

Housing Opportunities for All Workgroup Meeting

September 25, 2020

MEETING NOTES

Key takeaways

- Workgroup members discussed some of the key issues and opportunities created by COVID-19, which has changed the landscape of affordable housing in the county.
 - Participants offered responses highlighting the importance of assisting tenants and preventing evictions among tenants, including multilingual outreach to renters about their rights and available assistance programs.
 - Participants highlighted the need to expand policies that assist landlords and prevent evictions.
 - Participants highlighted potential opportunities regarding funding (including funding for renters and rental properties) and new partnerships that have been created or greatly enhanced due to the pandemic.
- The workgroup identified two key areas to guide workgroup activities for the remainder of 2020 and into 2021. This guidance will be used to inform the topics for future meetings and *Housing Opportunity for All* implementation:
 - Renter stabilization – Participants highlighted addressing some of the COVID-19 related issues of assisting renters and landlords and improving outreach to renters about rights and programs available to them.
 - Funding sources and mechanisms - Participants prioritized responses related to pursuing a dedicated source of funding for the County’s Housing Investment Trust Fund; identifying a source of funding for a landbank, which is being further assessed by the Center for Community Progress; and using vacancy taxes to fund initiatives.
 - The workgroup stressed the importance to taking an inclusive approach to any future activities.

Informational requests

- Universal design policy language
- Housing Investment Trust Fund policy language (recordation tax)

Large-group Reflection and discussion notes

COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities

The landscape has changed since the last time the workgroup met specifically related to the effects of COVID-19 and the challenges that it presents.

Question for discussion: *Based on what you are seeing or experiencing in your work, what housing challenges has COVID-19 brought into greater focus?*

Discussion Notes:

- Evictions, rental assistance, homelessness, housing stability, affordability have all been highlighted by this crisis:

- We have a lot of households that financially live on the bubble
- One of the biggest challenges is around the funding that is available. People have to prove their needs were created by COVID, even though these needs predated COVID in many cases.
- Many households are living paycheck to paycheck – COVID heightens this issue.
- How do we think more comprehensively with our funding – people who had issues prior to COVID have issues accessing funding. How can we be as broad possible with our programs and their parameters?
- There’s a need to address tenant protections; some landlords are trying to push people out of homes. We need a taskforce or group to look at regulatory or legal issues as they try to help people.
- Small landlords need support, especially if tenants aren’t paying rent right now, to cover their own costs.
- We think about the immediate impacts of COVID, but won’t have a full picture of the impact for months.
 - We will see what happens when public safety measures are lifted and people will need to pay back rent or mortgage payments (i.e., need to think strategically what will happen when the moratorium ends).
 - Needs to start thinking about places where targeted rental assistance is needed and how to help small landlords. We need to focus on low-income renters.
 - We need programs that can be in place by January 1, 2021.

Question for discussion: *Based on what you are seeing or experiencing in your work, what housing opportunities has COVID-19 created?*

Discussion Notes:

- Funding and Partnerships:
 - Partnership piece is big – HHS and housing – relationships between landlords and sheriff’s department – working with them to help resolve issues in these area – reduction of evictions
 - Government Agency Collaboration
 - Funding (including funding for renters and rental properties) and new partnerships as potential opportunities created or greatly enhanced due to the pandemic
- Need to begin to look for long term way to reimagine how they deliver services.

Key Workgroup activities through 2020 and into 2021

The table below summarizes the activities or topics that Housing Opportunities for All Workgroup members were asked to prioritize during their meeting on September 25, 2020. From these responses, two main areas to focus on were identified:

1. **Renter stabilization** – Participants offered responses highlighting the importance of assisting landlords and tenants and preventing evictions among tenants, including after the Center for Disease Control’s eviction moratorium expires at the end of 2020. One response focused on multilingual outreach to renters about their rights’ and available assistance programs. In discussion, workgroup and audience members shared that many residents in the county were

already “living on the bubble” before COVID-19. These residents have been hit hard by loss of income or health issues, among other challenges, but cannot always access COVID-19 relief resources because they cannot demonstrate these challenges are directly related to the pandemic’s impact.

- 2. Funding sources and mechanisms** – Participants prioritized responses related to pursuing a dedicated source of funding for the County’s Housing Investment Trust Fund; identifying a source of funding for a landbank, which is being further assessed by the Center for Community Progress; and using vacancy taxes to fund initiatives.

Table 1. Responses to “Across all topics, what is the most important item for the Workgroup to work on in 2020 and 2021?” (n = 15)		
Priority	Frequency	Responses
Renter stabilization	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help landlords who are losing rental income and cannot afford their operating expenses • Eviction Prevention Partnership with Shared Responsibility • Develop program to protect Renters from Eviction Upon Expiration of Moratorium • Multilingual Outreach on Renter's Rights/Available Rental Assistance
Funding needs & mechanisms	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Funding Source for the Housing Investment Trust Fund • Landbanking - Funding Sources • Vacancy Taxes to Fund Initiatives and Encourage Development • Introduce dedicated Housing Trust Fund
Universal design/accessibility policy	3	
Community-serving land	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disposition of public land for housing • Acquiring prime parcel/redevelopment opportunities to acquire to spur affordable housing development in critical location close
Connections to housing/related topics	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to explore strategic ways to develop housing policy in a comprehensive manner with health, social services, and ED • Police changes
Housing preservation (general)	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to preserve existing affordable housing • Preservation of existing affordable housing
<i>*Note that frequency sums to more than 15 due to individual responses including more than one priority, which were counted separately.</i>		