



Meeting Summary

Date: 11/10/2020

Time: 12:00 – 1:00 PM

Location: Online Zoom Meeting

A public open house was held online through Zoom and over the phone on November 10, 2020. 64 people were in attendance, including the following from the Task Force and Consultant Team:

Name	Sector	Employer / Organization
Task Force Members		
Kelly Cimino, <i>Project Manager</i>	Housing/Community Development	Dept. of Housing and Community Development
Dr. Caroline Harper, <i>Task Force Co-Chair</i>	Housing/Policy	
Bill McCormack, <i>Task Force Co-Chair</i>	Housing/Policy	
Peter Engel, <i>Workgroup Chair</i>	Housing	Howard County Housing Commission
Brent Loveless, <i>Workgroup Chair</i>	Education	PTA Council of Howard County
Pat Sylvester, <i>Workgroup Chair</i>	Housing/Disabilities	Columbia Downtown Housing Corporation
Roger Barnes	Faith Community	African American Roundtable
Steve Breeden	Developer	SDC Group
Anne Brinker	Health/Policy	The Horizon Foundation
Jeff Bronow	Planning/Zoning	Howard Co. Dept. of Planning & Zoning
Jenna Crawley	Aging	Office on Aging/Dept. of Community Resources and Services
Victoria Hathaway	Aging	Bob Lucido Team of Keller Williams
Linda Wengel	Affordability/Council Representative	
Consultant Team		
Erin Talkington	Consultant Team	RCLCO
Jacob Ross	Consultant Team	RCLCO
Michael Spotts	Consultant Team	Neighborhood Fundamentals
Tracee Strum-Gilliam	Consultant Team	PRR, Inc.
Elisabeth McCollum	Consultant Team	JMT
Allysha Lorber	Consultant Team	JMT
Sarah Diehl	Consultant Team	JMT

The purpose of this open house was to give community members the opportunity to ask questions regarding the draft recommendations of the Housing Opportunities Master Plan Task Force.

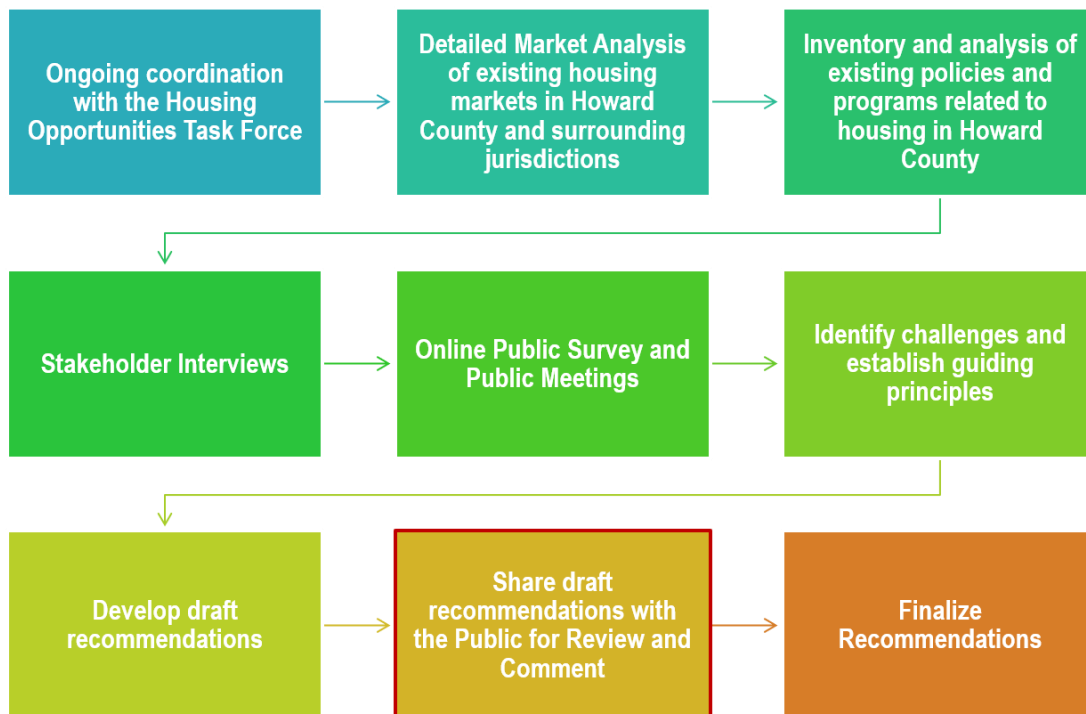
The following items were discussed:

Introduction: Housing Opportunities Master Plan

- A master plan for housing needs has not been completed for Howard County in more than 10 years

- County Executive Ball created the Housing Opportunities Master Plan Task Force in Fall 2019 to assess the current state of housing in Howard County and to assist in the preparation of the Housing Opportunities Master Plan
- The Housing Opportunities Master Plan will:
 - Assess housing programs and policies in all County government departments and agencies to improve efficiency and effectiveness
 - Identify ways to create and preserve housing opportunities for residents of all income levels
 - Provide metrics and timelines to measure progress towards achieving goals in the plan
 - Be a standalone document, but the findings will be incorporated into the upcoming General Plan

The Planning Process



What We Heard from the Community

- Over 2,300 survey responses and over 100 participants in public meetings
- Full summary available online
- The majority of survey respondents (53%) do not think that Howard County provides enough housing options that are reasonably priced to people who currently live or wish to live in the County in the future
- The top five considerations that would be most important if shopping for a home to rent or own include: home cost and affordability, low crime rate, home quality, proximity to quality schools and home size

Draft Recommendations: Q&A

Land Use, Planning, and Zoning	Programs and Policies	Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use land use policy to produce income-restricted, subsidized units. • Enable more equitable growth throughout the county. • Facilitate the development of lower-cost housing typologies. • Remove zoning barriers to mixed-use neighborhoods and developments. • Streamline entitlement and review process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve housing sector coordination and boost capacity. • Raise and deploy capital for affordable housing production and preservation. • Create a robust multifamily preservation strategy. • Improve housing conditions and support households with home repair and modification needs. • Expand opportunities for homeownership. • Support low-income households, vulnerable populations, and households with specialized needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify creative mechanisms to fund both housing and school facility investment. • Evaluate targeted changes to the APFO to support the growth required to improve housing affordability and opportunities when the APFO Review Committee convenes following the General Plan. • Creatively utilize land assets in the County.

Community Member Questions:

1. Are these recommendations from RCLCO or the task force? Who has to approve the final recommendations? What happens after that?

Recommendations are from the RCLCO consulting team that were put together based on guidance from the Task Force and community feedback. The final recommendations will come down to the County, that will help inform what goes into the final plan. The next steps for this task are review and refinement of these recommendations over the next couple of months based on feedback. We will be providing them to the General Plan team for consideration by the end of the year and will finalize everything early next year.

2. Question about MIHU's, FARM rate in the schools, affordable housing and location in the County? How much affordable housing is the County concentrating in specific areas, what is being done about that? Are MIHU fee-in lieu going to be allowed to continue?

We are proposing that the goal of the MIHU is going to be to produce housing units throughout the county. Current rules do not necessarily encourage the production of housing throughout the county. We are looking to set up fee-in-lieu to discourage just paying the fee, but there are some cases where it is the logical solution. In these cases, we would be generating funds to put towards some of the other housing goals in the county. In terms of building throughout the county, the General Plan Team is going to help us figure out specific areas for development, as they are doing detailed land analysis. We are also proposing an affordable housing overlay that would make it by-right development, making it much easier to build than it is today.

3. Would like to explain “facilitate lower cost housing.”

Today we are mostly building large, single-family homes and townhomes/larger apartment buildings. The missing middle are units in between (duplexes, different types of apartment buildings, smaller single-family houses, senior living, etc.) that are lower cost to the consumer, in comparison to current trends. In order to do this you need the underlying zoning to allow that; one of our recommendations is to have the General Plan team help us identify how this could be accomplished to produce more naturally occurring affordable housing.

4. What do you mean by “diverse populations”?

We are referring to people who may have specific housing needs beyond what the market is currently providing. - older adults and households with disabilities (finding/maintaining homes with appropriate accessibility characteristics), or those who face barriers to finding housing of any type (formerly incarcerated individuals, etc.) These are people who may experience greater challenges to find adequate housing.

5. Why does the draft not mention the Maryland Affordable Housing Land Trust Act?

This Act is state enabling legislation that focuses on community land trusts that enable affordable homeownership through different mechanisms. Our recommendations cover shared equity programs, and community land trusts that are a form of that tool.

6. What is the timing of the proposed improvements? The perspective of seniors waiting 3-5+ years for new building is not responsive. Please indicate the impact of the proposed changes.

In the programs and policies section, we talk about addressing a lot of these challenges – enhancing programs to make improvements to units, etc. We see preservation of housing opportunities and the opportunity for people to remain in their home a key piece to the policy.

7. Have you looked at how other communities handle the tension between set-asides for over 55/accessible housing and the desire for age-integrative housing?

There are a range of preferences among seniors or those that need accessible housing, which includes both integrative housing and senior/independent living facilities. The policy framework needs to support both – the ability to build age restricted housing and multifamily housing while making improvements to enable those who wish to live in current home and make improvements. We address this through recommendations to increase support for people looking to make accessibility improvements to their home and some neighborhood level infrastructure and accessibility improvements.

8. The ten factors the people have when considering a house, are they ranked in any fashion, such as chosen by most to least number of people?

Yes, these are the top 10 considerations that were chosen as a part of the survey’s 2,300+ respondents.

9. I didn't see any mention of planning for land use with increasing concerns about flooding and adequate drainage- why is that?

That is a question that the General Plan is going to address. The General Plan is an ongoing process that the Department of Planning and Zoning is leading. They are addressing broader land use questions in the context of infrastructure and environmental components.

10. How will land use recommendations influence over 55 restricted housing policy?

There are two elements - making sure that the land use policy enables multi-family and other types that facilitate age restricted and/or independent living settings for older adults, and also making sure that the infrastructure is in place to enable integrated community living in non-age restricted settings.

11. When determining location of new affordable housing, how is impact on the surrounding community assessed and addressed?

We are thinking about opportunities at the County level and a framework for how those would play out in different communities. The General Plan will be providing much more specific detail in modeling where sites are. We are trying to set forth a framework that identifies the places where new affordable housing will have a positive impact on the surrounding communities and places where new market rate housing will also have a positive impact on the surrounding community.

12. Zoning question. I read the proposal to allow garage conversions. This was done throughout my old neighborhood in Los Angeles area. The result is overburdened infrastructure with every street lined with cars. This devastated the quality of life throughout LA neighborhoods.

We are recommending a change in regulatory policy to facilitate the creation of accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Garage conversions are one model of that. There is another process of getting into the specifics of how that might be done. In our research of best practices in other areas around the country, we have seen many examples of effective implementation of ADU policy that have led to increases in the availability low cost housing supply. We have seen in the case of LA that it has worked well in expanding housing choice in a balanced way. Not every policy change is going to manifest itself in the same way in every jurisdiction. This will need to be tested in the General Plan process to see what types of ADUs will work and how they will function when you take into consideration infrastructure, etc.

13. There seems to be no clear coordination between agencies like DPZ, Board of Ed, Infrastructure planning etc.

This is going to be integrated into the General Plan. We are working through the process to address some of that disconnect and are proposing an inter-departmental task force to make sure there is more clear and ongoing coordination among various agencies at the county government level and to make sure policies are complimentary.

14. What data was used to conclude that APFO is having such a negative effect? Isn't the point to assure we have adequate facilities before continuing to develop?

That is the intent of the APFO and that is what it is doing most of the time. The challenge that we see is that as communities grow out, APFO can serve as a barrier to housing developments in areas that are already rather built. We have done a detailed analysis of supply and demand in the county and what we are seeing is that there is a significant mismatch at this point in the amount of housing that is being built. Based on our outreach and interview efforts, APFO is commonly recognized as one of the barriers that exists (but not the only one.)

15. Removing all the land from agricultural preservation would free up the amount of buildable land. Is that a recommendation of a policy that no longer works?

The County has a long history of prioritizing agricultural land preservation. While there is a lot of land, the development does not come at no cost to the county or the environment. We are not outright recommending that it is a direction to pursue. Our recommendations are focused on thinking about where we do have infrastructure, including some places in the rural west. There are also covenants on some of the land in the agricultural preserve that would make it legally difficult or impossible to remove and develop.

16. Is there a plan to strengthen APFO so that it actually working to decide new project approvals?

Some of our recommendations are directly focused on the APFO while others focus on the broader challenge. We are proposing that the county explore a new revenue mechanism that jointly funds schools and housing to help address the underlying issue of school capacity. We also recommend some policies related to the use of public land, partnerships using real estate that is owned by institutional partners, and some land use flexibility

that could potentially open up more sites for school facilities. Within the APFO policy, we recommend some changes potentially using the model that Montgomery County has adopted in which they look at areas where there is adequate infrastructure. The main issues are schools and revising the limits and flexibility in those areas so that they are not growing in areas that do not have enough infrastructure capacity. We view this as a two-prong challenge: how do you make the APFO as it is currently structured better, and through housing policy, what can we do to address the underlying challenges that are driving some of the concerns. We have proposed that one of the things that would help this would be to kickstart new schools and housing through a new source of funding that is tied together.

17. Cost of land developed and undeveloped is very high, there are many instances of land value as higher than the existing value of the home. Did you document this data set? How realistic is the “missing middle”?

What could be feasible would be to take a piece of land and develop a large structure that looks like one large house but is really four units. This would be one way to make land values work for missing middle housing. There are ways to accomplish it but it is harder when you are talking about the redevelopment of existing housing into missing middle structures.

18. Can there be a concerted effort for builders to provide completely accessible affordable housing in the plan? Also, can smaller lots be available and affordable for those with disabilities?

One of the things we recommend is the creation of affordable housing trust fund to help leverage external resources. The County can work to advance policy goals (providing housing for those with disabilities) and this is a mechanism for producing affordable, accessible housing units. There currently is an option to provide accessible units to meet requirements under MIHU – we are going to recommend that the county use the policy more robustly.

19. How would you expand opportunities for homeownership?

MIHU policy produces ownership units as well as shared equity homeownership programs.

20. What are the plans for de-concentrating affordable housing? Currently most affordable housing projects that are available are located in a limited number of communities.

We propose an affordable housing overlay to allow for affordable housing to be built by-right in low poverty neighborhoods. We also recommend that redevelopment plans in areas where there is existing affordable housing account for mixed income needs and income diversification.

21. I still haven’t heard that the FARM rate will guide where more affordable housing will be located.

We have been proposing using poverty levels instead of FARM rates, as poverty data is more readily available and serves as the basis for FARM rates.

22. COVID seems to have increased people's desire to NOT live elbow to elbow. Should the recommendation for dense rental structures be re-evaluated?

There is a lot of differing data on consumer preferences due to COVID. Choosing not to live in a rental structure in some cases is a luxury for those who have the means, and we are proposing a wider range of housing choices overall. It is something on our radar, but data does not yet lead us to conclude that we need to shy away from rental housing.

23. Please clarify what is referred to in the Western part of the County where there could be high density affordable housing. Why not just be specific or say this report only refers to the Metro District (water and sewer)?



We have a specific recommendation to identify specific locations in western part of the county. It is possible that the General Plan team will come back and say that this is not possible, but we do not want to close the door on that part of the county before it is explored.

24. How would an ADU overlay work with FDPs for single family lots and maximum lot coverage requirements?

Most ADU policies address those issues through the specific policy development process. Various jurisdictions handle it in different ways.

25. You haven't mentioned the Affordable Housing Plan for the new Cultural Arts Center and other developments in Columbia that expand affordable housing. This Plan is before the County Council now and may not be approved after having been set aside for 4 years. Do you support this plan?

Yes – this would conform with what we are proposing. We have some specific recommendations that align with this plan.

Next Steps

- The second online open house will be held on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at 7:00pm. Please help spread the word.
- We will be taking all feedback on the draft recommendations to finalize them in December. The final document will be available in March 2021.
- Keep checking the project webpage for updates – you can find draft recommendations and other information there.
- Please remember to take the survey and provide input on the draft recommendations:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WFDLKSJ>
- Email any other questions to: housing@howardcountymd.gov