
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

TESTIMONY OF
JOHN E. HALL
ACTING DIRECTOR

**PR 19-0227, "DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT JOHN E. HALL CONFIRMATION RESOLUTION OF 2011"**

Committee on Housing and Workforce Development
The Honorable Michael A. Brown, Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia

Thursday, June 23, 2011
2 p.m.

John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004



Good afternoon Committee Chairman Brown and members of the Committee on Housing and Workforce Development. I am John E. Hall, Acting Director for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

I. INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin by stating that it is an honor and a privilege to be appointed by Mayor Vincent C. Gray to lead the Department of Housing and Community Development. I am truly excited to serve this City and this Administration, and I look forward to moving forward the Mayor's housing agenda.

Throughout my formative years, a sense of civic responsibility was instilled in me, and this led me to a career in housing and community development. I have worked in all aspects of housing to date – from community development, to lending, to working for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. I view my new role as an opportunity to merge my background and experiences and to have a measurable impact in the District of Columbia.

As you know, the mission of the Department of Housing and Community Development is to create and preserve opportunities for affordable housing and economic development and to revitalize underserved communities in the District of Columbia. I firmly believe that housing stabilizes neighborhoods. Further, community development addresses poverty alleviation and improves the quality of life for residents. Because of the critical need in the city for both quality affordable housing and sustainable neighborhoods, I view DHCD as a pivotal agency.

I will first discuss my background and the experiences that have prepared me for this role. I will then discuss my vision for the Department and some of the strategies and initiatives that are either being implemented or are currently underway.

II. BACKGROUND

As stated earlier, my background prepares me for this position. Most recently, I served in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as Field Office Director for both the District of Columbia Field Office and later the Richmond Field Office. In this capacity, I oversaw HUD program delivery throughout these territories. More specifically, I was the senior leadership official responsible for establishing management priorities for front-office field operations; coordinating Presidential and Secretarial priorities and initiatives; managing and coordinating HUD's field office response to disaster relief efforts; and maintaining effective working relationships with local community groups and elected officials. While I was at HUD, I also served as Financial Transaction Manager in the Office of Affordable Housing Preservation (OAHP), whereby one of my key duties was to review HUD Section 8 project-based multi-family projects participating in the Mark-to-Market Program and make recommendations for non-profit organizations to become the assignee of HUD-held debt.

Prior to joining HUD, I worked for two community development corporations (CDC) in Texas. In these roles, I developed multi-family housing using Low Income Housing Tax Credits and Section 202 housing for the elderly, spearheaded single-family development and managed housing counseling and economic development initiatives. I have also worked in real estate banking and steered non-profit development as part of the Empowerment Zone in upper Manhattan.

My educational background includes a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Michigan, and a Master of Public Administration from The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, a college within the Syracuse University system.

My professional experience in identifying and assessing needs, setting priorities, and achieving missions for organizations will benefit me in this role.

III. VISION FOR DHCD

I will now briefly discuss my vision and goals for the Department. In my first eight weeks on the job, I've hit the ground running and began moving forward with some of the internal and external goals I have set for the Department. I will start by outlining some of the internal initiatives.

a. Internal

I understand that it takes a team to accomplish any goal, which is why it has been very important for me to review the operations of the Department and understand each staff members' role. My goal is for the Department to operate with what I call a "Triple E" rating: operating efficiently, administering programs effectively, and working with high ethical standards. To help ensure that we embody this mantra, I am reviewing the organization of the Department and will realign as necessary to ensure that we are focused on program delivery. Further, I have requested technical assistance with regard to our administration of our HUD-funded programs. In order to fully understand staff members' roles and as a way to get to know the staff, I have instituted what I call "Management Moments," where I am meeting with each employee to discuss his or her function at DHCD, to discuss his or her goals and to ascertain staff development needs.

b. Partnerships

DHCD has a strong network of partner organizations, including developers, community-based organizations, landlords, tenant advocates and many others. I've been meeting with these partners to make sure they understand DHCD's mission and priorities moving forward. These partners have also been vital in my analysis of the Department. For example, during my first week, I conducted a meeting with a cross-section of these partners to determine the Department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, also known as a "SWOT" analysis. I also recently hosted a "Meet and Greet" with our partners to review our Consolidated Plan, which outlines the strategic framework from which DHCD will work within for the next five years. Yesterday, I had a fruitful meeting with members of the Coalition of Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development, and I will continue to engage our partners moving forward.

c. Priorities

The Mayor's One City vision calls for substantially increasing the supply of housing that is affordable to both existing and new residents of the District of Columbia. To realize this vision, we must sharpen the focus of the efforts of DHCD and other District agencies to maximize available resources to spur community development throughout the city. This includes a wide range of affordable housing, including workforce housing and mixed-income communities. The District's Comprehensive Housing Strategy, Five Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans and other policies form the backbone of DHCD's housing and community development priorities. Specific priorities include:

- 1) Providing rental opportunities for low-to-moderate income residents at each spectrum of the Area Median Income, focusing on seniors, families of all sizes, and special needs residents with high housing cost burden;
- 2) Working with the Department of Human Services to provide permanent supportive housing for the homeless;
- 3) Using the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act as a means of creating homeownership opportunities through cooperative ownership, and
- 4) Supporting homeownership for seniors, families and special needs residents with a high housing cost burden.

I also plan to mobilize staff to focus our efforts in target areas of the city. Specifically, we will focus efforts in areas of the city that have the most critical need for development, including parts of Wards 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8. In addition, DHCD staff will support the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) in its implementation of the New Communities Initiative at Park Morton in Ward 1, Northwest One in Ward 6, Lincoln Heights/Richardson Dwellings in Ward 7 and Barry Farm in Ward 8. Transit-oriented development will also be a key focus for the Department, where we target neighborhoods within 1/2 mile of Metro Rail stations, Metro Bus stops or the forthcoming Streetcar stops.

There are many strategies that we will employ to reach these goals. First and foremost, we will make sure that we are good stewards of the both the entitlement funding we receive from HUD and the local funding we receive, mostly from the Housing Production Trust Fund. We will aim to leverage programs across the District and the region, so that we are leveraging additional resources and taking advantage of opportunities that may exist. Another key goal

is to strengthen partnerships with other agencies so that we are utilizing limited resources most effectively. I will also lead the Department in bringing creative, innovative strategies to spur mixed-use development and to implement forward-thinking land use plans.

Each of the Department's actions will be implemented in line with the Mayor's key goals of fiscal stability, job creation and education. For example, we will work to close outstanding projects in the Housing Production Trust Fund pipeline. These and other DHCD projects create temporary, permanent and indirect jobs, and we are working to better quantify how our projects spur economic development through job creation. Additionally, we will create a comprehensive strategy to dispose of land held by DHCD so that vacant and abandoned properties return to the tax rolls. We will also develop an organizational strategic plan that will serve as the navigational tool for DHCD to increase revenue streams for fiscal stability and allow us to operate in an efficient manner through effective collaborations.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, you have my commitment that I will work with focus, diligence and determination to meet DHCD's mission and responsibility to the residents of this great city. My goal is for the Nation's Capital to be a model for success for the country and the world. I have adopted the Athenian Oath as a personal goal and mantra, which states in part that "...we will transmit this city not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us." That is my ultimate goal for DHCD, and for the District, to become greater and more beautiful under my watch and to support Mayor

Gray's vision for "One City." I am available to answer questions from the committee.

Thank you.