



**Department of Housing and Community Development
Ward 1 Check-In Meeting
July 22, 2015**

**Greater Washington Urban League
2901 14th Street, NW
Washington, DC**

This report details key information regarding the July 22, 2015 Check-in Meeting for Ward 1. The DC Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) hosted this event.



Event Overview

Starting April 8, 2015, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) held eight community Check-In events throughout the District of Columbia. These public events updated residents, business owners, and community stakeholders on DHCD’s current and future projects, and attendees were encouraged to share their thoughts and concerns with DHCD. There were eight sessions, one in each ward. This report concerns the event in Ward 1, which was the seventh for this series.

The DHCD team promoted this event in several ways, including flyers, posters, social media, and postal mailings. DHCD Director Polly Donaldson gave remarks detailing interagency collaboration, new DHCD initiatives, and general agency updates. DHCD staff briefed attendees on current and future projects in their community. Participants then engaged in discussions organized around issue areas. Multiple representatives from DHCD were present to provide context, present on their particular program areas or areas of responsibility, answer questions, and connect with community leaders.

Participant survey results can be found in Appendix A. The scribes’ records and raw conversation notes can be found in Appendix B. Audience feedback notes in the Discussion Analysis section are edited for clarity, but generally follow the trajectory of emerging themes from the conversation.

Discussion Analysis

Following an informational session with DHCD leadership and staff, event attendees gathered in small groups to discuss issues facing their community. The groups generated significant feedback on the issues they saw in Ward 1 and the solutions they believe the District should pursue. Three themes emerged during the meeting: affordability, economic vitality and opportunity, and community development. These themes are reflected in the following summary.

Affordability

Event attendees expressed concerns about affordability, both in terms of creating and retaining affordable housing units. Participants expressed concern about new, high-priced units displacing current ward residents and communities and indicated strong support for government and non-profit programs that establish and preserve affordable housing units.

Audience Feedback

- Many prospective Latino residents want to live in Ward 1. To live comfortably, they need easy access to food, community, and metro transportation, as well as safe access to services and schools. Many people have a budget between \$600 and \$800/month for rent and can’t find appropriate housing. So they move to Ward 4, Ward 7, or Maryland.
- More people share units to split costs or rent a room in a house.
- “Affordable” is different to different people, but the dream is to own.

- There is concern about developers coming and making housing unaffordable. Who is representing DC residents?
- A church is trying to buy the space they are renting to turn into affordable housing units. Who should they talk to? How does this process work?
- Is there a state tax credit pilot for development? [That information will be in the RFP for FY2016. The \$1 million pilot program will unlock additional funds.]
- I am Vietnamese, came here 22 years ago. But when I ask for help, the DC government cannot help me. Every day, the rent is higher and the houses are too expensive. Help me so that I can have a house to live in.
- There are a lot of projects happening. What is happening in Ward 1, and why is the number of new affordable housing units so low? [Ward 3 has a scarcity of land for affordable housing. Over the next year, there will be many more IZ units added to Ward 1 developments.]
- Why aren't homebuyer programs targeted toward townhomes?

Economic Opportunity and Vitality

Participants expressed frustration over a perceived lack of economic opportunities open to Ward residents in finding jobs or starting businesses. A common refrain regarded a lack of information available to Ward residents about the services and programs available to them.

Audience Feedback

- There are too few opportunities for low-income people to start their own businesses. The cost to buy and build out is too much.
- There is a need to educate people about different opportunities open to them, such as grants and loans.
- Are there any new tools that may come out of DHCD to support developers and entrepreneurs?

Community Development

Attendees expressed discontent about changes in the Ward and their impact on community engagement and quality of life. There was concern that gaps in care for the mentally ill can create public safety concerns.

Audience Feedback

- Have we lost our sense of community? More people (density) does not always mean more community.
- Is development haphazard, without a plan? Who is deciding what goes where?
- Unlike 1998's charrette (community meeting) process, there's no deep community planning and engagement.
- Does unplanned development drive people away from business (i.e., Can an area be "too scattered" and overwhelm people?)

- Housing/support for homeless residents is needed, especially for those with mental illnesses. This impacts the public's sense of safety, security and cleanliness. Does this reflect broader trends?
 - Impact of Single Room Occupant (SRO) facilities on neighborhood?
 - Impact of the economy and lack of available, decent jobs
 - Impact of drugs (e.g. K2)
- Planning cycles play a huge role and feed into each other:
 - Development
 - City services
 - Economy
 - Crimes
- Big developers do not have a commitment to the community, and that has an impact. They also do not bring the add-on support services that non-profit developers can provide.
- Kent Base, chair of ANC1a: I've heard aging in place, which means keeping people in their homes. Yet I also advocate for aging in neighborhoods when they can't stay in their homes. The new buildings should make it a priority to serve the aging and the mobility-challenged.

Action Items

DHCD will employ feedback from residents and stakeholders to guide its policy priority areas and communication procedures to better serve the community through a dialogue and process that benefits everyone in the District. There were several lessons learned from this event that could serve upcoming events and future work with DC residents:

1. Event participants asked several questions about contacting their elected representatives and becoming involved in the decision-making process. DCHD could provide information at its events about how to contact local and at-large council members, as well as contact information for local Advisory Neighborhood Commission members. DHCD could also provide information for other city agencies that provide neighborhood services, such as the Office of Planning and the DC Housing Authority.
2. Some event attendees used the service of a translator. This was a community service provided by DHCD that benefitted meeting attendees. This is an important service that allows all people to participate and weigh-in on significant issues in their communities, and we recommend continuing to offer this service at DHCD community meetings.
3. At these events, DCHD could provide information about neighborhood social services available to senior citizens and other populations. Many people expressed interest in these services, and DHCD could provide a public service by providing information in their meeting materials.



4. Questions were raised about development and land use policies, and how decisions could be made. One way to address this confusion at future meetings would be for Director Donaldson or another DHCD representative to summarize the District government's structure and the Department's role within that structure.

Appendix A: Survey Results

Participants were surveyed about their priorities and how they heard about the event. These results have not yet been received.

How familiar are you with DHCD services and programs?		
Response	# of Responses	% of Responses
Very familiar		
Familiar		
Somewhat familiar		
Not familiar		

Most to least important priorities in your community (1=Most important; 6=Least important)		
Issue	Responses	Average Ranking
Redeveloping or restoring abandoned buildings		
Access to storefront façade improvement and small business technical assistance		
Access to first-time home-buyer incentives		
Housing that accommodates the needs of the elderly		
Access to affordable housing for purchase (single-family and multi-family)		
Access to affordable rental housing		

How do you prefer to hear about news, events, and other opportunities from DHCD?		
Response	# of Responses	% of Responses
Postal mail		
E-mail		
DHCD's website		
In-person meetings		
Social media		



How did you hear about the community meeting?		
Response	# of Responses	% of Responses
Email		
A friend or relative		
Social media		
Flyer or poster		
Other		

What is your preferred social media network?		
Response	# of Responses	% of Responses
Facebook		
Twitter		
Instagram		
Other		

Appendix B: Notes

The information below is a compilation of scribe and facilitator raw notes from the large and small group discussions.

Tenants

- The Latino Population wants to live in Ward 1. This means food, community, metro transportation, safe access to services and schools. But many people have a budget between \$600 and \$800/month for rent and can't find anything. So they move to Ward 4, Ward 7, or Maryland.
- More people in units to split costs or they rent a room in a house.
- "Affordable" is different to different people.
- The dream is to own.

Community Development

- There's concern about developers coming and making housing unaffordable. Who's representing DC residents?
- There are too few opportunities for low-income people to start own business. The cost to buy and build out is too much.
- There's a need to educate people about different opportunities open to them, such as grants and loans.
- Have we lost our sense of community? More people (density) doesn't always mean more community.
- Is development haphazard, without a plan? Who is deciding what goes where?
- Unlike 1998's charrette (community meeting) process, there's no deep community planning engagement.
- Does unplanned development drive people away from business, i.e. Can an area be "too scattered" and overwhelm people?
- Housing/support for homeless residents is needed, especially for those with mental illness. This impacts the public's sense of safety, security and cleanliness. Is this a part of broader trends?
 - Impact of Single Room Occupant (SRO) facilities on neighborhood?
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 - Impact of drugs, i.e. K2
- Planning cycles play a huge role and feed/each other:
 - Development
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 - Crimes
- Big developers don't have a commitment to the community, and that has an impact. They also don't have the add-on support services that non-profit developers can provide.



Group Discussion

- A church is trying to buy the space they're renting to turn into affordable housing units. Who should they talk to? How does this process work?
- Is there a state tax credit pilot for development? [That information will be in the RFP for FY2016. The \$1 million pilot program will unlock additional funds.]
- I am Vietnamese, came here 22 years ago. But when I ask for help, the DC government cannot help me. Every day, the rent is higher and the houses are too high. Help me so that I can have a house to live.
- Any new tools that may come out of DHCD that support developers and entrepreneurs?
- Kent Base, chair of ANC1a: I've heard aging in place, which means keeping people in their home. Yet I advocate for aging in neighborhoods when they can't stay in their homes. The new buildings should make it a priority to serve the aging and the mobility-challenged.
- There are lots of projects happening. What's happening in Ward 3, and why is the number of new affordable housing units so low? [Ward 3 has a scarcity of land for affordable housing. Over the next year, there will be many more IZ units added to Ward 3 developments.]
- Why aren't the homebuyer programs targeted toward townhomes?