

COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST TASK FORCE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2025

Members Present:

Eric C. Olson, Council Member (District 3), Chair

Wala Blegay, Council Member (District 6), Vice-Chair

Stephanie Prange Proestel, Executive Director, Housing Initiative Partnership (HIP)

Bryan Franklin, Director, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

Pastor Michael Dickson, Executive Director, Metamorphosis Community Project

Warren Burris, Senior Advisor/Director of Program Operations. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Ashley Johnson-Hare, Deputy Director, Prince George's County Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

Lakisha Hull, Director, Prince George's County Planning Department

Consultant:

Ms. Brenda Torpy

Staff Present

Rana Hightower, PHED Committee Director

Julio Murillo, Chief of Staff, Council Member Olson's Office

Charlotte Aheart, PHED Committee Assistant

James Walker-Bey, Associate Clerk of the County Council

WELCOME ATTENDANCE / INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Olson welcomed everyone and expressed appreciation for all the task force members' agreement to participate in the task force. He also welcomed WUSA 9, which had joined the meeting. He expressed excitement about getting more affordable housing in Prince George's County.

He introduced Ms. Brenda Torpy as the national leader on community housing trusts. Ms. Torpy established the first Community Housing Trust in the Country in Burlington, Vermont. Chair Olson worked with Ms. Torpy to create a Community Housing Trust in College Park, and he wanted to make sure this housing tool would be available countywide. Chair Olson explained that a report must be completed within one year of the task force's start date. The task force will meet monthly, potentially through the summer and fall. All persons in the meeting introduced themselves.

Vice Chair Blegay also explained that the County Council enacted legislation to create the Prince George's County Land Bank Program to address some of the issues with affordable housing, and the task force will be an extension to address the shortage of affordable housing in the County.

DISCUSSION

Ms. Brenda Torpy gave an overview of the Community Land Trust (CLT) presentation, which covered the organization's structure, homeownership under the program, the shared equity structure, the program's history and growth, benefits to homeowners and the community, steps to selling the property, shared equity homeownership performance, and federal, state, local, and private funding sources to fund the CLT.

Ms. Torpy discussed a real-life example of how a CLT operates with the Champlain Housing Trust in Vermont.

Ms. Torpy also recommended that the task force members download and read Preserving Affordable Homeownership Municipal Partnerships with Community Land Trusts by Mr. John Emmeus Davis and Kristin King-Ries to obtain additional information on what communities are doing.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Vice Chair Blegay asked if CLTs have a group ownership structure.

Ms. Torpy explained that the corporation or nonprofit owns the land and covenants that homeowners own the homes.

Vice Chair Blegay explained that there is a program in Washington, DC, where if you sell a home, you cannot sell the property for market rate. If a person buys a house at an affordable rate, will they be able to sell it at the market rate?

Ms. Torpy explained that the person would be subject to the terms they agreed upon for affordability, so no. The property would need to be sold to a qualifying family.

Ms. Stephanie Prange Proestel with HIP asked if one hundred and twenty (120 %) percent of Area Median Income (AMI) is still being used, even with the CLT owning the land?

Ms. Torpy explained that according to Champlain Housing Trust, yes, but until recently, buyers could afford to purchase a home at one hundred (100%) percent of AMI; now, most buyers cannot afford it because it is a hot market. The one hundred and twenty (120%) percent is the window. Not many homes are sold at one hundred (100%) or above the AMI because of the restriction. Most buyers are below eighty (80%) percent of the AMI. The average is seventy (70%) percent AMI buying the homes. The CLT helps homeowners sell their property.

Ms. Stephanie Prange Proestel asked if the housing appraisals review the total property (land and improvements) or if the land is excluded from the appraisal.

Ms. Torpy explained that the total property is included in the appraisal.

Ms. Stephanie Prange Proestel asked if the CLT had a situation during the foreclosure crisis where the property value dropped below the original purchase price.

Ms. Torpy said not too much because the real estate market did not crash in Vermont; there was an economic crash, and the market flattened.

Ms. Stephanie Prange Proestel asked, "From a logistical standpoint with staffing, is there a break-even number where you need a minimum number of properties in the CLT where economically it makes sense from an administrative standpoint to sustain the land trust?"

Ms. Torpy explained that a start-up funding is needed for support, and the question depends on numerous variables. The elements could include support from a community development office or county government. The task force will discuss the City of Des Moines, Iowa, in Polk County, where they have just started a start-up by contracting with a nonprofit-like HIP.

Ms. Stephanie Prange Proestel asked if there is a floor for affordability under the CLT. Is there a percentage of the Area Median Income (AMI) below which the CLT would not want to offer homeownership? Is it fifty (50%) to eighty (80%) percent below AMI?

Ms. Torpy explained that you do not see below fifty (50%) percent of AMI. A person needs to be able to obtain a mortgage. There were some instances where the Vermont CLT did offer homeownership to persons who participated in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8).

Ms. Ashley Johnson-Hare with DHCD asked how long it takes to complete the closing to purchase the property.

Ms. Torpy explained that the closing timeframe depends on the bank's approval. An application is done with the CLT, which generally takes ninety (90) days to approve. The process goes back and forth between the CLT and the bank.

Mr. Warren Burris with HUD asked if there is an education requirement for banks in the area that may not have dealt with land trusts and shared equity purchases? Do CLTs use regular commercial banks?

Ms. Torpy explained that the CLT has used every type of bank, mortgage company, and credit union. In each region, we must look at the banking environment. Many large banks, like Wells Fargo, support loans for CLTs. Many national banks are informed about CLTs, but local banks may need education, so there is training and education for those entities.

Mr. Burris asked Chair Olson about the County surplus land program. Is the County willing to add surplus land to the land bank to help start that program?

Chair Olson explained that Vice Chair Blegay has been working on placing County surplus land into a land bank and moving the land bank land into a trust. Vice Chair Blegay explained she is exploring requiring surplus properties to be considered first right of refusal for the land bank. Any residential property would go to affordable housing. The concern is limiting the County Executive, but legislative ideas are under consideration.

Mr. Burris also wanted task force members to consider that the federal government is moving toward transferring Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) programs to the local level. Also, consider that the County is seventy (70%) percent AMI and surrounded by seven of the richest counties in the country. When program policies are written, it must be considered that Prince George's County's median income is \$105,000, and the AMI is \$152,000.

Pastor Michael Dickson requested information to prepare for the meeting. Ms. Torpy explained she could give background information for task force members to read.

Ms. Torpy suggested that task force members read "Preserving Affordable Homeownership Municipal Partnerships with Community Land Trusts" by John Emmeus Davis and Kristin King-Ries.

Here is a link to the publication.

go.lincolnst.edu/preserving-affordable-homeownership-full.pdf?_gl=1*bfpwqv*_ga*NzY2MjlzMDkzLjE3NDkyMjA0MjY.*_ga_26NECLE3MM*czE3NDkyMjA0MjUkbzEkZzAkdDE3NDkyMjA0MjUkajYwJGwwJGgw

A PDF version of the publication will also be sent with the task force meeting invitation.

NEXT MEETING

During the next meeting, Ms. Torpy explained that the task force will discuss The Opportunity: Public-Nonprofit Partnerships.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:35.

Wednesday, July 7, 2025, on motion of Chair Olson, seconded by Mr. Bryan Franklin, the Community Housing Trust Task Force voted to approve the meeting with amendments.