



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

February 2017



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition (MAHC) sponsored "Housing Day" at the State House in Annapolis on February 16, 2017. Housing Day provides a forum to solicit the MD State Legislature for increased budget funding. State delegates and state commission leaders addressed the group to show their support of affordable housing in Maryland. The speakers also discussed the potential issues that could be impacted by anticipated changes in the Federal Government as a result of the new Administration. Several of us from the department attended the event and had an opportunity to speak with state delegates and other housing advocates regarding the challenges associated with providing affordable housing throughout the state.

MAHC is asking legislators to increase Rental Housing Works (RHW) funding to \$20 million in General Obligation Bonds for Fiscal 2018. RHW makes low-interest loans to Maryland businesses to construct or rehabilitate moderately-priced rental units for income-eligible senior citizens, families and persons with disabilities.

Several projects in Howard County have been funded with RHW dollars:

Park View at Colonial Landing renovated in 2012 provides 100 affordable units for seniors;
Park View at Ellicott City I renovated in 2014 provides 81 affordable units for seniors;
Riverwatch in Elkridge constructed in 2016 provides 42 affordable units for families; and
a new project in Ellicott City plans to use RHW funds to construct 41 new affordable units in 2018.

MAHC is also advocating to expand and strengthen the funding for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program in Maryland. According to the National Council of State Housing Agencies data, from 1986 – 2014, the LIHTC program funds helped preserve 58,910 affordable homes and helped provide affordable housing to 137,260 households. Funding for the LIHTC program will be particularly important for the development of affordable housing in Downtown Columbia so stay tuned for updates.

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, 30 MIHU buyers have received SDLP loans, including 11 Workforce Initiatives loans, for a total of \$730,398. 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, 25 non-MIHU buyers have received loans to assist with closing costs for a total of \$329,910. 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. The Commission requested assistance from the Department to sell this home to an income-eligible household. The Department will search the database for eligible applicants and schedule a lottery in April to award this home. 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

Citizen Participation for Annual Action Plan

Howard County, in compliance with the County's Citizen Participation Plan, advertised and held three (3) public hearings on the needs and goals of the County's CDBG and HOME Programs. The public hearings provided residents with the opportunity to discuss the programs and to offer their suggestions on future program priorities. The public hearings were advertised in The Howard County Times and Columbia Flier on November 17, 2016, December 22, 2016 and February 9, 2017.

During the planning phase of the Howard County's FFY2017 Annual Action Plan, staff created an online survey to acquire additional feedback from human service and housing providers, as well as advocates serving clients in Howard County. The survey was posted on the County's website for anyone that was interested in taking the survey. The survey remained accessible from December 5, 2016 until February 10, 2017.

30-Day Public Comment Period

The 30-Day Public Comment Period for the FFY2017 Annual Action Plan began February 14, 2017 and will run through March 15, 2017. The County developed the Annual Action Plan based on the input received from stakeholders. All comments and surveys received during our needs assessment phase were factored into our CDBG and HOME program application process, ranking and review, and in the writing of Howard County's Annual Action Plan to HUD.

Three remaining Public Hearings will be held during the 30-Day Public Comment Period.

March 14th Public Hearing #3 – Department of Housing and Community Development office
 April 13th – Public Hearing #4 – Howard County Housing Board Meeting
 April 19th – Public Hearing #5 – County Council Hearing

FFY2017 Action Plan Dates of Interest:

May 1, 2017 – County Council votes on resolution regarding Con Plan
 May 17, 2017 – County submits the FFY2017 Action Plan to HUD

The draft version of the FFY2017 Annual Action Plan can be accessed on Howard County Housing and Community Development's Community Planning and Grants Management division's webpage at <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Housing/Community-Planning-and-Grants-Management>

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

Staff met with Rebuilding Together, a current year sub-recipient, to ensure that all HUD regulations regarding contractor quotes were being documented and that their award spending would increase before the end of the third quarter. We also discussed permanent ramps for the elderly and disabled and sought technical assistance from our HUD representatives about the definition of permanent ramps.

The Division recently increased its reporting requirements for the Housing Stability Program administered by the Community Action Council. CDBG funding has been awarded for 2 years. All eviction judgements and CDBG Self Certifications were requested for the respective CDBG annual files. Staff is continually analyzing CDBG payments, spending and Program Income. This information is tracked internally and within the HUD Financial Database. (IDIS)

HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (HOME) PROGRAM

In February, the HOME Program Policy and Procedure Manual was completed and posted on the Department's webpage. The policy and procedure guide is a HUD requirement.

The HOME Program Specialist finalized the first amendment to the Living in Recovery HOME Loan Agreement in February. Living in Recovery was initially awarded \$100,000 for the acquisition of a property in Howard County. Since the acquisition price was less than anticipated, the excess cash can now be used towards the rehabilitation of the property.

Program documents for iHomes Inc.'s second project, a single family condominium that will eventually house two (2) persons with severe psychiatric and mental disabilities, are in process. This is the second unit that iHomes Inc. has been able to acquire in this current fiscal year and use HOME Program funds as gap funding.

COUNTY FUNDED PROJECTS

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING/DAY RESOURCE CENTER

The Leola Dorsey Community Resource Center on Guilford Road in Jessup is under construction (about 40% complete) 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. In January, the Housing Commission was awarded a \$65,520 Maryland Affordable Housing Trust (MAHT) grant which will fund a security deposit escrow for those residents earning up to 30% AMI.

The County's Coordinator of the Coordinated System of Homeless Services (CSHS) recently released information regarding the application process for prospective tenants.

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. After an issue with installation of the water meters is resolved, the developer expects to have the community fully leased and occupied by the end of March.

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 13 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, February 13, 2017. The next workshop is scheduled for Monday, March 20, 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

April will be the next open enrollment month for the MIHU homeownership program. Information Workshops for potential MIHU renters and homebuyers will be scheduled in April. 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
