

**Community-Based Organization Focus Group – Meeting Notes**November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015

10am – 12pm

DHCD's Housing Resource Center

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) organized a one-day focus group with its community-based organizations contracted to provide housing services, small business services, market DHCD's programs, and administer grants. Consultations helped inform numerous sections of the Consolidated Plan, including housing development needs and non-housing community development needs. Thirty-three community partners attended the meeting (attendance list is provided on page 4).

DHCD provided a brief overview of the day and then requested that organizations self-select into one of three sub-groups: housing, small-business technical assistance, and storefront façade improvements. Questions were provided to attendees in advance of the meeting. Each table was staffed and moderated by a DHCD representative, focusing on the following questions:

**How can DHCD expand upon existing programming to better meet affordable housing and economic development needs and goals of its stakeholders?**

*Small Business Technical Assistance (SBTA):* Target more economic development in Wards 7 & 8; provide more funding for community-based economic development activities that could be filtered through the non-profits who administer the SBTA program; promote job creation in line with education levels of residents of affordable housing, expand location/operating presence of SBTA providers; more marketing/outreach efforts, such as incorporating small businesses at an expo; help owners build their credit such through micro-lending, training classes, or financing towards operation

*Storefront Façade Improvement:* More marketing representation of program; better coordination with SBTA program; eliminate owner match contribution; better outreach to limited English proficient populations; better coordination with the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs and the Office of Tax and Revenue

*Housing:* Promote greater transparency at DHCD and among community-based partners; enhance HPAP so that it can be a major lender - increase funding, improve overall service; better align the Lead Safe Washington and Single Family Residential Rehabilitation Program (SFRPP) into one program; guarantee loans to developers; continue to support housing counseling; increase funds for seed-funding for tenants who exercise their rights under the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act; standardize and coordinate home ownership programs such as HPAP and IZ. The requirements to apply for the two programs are different; expand the SFRRP program to consider grant work that extends beyond handicapped accessibility and roofing. The sewer line infrastructure in DC is aging and many homeowners (seniors in particular) are finding themselves facing costly sewer line replacements that they can't afford on their own nor will they qualify for the SFRPP program because they've taken out HECM loans on their property; greater foreclosure prevention counseling

**How has the clientele/market changed over the past 5 years? What do you think the market will look like in the next 5 years?**

SBTA – businesses served and communities’ consideration and other ways to evaluate, business attractions with the ability to expand corridors.

Storefront Façade Improvement– DHCD focus on areas that marketing will not take care of such as from DC government employees, include SBTA and do not leave them unnoticed, boasting on media updating the website to include major campaign before and after photos, include small businesses, and include people stories – change focus to keeping seniors in their homes, support middle class and immigrants.

Housing - More developers seeking more grants; DHCD needs to decide on its true focus - are we a lender or an agency that fosters community development/affordable housing? Do we support middle-income vs. extremely low-income, new population that recently moved to DC vs only existing residents; If stabilizing the current population is a goal, the senior citizens need more help - programs to help fund repairs and emergency funds for taxes and insurance when people are in a bind would make a huge difference to many who are struggling.

**Are there target populations for which DHCD should consider new programming or initiatives?**

SBTA – more connection with the landlords and build in incentives for them such as a tax penalty or DHCD bring them a “ready to go prospect” - Business privilege tax credit model

Housing – New programs with more attention to fair housing; more focus and dollars for 30% AMI housing; reconsider the Homestead program; support needs of seniors; address vacant, blight and abandoned properties in lien tax status; support training for condominiums and coops; support senior homeowners through a program that provides housing assistance such as a reverse mortgage where the city is owner;

Storefront Façade Improvement– stress language of DHCD, clarify the requirements for choosing participants, have a mid-grant cycle, coordinate with other agencies

**From a capacity building point of view, what can DHCD do to better assist its stakeholders? What can DHCD do to better assist you in meeting those needs?**

SBTA –hire junior staffers; small business impact study needed; better communication through the pipeline between partners and DHCD; help older businesses compete with newer owners – keep the pace with new developments; DHCD could help its stakeholders by allowing them to participate more in the decision making process - seems like everything is top down

Storefront Façade Improvement- DSLBD/DMPED/DHCD coordination; train the trainer for Technical Assistance providers

Housing – Support non-profit developers to access money to city owned property; support asset management to preserve affordable housing; better support CBOs operational capacity to provide technical assistance – increase staff, online portals for all programs, better marketing for all programs from DHCD; provide multi-year grants or provide CBOs advances to better plan multi-year strategic plans;

**How can we augment our services to more effectively reach a low to severely low populations?**

SBTA – Similar to the Housing Production Fund, we need a Commercial Production Fund, providing more funds personnel, micro retail incubators, money to support economic development, promotion of underserved corridors, needed data analysis to support corridors

Storefront Façade Improvements: No Comments Given

Housing – Media campaign to support locals, expedite access to emergency rental assistance, increase housing stock for extremely low income residents, identify DC owned properties and use these for very low income housing, develop safe SROs, support development of micro units and support transitional housing developments; eliminate denial letters (100% financing to very low-income); increase tenant-based rental subsidies; expand housing programming to better meet housing needs

ATTENDEE	ORGANIZATION
1. Byers, Andre	DCCH
2. Banks, Delta	ULS
3. Lithe, Tom	DC Facades
4. Mossi, G.	GWHCCF
5. Gilchrist, Charlene	ULSFNE
6. Lemos, Fernando	MICASA
7. Brody-Capper, Laisha	DC Fashion Foundation
8. Gautier, Duane	ARCH
9. Flanagan, Tim	WACIF
10. Molyneaux, Alisa	EBOL
11. Moore, Sean	CHCTOC
12. Scruggs, Sarah	MANNA
13. Peoples, Christine	ULS-SE
14. Tyson, Annie	ULS-SE
15. Yon, Walda	LEDC
16. Stephenson, Amanda	AEDC
17. Kim, Jane	MOAPSA
18. Bilonick, Marla	LEDC
19. Ray, Monica	CHDTDC
20. Brown, Jane	ULS
21. Martinez, Anibel	CARECEN
22. Thomas, Denise	GWUL
23. Aquiro, Nate	Legal Counsel for the Elderly
24. Acosta, Oswaldo	LEDC
25. Queen, Yolanda	Lydia's House
26. Shepperd, Patrice	Lydia's House
27. Hampton, Tim	WAICF
28. Siegel, Marian	HCS
29. Jones, Deborah	Ward 7 Business Partnership
30. Turner, Tracey	ULS
31. Ward, David	ULS-SE
32. Williams, Bertha	ULS-FN
33. Vaughn, Kevin	CHCTDC