



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

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In November 2016, the Columbia Association invited Rob Breymaier to speak to the community about “Sustaining Racial Equity in Housing in Columbia: Exploring the Model of Oak Park, IL”. This event was part of the Columbia Association’s Community Building Speaker Series. Rob Breymaier offered insight into the operation of the non-profit Oak Park Regional Housing Center and their efforts to maintain racial integration in communities west of Chicago. Since that event, housing advocates and the faith community have been working on a plan to bring a regional housing center to promote and sustain meaningful and lasting racial integration and diversity in Columbia. On June 6, 2019, Dan Pontious from the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, Elizabeth Meadows and I met with some members of the Columbia Housing Center board to discuss their role in the upcoming Regional Analysis of Impediments (AI) Plan and 5-year HUD Consolidated Plan. Both plans should include opportunities to raise awareness about racial integration and diversity through coordinated outreach and educational programming. We look forward to working with the housing center board members as they make plans to open the Columbia Housing Center.

On June 10th, Bridges to Housing Stability hosted its inaugural annual Heroes for Housing Celebration at the 18th & 21st restaurant in downtown Columbia. The event honored the work of three Heroes for Housing: Bob Buchmeier, Bridges of Hope Legacy Award; First Presbyterian Church of Howard County, Building Bridges Award; and Dianne Jensen for the Premier Volunteer Award. Thank you to Bridges and the award winners for supporting the housing needs of working families in our community.

DHCD staff continues to attend meetings and work sessions for the preparation of the Regional AI Plan. The draft plan should be completed in August 2019. Then there will be time for community input and feedback. As part of the AI plan development. Dan Pontious, Peter Engel of the Housing Commission and I attended a meeting with Howard County Public Schools (HCPSS) Senior Management to discuss the role of schools in the AI plan. HCPSS and the School Board are currently reviewing redistricting proposals to address inequities and overcrowding in many area schools. Based on the discussion, students moving into existing homes are causing more overcrowding issues than students coming from newly constructed units. This is important information to consider as the County establishes the school allocation chart and reviews potential waivers to the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance.

The Housing and Community Development Board met on June 13, 2019, to approve the MIHU and LIHU pricing and standards that will take effect on July 1, 2019. The fire tax was increased to \$.236 per \$100 of a home’s assessed value in the approved FY20 County Budget. The tax rate is just one factor in the calculation of the MIHU and LIHU pricing each year. A survey of mortgage interest rates on June 3rd, showed that interest rates have decreased substantially since January. Despite the increase in the fire tax rate, the MIHU and LIHU base sale prices will be higher beginning July 1st. Developers, builders and potential homebuyers can view the new pricing on the Department’s website.

Prior to the board meeting on June 13th, the Housing and Community Development Board joined DHCD staff for “An Evening of Good Taste” at the Howard County Food Bank. This event was an opportunity to educate board members about the food bank, enjoy great food from Tino’s Italian Bistro and support the work of the Community Action Council.

Kelly Cimino, Director

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMS DIVISION

MODERATE INCOME HOUSING UNIT PROGRAM (MIHU)

Please see the attached MIHU Report.

SETTLEMENT DOWNPAYMENT LOAN PROGRAM

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.

For fiscal year 2019, the County funded \$1,353,179. in loans to income-eligible homebuyers. For FY19, 23 MIHU buyers received SDLP loans, including 11 Workforce Initiative loans, totaling \$468,028, and 52 non-MIHU buyers received SDLP loans, including 24 Workforce Initiative loans, for a total of \$885,151. This represents a 13% increase in program funding from the previous year. This program will be funded again in the FY20 budget.

Staff was invited to participate in Howard Bank's community outreach event, "Stop Renting & Start Home Buying" which was held on Saturday, June 28th at the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center. Information about the SDLP program was presented to attendees at the event.

REINVEST*RENOVATE*RESTORE HOUSING REPAIR PROGRAM

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. Applicants who are ineligible based on income or credit are referred to Rebuilding Together for assistance or considered for Maryland Housing Repair Programs. The Loan Review Committee meets twice a month to review loan applications for funding. DHCD staff is available to present RRR program information to organizations and service providers in the community. Many of the applications received do not meet the program guidelines so staff would like to offer more information workshops this summer.

STATE OF MD HOUSING REPAIR LOAN PROGRAMS

The Department processes applications for the State of Maryland's Whole Home and Housing Repair Programs. Both programs can assist eligible homeowners secure low interest loans or grants to make home repairs and bring properties into compliance with applicable building codes and standards. The programs are 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. While these programs may offer grants or 0% interest loans to income-eligible homeowners, the State's processing time for these loans is approximately 6 – 8 months. Homeowners that have urgent or immediate needs are not a good fit for this program. Applicants interested in the State's housing repair loan programs should contact the Department for additional information.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND GRANTS DIVISION

FFY2019 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

On June 17, 2019, the Baltimore CPD Division of HUD approved Howard County's FFY2019 Annual Action Plan. Howard County was the first 2019 plan submission approved by the HUD Baltimore Office.

The CPD formula allocation award amounts are:

- CDBG - \$1,246,937.00
- HOME Program - \$422,239

FFY2018 CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE & EVALUATION REPORT

The Community Planning and Grants Division is beginning to work on the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). The CAPER is the annual report Howard County must submit to HUD within 90-days after the conclusion of the program year. The CDBG and HOME Program years run July 1st through June 30th each year. This CAPER will report on accomplishments in the third year of the current 4-Year Consolidated Plan (FFY2016-FFY2019 Consolidated Plan).

FFY2018 CAPER Dates of Interest:

July 1, 2019 – Begin CAPER and Submit Section-3 Report in SPEARS

September 2, 2019 – Draft CAPER completion date.

September 6, 2019 – 15-Day Public Comment Period begins.

September 19, 2019 – Public Hearing 6:00 PM in Department of Housing and Community Development's Conference Room.

September 20, 2019 – 15-Day Public Comment Period ends.

September 27, 2019 – CAPER due to HUD.

COMBINED GRANTS ACTIVITY

During the past month, the Grants team hosted the second local focus group meeting related to the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Report. Those in attendance were from various public organizations that work with minority populations, such as the Office of Human Rights, Consumer Counseling Credit Services of MD/DE and the HC Housing Commission. The event facilitated great conversation surrounding fair housing choice. Comments from attendees were catalogued and sent to the consultant working on the strategies for the regional AI plan. The County is optimistic that these strategies will be meaningful and impactful to residents seeking more housing choices.

The Grants team has been editing and updating the grant agreements for federal grant program year FFY2019 and for the FY2020 MIHU Fee-in-lieu grants, ensuring that all regulatory citations are correct and updated. The upcoming program years will allow for twenty projects to be awarded. Funded projects will include the creation and preservation of affordable housing units, public services for community development activities, eviction prevention by direct subsidy, downpayment assistance and other programs and services supporting affordable housing. Recipients should receive their grant agreements in July - August.

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”) announced that it was soliciting competitive applications (Request for Proposals or RFP) from eligible mortgage lending institutions to participate in a neighborhood revitalization loan program, Revitalizing Neighborhoods EveryWhere in Howard County “RENEW Howard” (referred to as the “Program”) whereby Lenders would be incentivized to make low-interest loans to homebuyers to acquire and improve aging homes in Howard County. The purpose of the Program is to encourage new investment in and revitalization of neighborhoods throughout the County.

To incentivize Lenders, 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. DHCD Staff is working to design a program with an area lender that would be unique to Howard County and support the program goals.

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 acquires units to lease to households earning up to 60% of Howard County area median income as part of their Bridges Alliance program. Bridges received \$500,000 of funding on July 1, 2018. By adding matching funds of \$125,000., they were able to purchase and renovate 4 condominium units in Columbia and Ellicott City. Bridges helps low wage working households find affordable housing units and reduce their housing cost burden. As of 6/30/19, the Bridges Alliance program is renting 36 units to income eligible households.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The Department could 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 returning citizens when they are released from the detention center. The home is currently occupied by a full-time house manager and four returning citizens. The Department of Corrections refers eligible returning citizens to the property for rent-free transitional housing for up to 24 months. This transitional housing unit fills an unmet need in the community and prevents potential homelessness for its residents. The Department is continuing to work with local non-profits and other County and State agencies to formulate strategies to provide affordable rental housing units for County youths aging out of foster care.

OUTREACH

HOMEBUYER EDUCATION WORKSHOP

This month's Homebuyer Education Workshop was held on Saturday, June 1, 2019. The next workshop led by Making Change is scheduled for Saturday, July 13, 2019, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Community Resources Campus (9820 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia, MD 21046). Pre-registration is required. The 2019 workshop calendar is posted on the Department's website as well as FAQs. Prospective homebuyers can register to attend a workshop by sending an email to homebuyerclass@howardcountymd.gov.

MIHU WORKSHOP

July is the next open enrollment period for the MIHU homeownership program. The Department will hold several information 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