age in place, Rebuilding Together helps stabilize previously unsafe living conditions and transform them back to safe, quality affordable housing.

Accomplishment Data: During this program year, Rebuilding Together used \$150,000.00 of CDBG funding to assist 29 households with critical repairs to their home. Most of the repairs were completed for

homeowners with incomes below 50% AMI. Of those completed repairs, 16 were roof replacements, one was an accessibility ramp, and 52% of the repairs were made to homes of female-headed households.

HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (HOME) PROGRAM

The HOME Program Specialist has been working alongside the Grants Administrator to amend the current 5-Year Consolidated Plan to a 4-Year Plan and simultaneously amending the FFY2016 Annual Action Plan. This process is necessary so that Howard County could participate in the regional submission of the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) which will be coordinated by Anne Arundel County through its non-profit partner, Arundel Community Development Services, Inc.

Howard County, along with other jurisdictions in Maryland, received their respective entitlement award amounts. Now the County can submit its FFY2017 Annual Action Plan with precise allocations.

As mentioned in the last report, a public hearing was held on June 08, 2017. No residents attended and no comments were submitted to the Department related to the reprogramming of HOME funds.

The Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition (MAHC) hosted two (2) events in June that were attended by the Community Planning staff. One session was a roundtable session with Senator Ben Cardin, other affordable housing providers and developers from around the State to discuss the impact that entitlement programs have had in their respective communities. Participants cited specific instances where CDBG and HOME funds were critical in structuring affordable housing deals as well as public service activities.

The second event entitled, *Undesign the Redline* was an exhibit and guided tour of historical policies and programs that have impacted the housing industry. The tour and exhibit ended with the introduction of *Designing the WE*; a collaborative approach to influencing housing policy and design. The Department could utilize some of the concepts discussed for future affordable housing projects.

COUNTY FUNDED PROJECTS

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING/DAY RESOURCE CENTER

The Leola Dorsey Community Resource Center on Guilford Road in Jessup is nearing completion and expected to open in August 2017. The project is owned by the Housing Commission and will be operated by Volunteers of America. Once completed, the three-story center will provide services three days a week by Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center. The Center will assist homeless individuals by offering 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.

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 June 30th, the Housing Commission has purchased, renovated, and leased 14 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, June 19, 2017. The next workshop is scheduled for Monday, July 17, 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

The next MIHU open enrollment period is July 2017. The MIHU Renters workshop is scheduled for July 18th and the MIHU Homebuyers workshop is scheduled for July 19th at the Columbia Gateway building. 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 email Lisa Wiseman for more information.

Attachment: MIHU Report
