



Howard County

HOUSING



Director's Report

March 2016

Department of Housing and Community Development
Howard County Housing Commission

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The 10th annual "Come Home to Howard County" Housing Fair will be held Saturday, April 9, 2016, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at a new venue - Howard High School. We expect over 50 exhibitors including realtors, banks, mortgage lenders, apartment representatives, county agencies and other housing industry experts. Over 30 educational sessions will be offered on home buying, renting, home inspection, home repair, qualifying for a mortgage, improving credit, financial planning, affordable landscaping and energy-saving tips, among other topics. The Fair will also offer individualized credit counseling, bus tours, prizes, games for children, and a final drawing for a single-family home located in Elkridge.

As of this date, more than 325 persons have already registered to attend. Join us for an afternoon of fun and information and learn why Howard County is the place to come home to!

For more information, go to our "Come Home to Howard County" website - <http://www.comehometohowardcounty.org>.

Thomas P. Carbo
Director/Executive Director

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & ASSET MANAGEMENT

BURGESS MILL STATION

On August 5, 2015, the Commission issued its tax-exempt general obligation bonds to finance Phase Two of the Burgess Mill Station development, which consist of the redevelopment of the 60-unit Ellicott Terrace Apartments into a new 60-unit, mixed-income community. All 17 households that were remaining on the property have been relocated. Demolition/construction is expected to commence in the spring of 2016.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING/DAY RESOURCE CENTER

On May 2, 2013, the County announced plans for a supportive housing facility (SEA) and a non-residential Day Resource Center (DRC) to be located on Guilford Road near the intersection of Route 1 and Route 32. The project will be constructed and managed through a partnership with Volunteers of America Chesapeake (VOAC), a leading provider of housing and services for the homeless. The DRC will replace the existing facility located in close proximity to the new site and offer 35 efficiency apartments to fill a sorely-needed gap in the County's housing stock. Howard County acquired eight acres for the project for \$3.25 million in July 2013.

Ownership of the 3-acre portion of the site that will house the SEA/DRC will be transferred by the County to the Housing Commission. VOAC will develop, build and provide case management services at the facility. To date, the County has received approval of a State bond bill that will provide \$250,000 toward the cost of the DRC. This amount will be matched by County funds. The Department will also allocate \$225,000 in CDBG funds towards the SEA/DRC development costs. In July 2014, the Commission issued \$4.25 million in bonds to help fund the DRC portion of the facility. Recently, the project was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. VOAC has submitted an application to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for Partnership Rental Housing Program and Transitional Housing Program funds.

Following review of project plans by the County's Design Advisory Panel, in June 2014, the Environmental Concept Plan was approved. The Site Development Plan has been approved as technically complete by the County. Subdivision plats are also in process.

The Salvation Army, owner of an adjacent parcel, executed a land exchange agreement for 0.61 acres, allowing the County to gain access to the remaining 5-acre portion of the property, once the subdivision process is complete.

The Commission issued an RFP to award 35 project-based vouchers for the creation of a supportive housing facility to serve formerly chronically homeless persons. The Commission received a response from VOAC, which proposed to utilize the PBVs for the SEA portion of the project. On November 18, 2014, the Board of Commissioners authorized the development of SEA/DRC project and approved VOAC as the contractor for the administration of the project-based vouchers.

In January, during a community meeting held at Carroll Baldwin Hall in Savage, amid community concerns regarding the project, County Executive Allan H. Kittleman expressed his support for the proposed SEA/DRC for the homeless in Jessup. According to press secretary Andy Barth, the County Executive said building the center was "the right thing to do."

In February, the County Council approved the transfer of the 3-acre parcel from the County to the Commission (CR124-2014). The Planning Board approved the project's site development plan at its May 7, 2015 meeting.

CDA's Housing Finance Review Committee has approved both \$4.65M requests for a combination of Partnership and Transitional funds. This project was presented and approved by the Board of Public Works on August 26.

In December, staff and VOA met with Howard County review planners to discuss the project. Based on their recommendations, our plans were revised and resubmitted for pending approval. It is anticipated that closing will occur in March 2016.

RIVERWATCH

The Commission received a donation of land in ElkrIDGE as part of an MIHU alternative compliance. It has ground leased the parcel to a partnership created by Kirby Development, of which the Commission is a member. The partnership will develop the land into an 84-unit mixed-income community. Project financing closed on October 21, 2015 and is currently under construction. Completion is anticipated by October 2016.

ACQUISITION/REHAB PROGRAM

The Department's FY15 budget includes funds for the acquisition and rehabilitation of existing scattered site properties. The Commission has 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.

The Commission has purchased, renovated, and leased eight 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. Renovations on two recently acquired units will be complete this month so they can be turned over to Bridges for new tenants. Another unit in Columbia is under contract for closing in March. The line of credit with Howard Bank is financing the new acquisitions.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

MODERATE INCOME HOUSING UNIT PROGRAM

Please see the attached MIHU Report.

SETTLEMENT DOWNPAYMENT LOAN PROGRAM

The Department's FY 2016 budget includes funding for the Settlement Downpayment Loan Program for both MIHU buyers and the public at large. In FY 2016, 15 MIHU buyers have received SDLP loans for a total of \$332,704. These low-interest, deferred payment loans are important to the success of the MIHU homeownership program.

Beginning in July 2015, the Department also made \$400,000 available through its 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 FY16, 12 non-MIHU buyers have received loans to assist with closing costs under the Homestarter and Workforce SDLP programs. In recent years, funds in the program were only available to households purchasing properties through the County's Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU) program.

Funds are available now and offered on a first-come, first-serve basis. As of March 1, the available balance for new non-MIHU purchasers is \$233,254. A Lender training will be scheduled in March and area lenders will be invited to learn more about the 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 information about the program.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM

The \$750,000 program is 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 last year. Rehab of the home is almost complete and the Commission is making plans to sell this home to an income-eligible family this spring.

MARYLAND HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The Maryland Housing Rehabilitation Program (MHRP) can be used to assist eligible homeowners in securing 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.

DHCD recently increased the number of loan processing days for a MHRP loan to 195 days. This change in the number of "cumulative days to start construction" could negatively impact homeowners that request assistance for emergency repairs (i.e. furnace stops working during cold weather days). As of March 1, the Department is processing three (3) MHRP applications.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND GRANTS MANAGEMENT

FFY2016-FFY20 CONSOLIDATED PLAN (5YR PLAN)/WITH FFY16 ACTION PLAN

Urban Design Ventures (UDV), Howard County's consultant for the 5-Year Consolidated Plan process, conducted three days of Public Comment Session Needs Hearings and face-to-face interviews. UDV was onsite in Howard County from February 23 through February 25 facilitating the Citizen Participation sessions for the County.

Three Public Comment/Needs Hearings were held with tremendous turn-out from both the local nonprofits and advocacy groups. Each session had in excess of 20 participants giving input by identifying needs in our community. Each person attending was allowed time to identify areas of concern and special populations that are at-risk in Howard County.

As in previous years, the lack of affordable housing to serve residents with area median incomes (AMI) at or below 60% is being identified as a critical need. This need crosses over all the at-risk sub-populations encountered in the continuum. Advocates, staff and directors of human services agencies and concerned citizens identified needs within a variety of populations such as youth transitioning out of school who have autism, prisoners reentering the community after incarceration, persons with psychiatric and developmental disabilities, and homeless individuals and families. Many agencies are concerned that if housing does not exist when their clients or children need it they will ultimately become homeless.

Future Con Plan Dates of Interest:

March 21st – Draft version of 5-Year Consolidated Plan due back from UDV

March 31st – 30-Day Public Comment Period begins, running through April 29th

April 14th – Public Hearing # 2 – Howard County Housing Board Meeting

April 18th – Public Hearing # 3 – County Council Hearing

May 2nd – County Council votes on resolution regarding Con Plan

May 13th – County submits the FFY2016-2020 Consolidated Plan with FFY2016 Action Plan to HUD

FFY2016 Entitlement Funding for Howard County Government:

CDBG: \$1,034,767.00

HOME: \$ 332,504.00

HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP - PROGRAM MONITORING

The HOME Program Application for FFY16 funding was due back to the County on February 11, 2016. The County received two applications from projects requesting funding for programs that serve persons with severe disabilities to provide housing. One of the programs is a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) and has provided and been certified again this year as an eligible CHDO. This will make then eligible to use the set-aside CHDO funds the County has remaining for FFY2014 and FFY2015.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) - PROGRAM

The CDBG applications were due to the Department on February 11, 2016. The Department received nine applications requesting funding for wide array of programming from transitional housing, homeowner rehabilitation, financial repair education, crisis intervention funding, landlord outreach, and funding to provide business training and development programs.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE

WAITING LIST

On July 1, 2012, the waiting list for the Housing Choice Voucher program was officially closed. Closing the list prevents false hope among families that assistance will be available in the near future. As a reminder, the program will remain open for emergency preferences in accordance with the Administrative Plan. There has been little change in the waiting list numbers over the past year. Staff is recommending that the waiting list remain closed as there are still over 5,000 families waiting for assistance.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

The 2016 Funding Notice was recently received from HUD. Funding for 2016 remained constant at \$10,034,665. The Commission was funded at \$10,171,699 in 2015. The average Housing Assistance Payment for voucher units in 2015 was \$1,114.59 per unit month.

The public hearing for the Commission's Annual Plan for HUD programs is scheduled for 4:30 p.m. on April 18th at the Housing Choice Voucher office located at 5575 Sterrett Place, Suite 360, in Columbia, Maryland. The Annual Plan is the document that outlines policies and procedures for administration of federal housing programs and examines local resources available to low-income and moderate-income families. This document also serves as a plan of action for the Commission to address local housing needs. The Commission will review the plan at its March meeting and will take final action on the plan in April. In conjunction with the approval of the Annual Plan, the Commission will also be taking action on some proposed changes to the Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan.

HOPWA (HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH AIDS)

The Commission is currently spending FY2014 funding in the amount of \$228,337.00. The Commission has been awarded funding in the amount of \$233,886 for FY 2015. The Commission has three calendar years from the contract effective date to expend HOPWA funding. Referrals for HIV positive families come from the Howard County Health Department. The Commission is in the process of screening Four (4) families that have been referred for eligibility interviews thus far in 2016. We are continuing to find issues with families qualifying for a residency preference for living or working in Howard County.

HOUSING STABILITY SUBSIDY PROGRAM (HSSP)

The Housing Stability Subsidy Program (HSSP) is a component of the Coordinated System of Homeless Services (CSHS) and provides a housing subsidy for residents that have exhausted all the services of local homeless prevention, housing stability, rapid re-housing and/or shelter programs available in Howard County and continue to be unable to secure affordable, stable housing due to extreme and often multiple barriers to conventional, permanent housing. To date, 16 rental subsidies have been provided to eligible Howard County households. There are currently two vacant slots in the HSSP Program due to two recent terminations. One family was recently issued a voucher by Anne Arundel County, and the other family is being terminated from the program for violation of program obligations. Two families have been identified and determined eligible to fill the vacant slots and voucher issuance is pending. One family located a unit last month and the other family is currently searching for a unit.

AUDIT & SEMAP (SECTION 8 MANAGEMENT & ASSESSMENT PROGRAM) CERTIFICATION

The Housing Choice Voucher team has submitted all of the required documentation for the annual audit. The audit is complete and there were no findings or corrective action required. Part of the audit process involves drafting the HUD SEMAP Certification which rates housing authority performance during the fiscal year. The Howard County Housing Commission was rated as a high performer during the most recent rating period.

PUBLIC HOUSING RAD CONVERSION

Howard County's 50 Public Housing units have been converted to Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Project-Based Vouchers effective December 1, 2015. The RAD program allows Housing Authorities across the county to upgrade their Public Housing stock by transferring ownership to the

Housing Authority, which subsequently allows the Authority to obtain private loans to finance property upgrades. The completion of the RAD Conversion culminates 18 months of extensive preparation by Housing staff under the leadership of Samit Paul, who served as the Project Manager.

OUTREACH

HOMEOWNERSHIP WORKSHOP

This month's Homebuyer Education Workshop is scheduled for Monday, March 21, 2016, from 6-9 p.m., at the Columbia Gateway building. Pre-registration is required. The Department's website provides ongoing workshop dates through 2016 and FAQs.

MIHU WORKSHOP

An MIHU information session was held on Monday, March 7 at the Lennar sales center at the Oxford Square community in Hanover. Staff is available to partner with builders and non-profits to present MIHU workshops throughout the year. Interested partners or applicants should visit our website or call 410-313-6343 for more information. Staff continues to search for opportunities to promote MIHU and homeownership informational sessions to employees of educational centers and businesses in the County.

“REBUILDING TOGETHER”

One home. One neighbor. One Community at a time. Approximately 1,000 volunteers will donate their time and talents to **Rebuilding Together Howard County** on Saturday, April 23, 2016 to make sure their neighbors live in a safe and healthy home. With their help, and the help of corporate partners, skilled trades associations, and government and non-government organizations, Rebuilding Together will provide free home repairs to 28 houses.

HCHC is sponsoring Rebuilding Together Howard County this year. We have assembled a talented team of twelve volunteers to assist a needy Howard County resident with home repairs while making a direct and lasting impact on their community. We are looking forward to participating in this exciting volunteer opportunity!

Attachment: MIHU Report
