

Developing a Housing Strategy and Action Plan: A Case Study

Approaches Used in
Montgomery County, MD

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A Housing Strategy: Where to Begin

- Look at your current organization
- Evaluate your current programs
- Get feedback from your customers and partners
- Evaluate the potential resources available:
 - Financial resources
 - Partners, such as non profits
 - Political support
 - Staffing within the organization
 - Legal authority

Figure out What You are Trying to Achieve

- ❑ If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there
- ❑ Solve the problems in facing your community not the problems of other communities you read about in journals
- ❑ Don't fall into the typical traps of developing a housing policy

Traps to Avoid

- ❑ Data collection: avoid endless data collection, some of it is very difficult to obtain
- ❑ Do not adopt a policy from another jurisdiction just because it looks good or won an award
- ❑ Do not prepare a policy in isolation: get input from other groups.
- ❑ Secretly developed policies do not get implemented

Look at your Current Organization

- What is the internal climate of your organization?
 - Is there a customer focus and feedback mechanism?
 - Is it well managed?
 - Is there a spirit of collaboration and teamwork?
- Montgomery county 1995

What to look for In Your Programs

- Who is the program serving?
- Are the resources appropriate to the task?
- Are you measuring the effectiveness of the program?
- How does this program relate to other programs?
- Who are your team members or interested parties?

Get Feedback from Interested parties

- Initiate customer feedback system
- Meet with organizations that are interested in affordable housing or housing programs:
 - the apartment owners organization,
 - tenants rights groups,
 - neighborhood organizations,
 - non profit partners, etc
- Meet with elected officials or other departments to determine areas of mutual interest

Case Study: Montgomery County MD

- Policies and Programs
 - Code Enforcement
 - Housing Trust Fund
 - Neighborhoods Alive!

Montgomery County in 1995

- Little focus on the customer
- Poor morale
- Out dated policy
- Poorly managed sections
- Rivalry between senior staff

Warning Signs

- “Housing Policy for the Eighties” still in place in 1995
- Physical separation of staff by section
- Roof collapse in old building
- Hours of operation for the public very limited
- No strategic plan

Code Enforcement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Previous Situation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No technology ■ Only 10% inspection ■ County attorney not interested in cases ■ No landlord training ■ No tenant information ■ All buildings treated the same | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ New Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Each inspector has hand held device ■ 100% inspection of at risk buildings ■ Landlord training sessions ■ Tenant selection software ■ Landlord /tenant handbook ■ Work closely with attorneys |
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Housing Trust Fund

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Previous Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No annual funding ■ Limited information on fund available ■ No outreach to non profits ■ No strategy for projects to fund ■ Decisions by division chief | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ New Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Annual funding up to \$16 million and up ■ Loan committee ■ Target funds to preservation and rehabilitation ■ Outreach to non profits ■ Work closely with human services |
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Housing Trust Fund

- ❑ Established in 1989
- ❑ Now dedicated 2.5% of property taxes minimum
- ❑ This year \$30 million
- ❑ Soft second loans to nonprofit and for profit developers
- ❑ Layered with many programs
- ❑ Has produced over 8,000 units
- ❑ Leveraged \$6 to every county dollar

Neighborhoods Alive!

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Previous policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scattered used of rehabilitation ■ No communication between sections ■ Limited hours for tenant complaints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ New policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify at risk neighborhoods ■ Send teams from all sections ■ Priority funding with CDBG and trust fund ■ Work with public works and other departments |
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Outcomes

- ❑ Several neighborhoods turned around
- ❑ Renovation and preservation of 8,000 affordable and moderate priced units over 10 years
- ❑ Many non profit partners
- ❑ Staff morale and productivity increased
- ❑ Policy and strategy clearly understood

New Housing Policy Adopted

- ❑ Evaluation of old programs completed
- ❑ New strategies tested out
- ❑ Outreach to partners and stakeholders
- ❑ Action plan to increase affordable housing
- ❑ Support by stakeholders
- ❑ Adopted by County Council



For More Information

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