



HEARING NOTES

Legislative Oversight 24-0061

Briefing – Fixed Price Policy & Buy Into Bmore Program

Committee: Ways and Means
Chaired by: Eric Costello

Hearing Date: Tuesday, April 09, 2024
Time (Beginning): 10:20 AM
Time (Ending): 11:40 AM
Location: Council Chambers
Total Attendance: Approximately 15 in-person
Approximately 05 virtually

Committee Members in Attendance:
Sharon Green Middleton Kristerfer Burnett
Eric Costello Robert Stokes, Sr.

- Bill Synopsis in the file? YES NO N/A
- Attendance sheet in the file? YES NO N/A
- Agency reports read? YES NO N/A
- Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded?..... YES NO N/A
- Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file?..... YES NO N/A
- Evidence of notification to property owners? YES NO N/A
- Final vote taken at this hearing? YES NO N/A

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

Alice Kennedy, Housing Commissioner
Kate Edwards, Deputy Commissioner, Development
Ty’lor Schnella, Council Liaison

Major Issues Discussed

1. The Housing Commissioner gave a presentation highlighting the purpose, goals, criteria, application process, outreach efforts, and the most recent application analytics of the Fixed Pricing Policy under the BuyIntoBmore Program.
2. Chairman Costello asked the Commissioner to discuss the application process and the timing once the application is submitted.
3. The Deputy Commissioner noted that when they receive an application, they have two weeks to respond to the applicant on their status, i.e. whether they are eligible and are moving on in the process. Then, the application will move onto the Board of Estimates review and go into a standing agenda and a standard Land Disposition Agenda. The goal is to settle within 45 days of the Board of Estimates approval.
4. Chairman Costello asked if the information on the Fixed Pricing Policy will be posted to the DHCD website, and, if not, when it will be.
5. The DHCD representatives noted that the information was already posted, and it was posted immediately after their Board of Estimates approval. **Chairman Costello asked DHCD to send the committee a link to that information.**
6. Councilman Stokes noted that Baltimore City is already gentrified, and asked where the gentrified policy within this Fixed Pricing Policy is. He noted he asked about this gentrification component before. He noted that he is concerned about Land Disposition Agreements and residents who already live in the communities where these vacant properties and lots are located since out-of-state people are buying them. Councilman Stokes noted that small Black developers should have first dibs on these properties, but now more out-of-city people can try to claim those properties.
7. The Deputy Commissioner noted that they did receive applications from individuals out of Baltimore City but are only processing applications from Baltimore residents who want to purchase properties for primary residents. They received those applications because they are not able to sort out who applies, but, once they review, they only process city residents' applications.
8. Ty'lor Schnellla noted that the mayor sent a letter to the Council, which included a directive to develop to anti-displacement and equity-based framework based on significant community input. This will guide how DHCD does development in neighborhoods and will look into how anti-displacement is built into this policy.
9. The Housing Commissioner noted that they are finalizing RFQs¹ for Broadway East, East Baltimore Midway, and Coldstream-Homestead-Montebello, which will be developed in partnership with the community to find developers and they want to support the community's goals.
10. Councilman Stokes asked about residents who don't have technical assistance to develop and renovate their property through this policy.
11. The Housing Commissioner noted they are in the process of finalizing agreements with the organizations that will provide that assistance. DHCD will provide the funds for these organizations to assist those awarded properties.
12. Councilman Stokes asked if DHCD is monitoring the bad developers, so they cannot buy properties under this policy.
13. The Housing Commissioner noted that they are monitoring, and it comes under the review criteria. Also, they have increased their monitoring and compliance in the agency, and have

¹ Request for Quotes

internal software triggers to manage this. This also is meant to avoid those who will purchase properties and not develop them, and they are researching to connect the dots to understand developers or LLCs who are trying to buy.

14. Councilman Stokes asked if DHCD thought about a demo stabilization permit. The Housing Commissioner noted that are in discussions to start the stabilization process for a lot of properties, both city and non-city-owned properties.
15. Councilwoman Middleton asked how DHCD ensures that there are not whole blocks of individuals or developers renovating properties and making group homes. Is there something to ensure the primary resident is not making the property a group home or changing the aesthetic of the neighborhood?
16. The Housing Commissioner noted that DHCD will not handle this issue with this policy. There are concerns about multiple laws and regulations that restrict DHCD from restricting the density of the group homes as they are protected by the ADA. They are having conversations to understand how to handle this issue.
17. Councilwoman Ramos noted that legislation was passed to help DHCD to do enforcement on group homes concerning the building codes to ensure those living there had good conditions.
18. Councilwoman Ramos asked How many properties are available for the 90-day primary residents? DHCD noted there are 360 buildings and 1,200 vacant lots that are available for purchase.
19. Councilwoman Ramos asked if that included the 320 properties that people applied for before the Fixed Price Policy launched. DHCD noted that it does not.
20. DHCD will not include properties that are in the middle of vacant blocks.
21. Councilwoman Ramos asked about adding criteria to check an entity's track record with developing and managing properties. DHCD noted that they are looking at an entity's track records, but are supportive of small minority developers in acquiring properties.
22. Councilwoman Ramos asked if the department will help potential homeowners to ensure they are successful and what funds will be available. DHCD noted that they do have some existing funds they want to apply for. Also, noted the technical assistance and potential funding to cover appraisal gaps.
23. Councilwoman Middleton asked if the Office of Equity and Civil Rights is a part of the application process. DHCD noted they have an Equity Officer and partner with multiple agencies.
24. Councilman Stokes asked about the engagement with community associations. DHCD noted that have been engaging community associations in the review of the properties.
25. Councilman Stokes requested a list of available properties and those properties under application review for community association meetings. DHCD asked for advance notice of community meetings, so they can provide updated lists.
26. Councilwoman Ramos asked about the enforcement of Land Disposition Agreements. DHCD noted that they can actively track the progress of these agreements, and are working to step up enforcement. They are building a compliance team that will manage city-owned properties and manage the enforcement of privately owned properties with Land Disposition Agreements.
27. Councilwoman Ramos noted that the Fixed Pricing Policy does not support the whole block development strategy, which DHCD disagreed with.
28. Councilwoman Ramos asked about preserving affordability, which DHCD noted the available funding they have will aid in this. DHCD noted this is why Public Land Trusts can purchase for \$1 as they can provide affordability. Preserving affordability will be a focus of their anti-displacement framework.

29. Councilwoman Ramos asked for DHCD to share information with the Ways and Means and the Economic & Community Development Committees on how this policy worked after the 90 days and the outcomes, including which properties were purchased and what subsidies will be needed. Also, the Councilwoman asked for more information on the Charms City Roots component, and, after the 90 days, she would like to work with DHCD to see what is needed to achieve the department's goals.

30. Chairman Costello thanked DHCD for the briefing.

31. Hearing called to recess.

Further Study

Was further study requested?

Yes No

Please see the highlights above

Niya N. Garrett

Niya N. Garrett, Committee Staff

Cc: Bill File

OCS Chrono File

Date: April 10, 2024

City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Meeting Minutes - Final

Ways and Means

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

10:02 AM Virtual/Du Burns Chambers, 4th Floor, City Hall, Phone:
+1-408-418-9388, Access Code: 2333 081 5455, Password:
Public, Link: [https://bmore.webex.com/bmore/j.php?
MTID=m0c8e1fd64abf24895bb259840a69df1e](https://bmore.webex.com/bmore/j.php?MTID=m0c8e1fd64abf24895bb259840a69df1e)

Legislative Oversight: LO24-0061

CALL TO ORDER

INTRODUCTIONS

ATTENDANCE

Present 4 - Eric T. Costello, Kristerfer Burnett, Sharon Green Middleton, and Robert Stokes Sr.

Absent 3 - Ryan Dorsey, Danielle N. McCray, and Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer

ITEMS SCHEDULED FOR PUBLIC HEARING

Briefing - Fixed Price Policy & Buy Into Bmore Program

For the purpose of having representatives from the Department of Housing and Community Development update the Council and the public on the process people will need to follow to apply to purchase properties through the newly enacted Fixed Price Policy and generally the Buy Into Bmore program.

Hearing called to recess.

ADJOURNMENT