Meeting Summary

Date: 10/20/2020
Time: 3:30 – 6:00
Location: Virtual Call

The second dive discussion was held over the phone on October 20, 2020. The following were in attendance:

Name	Sector	Employer / Organization
Task Force Members		
Kelly Cimino, *Project Manager*	Housing/ Community Development	Howard County Dept. of Housing and Community Development
Dr. Caroline Harper, *Task Force Co-Chair*	Housing/Policy	
Bill McCormack, *Task Force Co-Chair*	Housing/Policy	
Peter Engel, *Workgroup Chair*	Housing	Howard County Housing Commission
Brent Loveless, *Workgroup Chair*	Education	PTA Council of Howard County
Pat Sylvester, *Workgroup Chair*	Housing/Disabilities	Columbia Downtown Housing Corporation
Steve Breeden	Developer	SDC Group
Anne Brinker	Health/Policy	The Horizon Foundation
Jennifer Broderick	Housing/Affordability	Bridges to Housing Stability
Jeff Bronow	Planning/Zoning	Howard County Dept. of Planning & Zoning
Rose Burton	Community Resource	Howard County Office of Community Partnerships
Paul Casey	Housing/Policy	
Mavis Ellis	Education	Howard County BOE
Victoria Hathaway	Aging	Bob Lucido Team of Keller Williams
David Nitkin	Employer/Healthcare	Howard County General Hospital, Johns Hopkins Medicine
Cindy Parr	Disabilities	The Arc of Howard County
Paula Seabright	Employer/Council Rep.	Comcast
Linda Wengel	Affordability/Council Representative	
Larry Twele	Economic Development	Howard County Economic Dev. Authority
Consultant Team		
Erin Talkington	Consultant Team	RCLCO
Jacob Ross	Consultant Team	RCLCO
Tracee Strum-Gilliam	Consultant Team	PRR, Inc.
Michael Spotts	Consultant Team	Neighborhood Fundamentals
Allysha Lorber	Consultant Team	JMT
Sarah Diehl	Consultant Team	JMT
Julie Pagadun		Neighborhood Fundamentals
Additional Community Members		
Quanita Kareem		Howard County Dept. of Housing and Community Development

Jason Jannati		Howard County Economic Dev. Authority
Tonya Tiffany		

The purpose of this meeting was to focus discussion on the County's housing programs and policy recommendations of the Task Force. These deep dive discussions are to ensure that the Task Force is on the same page with the recommendations before the next community meeting where they will be presented in draft form.

Allysha Lorber kicked off the meeting by thanking participants and introducing Task Force members for attending. She handed the meeting over to Mike Spotts who would be leading the deep dive discussions.

The following items were discussed:

Meeting Overview
- ○ Mike noted that the Task Force indicated during the last meeting we are headed in the right direction with high-level recommendations, and since the last meeting, the team has moved forward in drafting policy detail in that direction. He added that within the work there are some examples where there is a clear path forward, but we want to make sure that the Task Force thinks we are on the right path. This is a first draft of the recommendations that we are marking up.
- ○ If there are different directions that we should be taking, now is the time to encourage that debate between Task Force members.
- There is overlap between recommendations and strategies, many of which will be talked about during the other deep dive discussions. Mike will be highlighting these throughout the course of the meeting, and it may be appropriate to table that discussion for the other meetings.

Challenges for Discussion/Background
- Howard County lacks a cohesive strategy for prioritization, policy/program design, and resource allocation.
- Existing resources are not sufficient to meet current and future capacity and demands (schools, transportation, etc.) while also dedicating funds to housing
- It continues to be difficult to supply housing for diverse populations, with significant needs going forward.
- The COVID 19 pandemic and associated economic disruption is exposing and exacerbating housing insecurity.

Importance of County Policies and Programs
- County interventions are necessary to address needs that the market cannot reach.
- New funding resources are critical to addressing housing needs.
- However, new structures and systems are needed to create a new housing policy framework and effectively deploy resources.
- Interventions fall into three categories that will be discussed throughout the rest of the meeting.

A series of key policy interventions were discussed. Details for recommendations can be found in the accompanying PowerPoint presentation slides. Discussion on policies and intervention recommendations is summarized below:
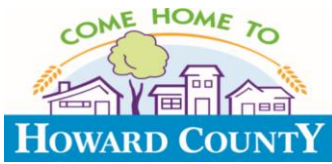
Intervention Category - Improving Housing Sector Coordination and Boosting Capacity

Key Policy Intervention #1: Create inter-agency affordability task force and identify opportunities for collaboration in decision making processes and how to prioritize collective resources to maximize impact.

- **Questions/Discussion**
  - Steve noted that he agrees with all of the above, but it shouldn't be just for affordable housing; it should be for all housing. "Market rate housing" needs to be added to the text.
    - Mike added that we are not just talking about affordable housing. Some metrics would track more of what the broader market is doing, other might target specific housing programs.
  - Peter added that he thought recommendations will really help with coordination and that an ex-officio group should be added to the mix.
    - He also questioned the specific recommended changes and whether or not this is something the group is doing or not.
      - Mike noted that these are all a part of the larger system that goes beyond this point in time.
  - Pat agreed with Peter and had concerns about Steve's note to include all housing types. We do not want to get distracted with market rate issues and take away from the affordability aspect. CDHC should be engaged particularly when talking about downtown, there might be other groups that should also meet with this interagency group.
    - Mike added that we need a core group and then other arrangements. Flexibility will ensure we have the appropriate partners at the right time.
  - Pat noted that we also need to establish affordability and production goals as part of this workgroup that can be updated as part of our recommendations.
  - Brent added that an excellent first step is establishing goals, standards, and showing trends. At a higher level, seeing how services trend will allow for interventions early on and will allow for the system to work together as a cohesive unit.
  - Mavis expressed that she is in support of the inter-agency group that would be working on affordability long term and that we need to identify and track goals and targets. We should set goals that can be looked at and revised over time and agreed with Brent with looking at trends and how things are changing. We need to be active with how we look and measure.
  - Paul noted that we need to make sure we allow opportunities for citizen input throughout the process when looking at targets and goals. Public needs the opportunity to comment and this will ultimately help with approval. The time period should be appropriate based on the work of other agencies – 3 year? 5 year? What is the standard?
    - Mike responded that there is no right answer for time period. 5 years is a good amount, but it depends on pace of change in market and pace of policy change.

Intervention Category - Raising and Deploying Capital for Affordable Housing Production and Preservation

Key Policy Intervention #1: Create new funding resources for affordable housing investment.

- **Questions/Discussion:**
  - Kelly noted that she is not seeing anything about general funds – are we not going after those?
    - Mike added that "Annual discretionary appropriations" is the same idea as general funds.
  - Pat suggested that we consider "sin taxes," taxes should be looked at holistically
    - Steve agreed that taxes should be holistic.
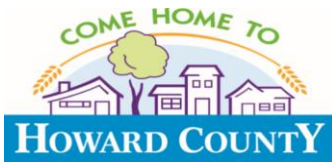
- ○ Peter added that specific numbers would help to facilitate the discussion – i.e., the county is looking to spend x amount a year, once we have a number it is a lot easier to compare options because we don't know how much they would produce.
- ○ Paul noted that it is important to try and target a number for council and it is helpful to have a target that we are looking for. We should also think about one-off funding sources that the county might have. For example, sale proceeds could go into a trust fund. He agreed that there is a benefit and downside to general appropriations.
- ○ Pat wanted to make sure we talk about capital investment and rental assistance.
- ○ Mike added that from a policy design perspective, we can strive to set fee in lieu and on-site requirements to be economically equivalent, and the developer can choose what path works best for the situation. He wanted to get a sense from the group of what the county should focus on.
  - ▪ Peter noted that one of the reasons to focus on production is for fairness. On the other hand, you can get more bang for your buck with fee in lieu. A program that requires more integration and allows for some outs in some situations might be the best balance. If the county has no other source for funding, fee in lieu is extremely important. This is a question that must be answered in conjunction with other policies.
  - ▪ Jeff asked if there was a reason that transfer tax is not a part of the funding source?
    - • Per Kelly, the money goes to the housing department.
    - • Jeff added this is a logical source in terms of funding. Is there enabling legislation that allows for a local income tax? It would be interesting to see if other areas have local income tax?
      - ○ Mike added this is something we would have to look into at the state level as we move through this.

Key Policy Intervention #2: Establish affordable housing trust fund for capital investment in affordable housing.

- **Questions/Discussion:**
  - ○ David asked for details about Montgomery County and how long their policy has been around, etc.
    - ▪ Mike noted that he has Arlington County data, and their biggest source of revenue is general fund appropriation. The revenue fluctuates year to year and has been about 30-40 million in recent years. When a project starts generating revenue, the loan is started to be paid back, and when refinanced, the balance is due to the county.
    - ▪ He added that Montgomery County runs a few additional programs through its housing fund. It funds some rental assistance through housing initiative fund and had also provided support for homeownership projects.
  - ○ Peter added that if we knew there was money for a project it would make production more reliable.
  - ○ Paul stated that he thought it makes more sense for us to recommend funding through a bond issue, and we need to come up with a number. Bonding makes sense if we can work it into our bond issuances. We need to find a source that impacts everyone in the county in some way. Maybe it is an additional amount on property tax, etc. If we don't do something about affordable housing in the county we are going to be a gated county. If we are going to fund up front, a bond issue is appropriate.
    - ▪ David agreed
  - ○ Paul noted that we should not exclude renters – that is the preferred use. Looking at defaults and evictions - maybe there is a trigger that this fund could be used as an emergency resource fund in times like this.
    - ▪ Mike added that yes, we want to dedicate a revenue source and could recommend that an amount of resource is dedicated to x or y.

Key Policy Intervention #3: Explore social impact bonds to address the needs of diverse populations.

- **Questions/Discussion:**
  - ○ Kelly stated that she is the co-chair on the Coalition to End Homelessness and that a lot of this work is being done already. While it is housing work, she felt that we might not want to invest a lot of time in this because another agency in Howard County government is investing a lot of time in this.
    - ▪ Rose added that the National Alliance to End Homelessness did an assessment and looked at needs – learned that it was more individuals that are not chronically homeless – after 90 days someone that was formerly institutionalized but cannot find housing is considered homeless. It is challenging for people with criminal backgrounds to find housing and this might be a good area to focus on. We have a nonprofit that runs permanent support housing programs – 1 is voucher based, the other supported by a HUD grant. We might not see as much tension on this need down the road as other groups are also looking at this but focusing on the need for individuals returning from incarceration would be a good start.
      - • Mike acknowledged that this recommendation would not be a top priority but an area to study moving forward. It could be led by nonprofits working to address specific and challenging needs.
  - ○ Pat noted a concern that we don't want to end up creating new institutions for those with disabilities. We want to provide opportunities for those with disabilities to live among those without. Do not want to put them in a place that would be easy to care for them but not meet their needs. Red flags raised that this is going to raise some Olmstead issues.
    - ▪ Mike added that the team want to work with the group to make sure phrasing meet intents and that we are not calling for segregated living of any kind.
  - ○ Cindy echoed Pat's comments and appreciated the idea of looking at the language to address this.

Intervention Category - Supporting low-income households, vulnerable populations, and households with specialized needs.

Key Policy Intervention #1: Create a local rental assistance program.

- **Questions/Discussion:**
  - ○ Linda noted that she had been waiting to hear an idea like this and that extending limited federal housing voucher program would be a positive move. It would have to be limited like the federal program is and we would have to decide who gets the voucher.
  - ○ Pat added that the state does this and Howard County could do something similar where we target very vulnerable populations to ensure they are on the housing choice voucher list and agree to provide a rental subsidy to them while they wait to get a voucher. It needs to be constrained to a timeframe. There is a Live Where You Work program for Downtown and there is a timeframe on that. Both are programs we could model and use to help individuals that have a tough time.
  - ○ Peter emphasized the huge demand for tax credit projects, he has heard a lot from seniors who are priced out, but this is a hard program for the government to run as it is expensive and the price goes up every year. It needs a good budget solution if we were to do this.
  - ○ Paul agreed with Peter and Pat, added that following up with Pat's example program for Downtown and how it is established with the hospital. We should think about programs that would take advantage of employers that are interested in helping employees and use the hospital as a model. The subsidy is shared so that it is not all local funds and it must be defined in terms of time frame.
    - ▪ He also added that he understood that a problem that some people in the lower income range face is putting the money together to enter a unit: they can't come up with the deposits to start (2 or 3 month's rent, etc.) Perhaps we could develop a program that provides a 0% interest loan or

grant to people of limited income to move in to a unit as a way of assisting so that people could rent an affordable unit.

- ○ Peter added that most of these have been government solutions. Are there other means to incentivize public sector (density bonuses etc.) to look at more closely? Are there others that would not rely on government money to achieve the same results?
- ○ Pat noted another possibility of the National Housing Trust- the state gets ~$3 million a year that has to be used for 30% AMI or below and the state puts it out as gap financing. Other states hold competitions for the funding, Howard County could talk to state about need to use funds and provide some form of rental assistance that way.

Key Policy Intervention #2: Expand access to homeownership through permanently affordable/shared equity homeownership programs.

- **Questions/Discussion:**
    - ○ Kelly asked if shared equity transactions, can be continued if they are already in existence. Would like to see banks investing in communities with innovative mortgage programs to support affordable housing. Would love to see how we can incentivize banks to do so.
        - ▪ Mike noted that a component would be engaging with those lenders to see if they would be interested in engaging with Howard County to establish these programs.
    - ○ Pat added concerns about the concept to preserve existing lower cost units. It would be worth paying more to establish a long-term affordable homeownership opportunity in an area where we currently do not have any. We need to think about using this in areas where we do not have higher concentrations of poverty in areas then we probably need.
    - ○ Bill agreed with Pat's comments.
    - ○ Peter noted that he would be hesitant to encourage low-income buyers to buy into a condo that is tipping out of FHA. They are unsteady. We should encourage a wide range of opportunities. Finding the money for this and how it is going to work is a challenge, but we should explore options to make this possible. We want to look for options that don't' involve a lot of government money per house.
    - ○ Pat added that homeownership is not for everyone and some are better off in a sustainable rental facility.
    - ○ Mike noted that we are not talking about 30% AMI homeownership, we are talking about amounts that would be feasible for homeownership.

Key Policy Intervention #3: Conduct a neighborhood accessibility/mobility assessment and inventory with a specific focus on identifying areas with characteristics that facilitate more independent living opportunities for seniors, persons with disabilities, or other needs

- **Questions/Discussion:**
    - ○ Peter noted no objections but stated this is going to be difficult in the County. It is going to take a lot of infrastructure. We should consider a stronger program to help seniors stay in their houses. It is a health program as much as it a housing program.
        - ▪ Mike added that this will be talked about on Monday.
    - ○ Pat liked this idea; there are several Columbia neighborhoods that are naturally occurring retiring communities – could the County help these communities add for example, a bedroom on the ground floor, etc.?
    - ○ Bill noted that there is an opportunity to create a housing lifecycle and redevelopment opportunities present themselves to put in accessible single-story family houses. This is also a de-concentration opportunity as seniors don't go to school so this would not affect FARM rates.

- Caroline asked if there was an opportunity for those who are aging in a community that is established – could we hit the middle point that we allow for zoning to use a basement as an apartment and a lease to own option for those who need an affordable place to live? That way we are dealing with middle ground in terms of renters but also allowing people to age in their own homes.
  - Mike mentioned the ADU element and could look into more of the lease to own perspective.

Additional Topics for Discussion

Key Policy Intervention #1: Significantly expand landlord outreach programs and/or negotiate rental agreements with property owners.

- **Questions/Discussion:**
  - Steve noted that incentivizing landlords is a good option.
  - Peter added that there is confusion about evictions during COVID – if people knew there was assistance there might not be as many evictions.
  - Pat added particularly with those with disabilities – explaining how to go about getting this assistance is important.
  - Kelly noted that this is something to explore, especially considering the two floods and the challenges that we faced in terms of assistance. The County did not have a program in place to help flood evacuees.

Closing
- Mike noted that we have a great start and encouraged Task Force members to reach out via email to continue the discussion and express any additional concerns.
- We are committed to having draft recommendations available for the public (via the November community meetings flyer) on November 4th, so please get additional comments in ASAP.