

CHCD's Public Statement

Good morning,

I am LaChele Kellam, the Executive Director of the Cherry Hill Development Corporation, and I am joined by my partner, Vonnette Harris, President and CEO of Kairos Development. We extend our gratitude to the Ways and Means Committee for affording us the opportunity to address you today.

We are here to emphasize the significance of authorizing the sale of Patapsco Elementary to the Cherry Hill Development Corporation. This transaction is pivotal in our ongoing efforts to advocate for our community and enhance the socioeconomic conditions of Cherry Hill.

The transfer of Patapsco Elementary School to CHDC holds immense importance in achieving our objectives. Firstly, it empowers us to further our mission of constructing quality homes for Cherry Hill families, ensuring they have access to safe and sustainable housing options. Secondly, it serves as a cornerstone in enhancing the development capacity and long-term sustainability of our organization.

Cherry Hill stands as a quaint yet resilient gem, nestled amidst Baltimore's Peninsula. With the heartbeat and resilience of its ancestry, this historic African American community boasts a rich heritage of triumph over adversity. From elected officials to prominent business owners, educators, attorneys, faith leaders, and community advocates, each individual has woven their story into the vibrant fabric of this community. It's these collective contributions that have brought us to this pivotal moment in time.

Today, this Ways and Means Committee has an important decision to make. Permitting the Mayor and City Council the authority to transfer the title of Patapsco Elementary School to the Cherry Hill community; so that we, CHCD, and our partners can build new, affordable homes for Cherry Hill families. If the Committee will indulge me for a few moments, I would like to outline the significance of this decision.

Approving the sale of Patapsco Elementary to CHDC sends a powerful message to the Cherry Hill community: we are seen, valued, and worthy of investment. This decision signifies an end to waiting on the sidelines, no longer relegated to the outskirts of the city's economic agenda. It's a declaration that Cherry Hill is not just a priority, but a vital contributor to the city's growth and prosperity.

Patapsco Pointe serves as a prime example of equitable community development, embodying the goals, objectives, and principles outlined in DHCD's Framework for Community Development. Originating from a comprehensive six-month master planning process led by CHDC, this visionary project is deeply rooted in community inspiration.

Aligned with the 2020 Cherry Hill Transformation Plan, Patapsco Pointe capitalizes on the community's strengths while forging vital connections with ongoing investments in Port Covington, Middle Branch Park, and the Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center. This development represents a proactive approach, prioritizing community needs and aspirations.

As a build-first, community-focused initiative, Patapsco Pointe is committed to fostering a mixed-income environment, catering to families with incomes ranging from 30 to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Crucially, it seeks to challenge and reverse the effects of past government-endorsed racist policies that

have historically marginalized and under-resourced the community, both publicly and privately. Through Patapsco Pointe, we aim to chart a new course towards a more inclusive and thriving future for Cherry Hill and its residents.

Patapsco Pointe represents a pivotal step forward, offering new, energy-efficient homes designed to alleviate the housing cost burden for families. This development will make a modest yet meaningful contribution to addressing Baltimore City's pressing need for affordable housing options. Moreover, Patapsco Pointe is committed to supporting local businesses, with our development team comprising several Baltimore area firms.

Furthermore, Patapsco Pointe prioritizes diversity and inclusion, providing opportunities for minority and women participation at every level. Today, we stand before you as two African American, women-led organizations, spearheading a complex real estate transaction. Our presence here serves as a testament to progress and inclusivity in action.

Both CHDC and Kairos proudly hold a 20% ownership and equity stake in the project, showcasing our unwavering commitment to community involvement and empowerment. Furthermore, CHDC's Right of First Refusal ensures that community ownership remains a priority even after the tax credit compliance period, solidifying our dedication to fostering lasting community empowerment and ownership.

I implore this Committee to reaffirm the City's stance in endorsing community-led initiatives, where those most affected have a genuine voice and the opportunity to shape economic development projects in their neighborhoods. As Patapsco Pointe is a community-driven endeavor, there is no room for hidden agendas, information gaps, or lack of participation. The concerns of our community are, and will always be, paramount.

It's worth noting that this development will not displace any low to moderate-income households, further cementing our commitment to preserving the fabric of our community. CHDC's role in this project is backed by the overwhelming support of the community, as evidenced by the numerous letters of support we've received.

In conclusion, Patapsco Pointe stands as a multifaceted initiative that addresses several critical needs in our community:

- (i) It effectively combats blight,
- (ii) Expands access to affordable, energy-efficient housing,

- (iii) Is driven by community input and involvement,
- (iv) Creates ample opportunities for minority and women participation,
- (v) Facilitates community ownership,
- (vi) Strengthens the capacity of a local non-profit,
- (vii) Complements ongoing local investments in and around Cherry Hill.

For these compelling reasons, I am confident that you will see the immense value in approving the sale of Patapsco Pointe to CHDC.

Once again, I extend my sincere gratitude for your time and attention to this matter. We are fully prepared to address any questions or concerns the Committee may have.

Thank you.