

DC wants to expand affordable housing offerings



EQUIPO. Miembros del Departamento de Vivienda y Desarrollo Comunitario durante el recorrido por las nuevas viviendas asequibles en DC.

- **The National Capital Administration continues its renovation and construction plan**

By Tomás Guevara

DC Department of Housing and Community Development Director Polly Donaldson, whose office is located in Anacostia, told El Tiempo Latino on a tour of the properties that this two-home renovation project has been a direct investment by the Department to expand the offer of affordable homes in the District of Columbia.

The two renovated homes were part of a historic neighborhood on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, and were in a state of neglect and with great damage, so it was decided to dismantle them and move them to the other neighborhood that has gradually become a central and developing area in Anacostia.

"We rebuild and pay for the entire renovation and would like to say that these are affordable housing in Anacostia. For example this house costs \$280 thousand dollars and has 3 bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms; and the other ongoing home costs \$230,000. Both are intended for family groups of at least 3 members in each," Director Donaldson said.

Families who may qualify for the purchase of this home must have an income of no more than \$60 and \$70 thousand per year as a requirement of the capital government National.



ASEQUIBLE. La directora del Programa de Vivienda y Desarrollo Comunitario, Polly Donaldson, frente a una de las viviendas.

On the tour, director Polly Donaldson joined other members of the department she leads, including project makers such as Tsega Bekele, Chief of Staff and Deneira Owens, Property, Procurement and Dispositions Manager, who manage the process's carpentry.

These restored homes have the original elements of the architecture, more adaptations with materials and designs that make them unique pieces while retaining the seal of houses of historical value.

An opportunity for D.C. residents

Under the affordable housing approach, Principal Donaldson emphasized that all District residents can apply for the acquisition of one of the properties, provided they qualify, such as income and the number of members. This means that immigrant families are eligible to participate in the program.

For her part, Mayor Muriel Bowser said her government's plan is to continue to optimize the terrain to increase the number of affordable housing in the city, and thus maintain housing supply for low-income families in all neighborhoods, a job where communities must enlist to drive project development.

"We know that every new project here in the District of Columbia brings the potential for new opportunities and housing, and we will not allow a piece of land to be wasted. We look forward to working with our community partners to make the best use of these lots and help families move into beautiful, affordable homes in the historic Anacostia neighborhood," Mayor Bowser said of this project.

New constructions

The Department of Housing and Community Development is about to start work on two other lots, one of 32 thousand square feet and one of 16 thousand, always in the southeast of the capital, where it is intended to maintain residential neighborhoods with an optimal population density.

The department's director explained that the city has not established boundaries of how far new multi-storey building neighborhoods can go, and what would be single homes only, because "it is best to keep open dialogue with communities for a fair balance of development."

The new projects in the plan are located in the available lots on the corner of 58th and Dix streets in the southeast. This area is registered in the city as "MU-4", which means that buildings of moderate densification can be built.

The other lot is part of V and W streets, also in the southeast of the capital in Anacostia, listed as "category R-3", and lends itself to the construction of a complex of three individual homes for low-income families.

The national capital and its surroundings maintain a constant increase in the cost of housing. In DC the average home purchase price is \$632 thousand \$247. According to real estate specialist Zillow, the value of houses has risen by 1.8% in the last four years and growth projections reach up to 4% by 2021. This landscape, which could represent opportunities for good investment for many buyers, creates great pressure on the most vulnerable neighborhoods.