

Pine Street Neighborhood Revitalization Meeting

Tuesday July 21, 2020.

Notes taken by Cindy Stone

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Maryland Department of Housing & Community Development
Neighborhood Revitalization

Status Report:

- The position of Housing Specialist has been filled, and a new staff person will start in August
- The City is in the process of contracting for demolition of 4 properties - 517 and 522 High Street; and 403 and 810 Pine Street. Three of these lots will be used to expand side yards, 522 High Street will receive new construction. (CDBG process was previously discussed if adjacent lots were to be provided to existing homeowners.)
- The big picture - 2 houses are completed; a total of 22 new houses could be built
 - Habitat has completed the construction of 2 houses - 507 High Street (sold) and 519 High Street
 - Habitat has 1 house under construction = 603 High Street
 - Habitat is going to construct 1 house on a combined lot in the 400 block of Pine Street
 - Habitat is going to construct about 6 houses on Wells Street by combining lots
 - There are 6 potential buildable lots on Chesapeake Court
 - There are 4 potential buildable lots on Douglas Street
 - There is one buildable lot at 522 High Street
 - And there are more potential lots that could be developed throughout the neighborhood
- One housing rehabilitation was completed at 521 Pine Street
- The City is okay to proceed with the acquisition of properties on Douglas Street with their State funding awarded last year.
- There are issues with qualifying homeowners for rehabilitation using CDBG or DHCD's Special Loans programs.
- There was a discussion about the cost to build houses, appraised value and the sales price. Habitat houses typically appraise at more than they are sold for. Concerns about the need for grant funding/subsidy needed for construction, to ensure that units are affordable.
- On the subject of using companies like Beracah Homes (modular construction), there are issues with power lines. Habitat will not be able to do modular (for lack of correct word) homes on Wells Street because of the power lines. This will be an issue in most of the Pine Street area.

It could be a better option for the Pine Street fringe areas and would be feasible on Chesapeake Court.

- Habitat Board looking for ways to move people into housing faster using the Habitat financing model

Ideas/Discussion:

- On cleared lots, use CDBG funds for site work and then give site ready lot to non-profit or CHDO housing developer to finance and construct houses
- Under Phase 2, allow for 2 subrecipients - Habitat and another - to use CDBG funds to construct housing which could be sold or rented
- CDBG funding can be used to pay for rehabilitation of rental properties. All the same requirements are in place except that it would have to be a loan to the owner. New idea... maybe Habitat or another could use CDBG to acquire, renovate and rent existing houses. There is no limit on the amount of funds used to renovate a house, but we all know that many would not be worth fixing. Fix the neighborhood by "buying out" existing landlords and replacing them with better ones.
- Elimination of obstacles to success - blight, bar on Chesapeake Court, difficult landlords, code enforcement, crime - perhaps the acquisition of the bar could be a significant step towards success

Other issues brought up during the public meeting:

- The community wants to see movement on the "big picture" for the revitalization of Pine Street community including non-housing elements
- Concerns about discussion of new housing construction when area still looks the way it does and is blighted
- Comments about lack of visible activity and progress

Next steps:

- Community meeting at Sailwinds
- Small Area Plan