



Baltimore City's Housing Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 2024
3:00 PM – 4:30 PM
Via Zoom

1. Welcome/Introductions:

Meeting participants include: Ahmna , Tim Wiens, Andy Krauss, Chelsea Hayman, Vonnette Harris, Diane Dressler, Ami Taubenfeld, Leslie Dickenson, Dianne Blevins, Sarah Hochbaum and Valerie Crosby.

2. Updates on Cherry Hill/Patapsco Pointe:

- Vonnette Harris discussed challenges and barriers with the Cherry Hill project. The project was deemed ineligible by HUD for vouchers due to not meeting neighborhood condition standards.
- Cherry Hill has a history as a low-income African American community designed in the 1940s. Current Barriers include the housing authority owning one-third of the land, racial composition, poverty rate, and school performance issues.
- The area has numerous socioeconomic determinants that the project aims to address by driving new investment. The housing will target a range between 30% to 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), which is uncommon in Cherry Hill, where most housing is restricted to 60% AMI or below.
- Initially, the project aimed for a 4% bond application, but now they are considering a competitive 9% and potential 4% deal to secure more resources and financing.
- Concerns related to being competitive, the project needs to leverage non-state resources and secure operating assistance, typically through a pilot from the municipality or an operating subsidy. It was mentioned that the housing authority is unable to grant the Cherry Hill project this subsidy due to the neighborhood conditions.

3. Inclusionary Housing Coalition Update:

- In June, a town hall meeting focused on rent stabilization was held in Baltimore City, providing a platform for community discussions and feedback on housing policies.
- The committee is planning a retreat for September, aiming to foster engagement and collaboration among members to strengthen their collective efforts.
- Valerie Crosby and Derek McCorvey (interim facilitator at the time) attended a comprehensive plan meeting specifically focused on the southwest area of Baltimore. This meeting, overseen by the Southwest Partnership, allowed them to share their insights on proposed changes and new projects outlined in the draft plan.

- A regional fair housing planning process is underway, which aims to develop a five-year regional housing analysis. This process involves collaboration between the city and county to create fair housing action plans that address community needs.
- During the discussions, a recommendation was made for bolder advocacy training, with some members expressing their intent to participate in this training to enhance their skills and knowledge in advocating for housing rights.
- There were inquiries regarding the various development projects currently in the pipeline in Baltimore, acknowledging that while new construction is evident, it is essential to verify whether developers are complying with relevant regulations regarding affordable housing.
- Derek McCorvey has recently begun pulling permits to gather information about these projects and assess their compliance with the new guidelines aimed at ensuring affordability in housing.
- Conversations have focused on changing the culture within Baltimore City to prioritize affordability, advocating for its inclusion in both community discussions and political agendas to influence decision-making.
- There is a recognized need for research to determine how many voucher holders could benefit from the ongoing development projects, as understanding this demographic is crucial for effective planning.
- Encouragement was given, as noted by Miss Ronette, for applying to new building projects, with discussions centered on how to assist voucher holders in navigating the application process for these opportunities.
- The committee highlighted the importance of educating property owners about the legal requirements regarding voucher holders, as many landlords are unaware that they cannot discriminate against these individuals and often seek ways to circumvent the law.
- The development of an affordability housing trust fund commission was discussed, which aims to provide ongoing funding to support initiatives focused on improving housing affordability within the community.

4. DHCD Update

- Chelsea Hayman shared that HUD recently announced its awards for the 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA) program, but unfortunately, Maryland was not awarded funding. This news was particularly disappointing for Chelsea, who had worked on the application while managing a broken wrist.
- They plan to request a debriefing from HUD to understand why Maryland's application was unsuccessful and how to improve future submissions. Chelsea noted that Maryland faced similar challenges in past years but received later allocations when HUD had unspent funds.

- Chelsea expressed optimism about assigning the remaining funding from the Fiscal Year 2019 811 grant, highlighting some promising projects selected for funding.
- They provided an update on the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD), which is onboarding a new housing director following Sharon McCready's recent resignation, adding to the year's challenges.
- Chelsea is working on implementing a statewide housing voucher program that will prioritize individuals with disabilities and others on housing choice voucher waitlists. This program aims to provide temporary assistance until individuals can access federal assistance, helping to alleviate waiting list pressures.
- Although the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) cut the program's first-year budget due to startup challenges, Chelsea is hopeful about issuing updated allocation amounts to participating public housing authorities soon.
- They concluded by inviting any questions from the audience regarding these updates.

5. Baltimore City Housing Committee Member Updates

- Dianne Blevins reported ongoing issues related to mobility within the community and mentioned that the commission plans to participate in Civil Rights Week with a focus on activities for children with disabilities, although the details are still being finalized; Alona will coordinate further discussions, and they will meet again on September 19 to explore these plans.

6. Next Meeting – October 21