

Racial Equity Task Force – Sub-Group Meeting to Identify Themes and Draft Recommendations

THEMES

Explore: Can we really impact the Master/General Plan?

- Within the PSA 60% of the land is single-family detached. This may be where we can impact the master plan process.
 - We're clearly creating a segregated community with our land use policies – it's obvious if we look at the maps – can we tell this story clearly? To whom and how?
 - Without changing the land use in Howard County racial and economic segregation is our trajectory. We must change the land use.
- How can we take school ratings out of the housing equation?
- How can we (Land Use & Housing Sub-group) help integrate schools?
 - Creating Affordable Housing opportunities in a much broader swath of the county (Affordable housing is extremely limited in its range in the county)

Explore: Are these demographic segregation trends driven by historical factors? (What is our Howard County Story?)

- To expand housing options without addressing possible historical factors of segregation trends is to invite potential culture clashes. How could we avert? Would it be worth the effort?
- Is this how systemic racism is showing up in Howard County in 2021?

Explore: Is the PSA really limiting housing development? (Or is it an excuse to preserve segregated housing and education?)

- If they can provide water and sewer for those huge houses (many of which are the better part of 10K feet), why not think outside of the box in terms of the type of housing?
 - What about a 2-Plex, 4-Plex, or 6-Plex house? (note there is creative development precedent in other markets – see articles)

- Building is happening at a “ferocious” rate not with people but with huge housing large enough to be “a 6-unit apartment house.”
- We’re not getting “open land” we’re getting high-end development
- Build and present a strong case for why we should and can be more intentional, creative, and equitable west of the PSA.
- We can push back on the current “reasoning” behind the different development protocols in Western Howard County
- Change the zoning:
 - The area is zoned for 1-3 acre lots.
 - If we change the zoning, we’ll change what can be built on it.
 - We can build 4-6 family multi-family housing on a 3-acre lot.
 - We’ll never do any of this if this line is drawn forever.
- What’s really happening in the West?
 - It appears to be more like urban sprawl
 - We seem to be losing agricultural land and it’s turning into large lot houses. That’s not what “preservation” is.
 - How can we expand the kind of housing in the west (townhouses, cottages, bungalow’s, 4-plexes, etc.)?

Explore: Is there a diversity problem on the zoning board itself?

- Our elected County Council serves as the zoning board.
- Does the County Council represent the diversity of the community?
 - If not, how can we make sure there is diverse representation (reflecting the diversity of the county) at the table where decisions are made?

CATEGORIES OF WORK:

- I. **Narrative: There’s a need for narrative change and truth-telling**
 - This will inform the public and provide a layer of accountability
 - School Quality: Debunk the myth that school ratings/test scores = better schools.
 - Despite recent legislative efforts, there is still a strong connection (through official or implied suggestion) between housing and school ratings)
 - Cultural Welcome – can we help create an environment so that all people feel a sense of belonging and welcome all over Howard County

- What is the story behind the concentration of white people west of the PSA?
- Why do black people primarily reside in areas where there is multifamily housing in Howard County?
- Let's not code, let's name structural racism and economic segregation for what it is.
- Raise the recognition of this bias to decision makers at the county level and advocate for policies that will, as much as possible, take the ratings out of the equation when it comes to housing.
- "School Ratings" = Code for where upper income people are clustered. We need to build a narrative around this so-called "tool" that must go away as a guide for how this county steers housing. This is old-fashioned redlining "gone underground!"

II. Planning now for changing the PSA:

- East: Opportunities for rezoning – low and high density
- West: Same opportunities
 - 1-3 acre plots can be re-zoned and considered for multi-family use.
 - There are certain areas within the PSA that are also zoned for a low-density residential when they don't need to be – may be an idea for a short-term solution.
 - Note: Other markets where this is creative development is happening to diversity
 - Revisit "Fee in Lieu of" principal. Needs to be heavily challenged.

III. Additional Research:

- Location of Schools/School Rating Information overlaid
- Historic Information on Land Use & Zoning
- Facts about the zoning policies in place and ordinances that could be potential obstacles.

- Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO): Would this limit growth and development options?
 - Our recommendations about changing the zoning will end up touching on school construction since it's a real zoning issue. It's a topic we have to recognize.
- Note: There is a time limit with APFO schools, the development will go ahead and build a new school anyway – we need to know what this is so that it can be a part of our discussion.
 - Are there any other existing policies ordinances that are also drivers of inequity and segregation?

Phil's notes from Heather McGee's book:

- Heather has written extensively about the costs of housing discrimination to the whole country. She says that housing in predominately black neighborhoods is valued at 23% less than similar housing in white neighborhoods. This has really got me thinking. Discrimination costs the US \$156 Billion dollars in lost housing values, tax income, and the wealth of black families. Here in our village of Oakland Mills, Columbia, it has led to the loss of house values, under-resourced schools, amenities, and loss of local retail businesses like banks, gas stations, pubs, etc. A real lack of commercial investment in an otherwise affluent region.
- There is definitely a strong bias in Howard County towards school redistricting that concentrates poor kids to districts with high poverty rates and concentrates affordable multiple housing units in these same communities. In our own community school redistricting continues to move kids from single-family homes out of our district and kids from multi-family homes in. These practices will not maintain healthy diverse communities.

From Jessica:

Please read this article and let me know if you all think we should reach out to this organization for guidance and information.

<https://thephiladelphiacitizen.org/desegregate-ct/?fbclid=IwAR1gOD1jxaGNzN-5u1QDe69gUQAjRkOxTQOX38iSvosPYO71y4WOU4bveyI>