

Community Action Council of Howard County, Maryland

**HOWARD COUNTY'S COUNTY COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING**

March 21, 2011

TESTIMONY

**Submitted by:
Bita Dayhoff, President**

Good Evening Councilman Ball and members of the council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening. My name is Bita Dayhoff, and I am speaking on behalf of Community Action Council of Howard County.

I am here this evening to testify in favor of Council Resolution No. 24 -2011 which calls for redevelopment of Hilltop as a 278 unit mixed income residential community and recreational facility.

CAC is an agency whose mission is to alleviate the effect of poverty in Howard County and to promote and foster self sufficiency among the low income population. Among other services, CAC provides assistance in Eviction Prevention to prevent homelessness, First Month's Rent for new households, Energy assistance for safe and healthy homes and Food assistance to avoid hunger.

Last fall, CAC completed its community needs assessment. The data confirmed what is already a known fact in Howard County; with a per capita household income of \$43,133

per year, many Howard Countians especially renters experience severe housing burden cost.

Based on CAC needs assessment, renters in Howard county pay 46% of their annual income in rent; in Ellicott City, that figure is 49%. The US Department of Housing and Community Development has stated that to have affordable housing, a household should not pay more than 30% of their annual household income in rent and utilities.

Furthermore, the National Low Income Housing Coalition has indicated that for a household to rent a two bedroom apartment at slightly over \$1,000, and not pay more than 30% of their annual income in rent, it would need a monthly income of over \$3,000, or hourly income of \$19.91. Rental cost of a two bedroom apartment in Howard County is between \$937 to \$1,789 per month; average hourly rate is \$15.54.

Housing affordability is a persistent problem not only in the US as a whole but in Howard County as well. Marketplace strategies alone cannot meet the demand for housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households. That is why a mixed-income housing approach is so important. The mixed income strategy has three main advantages:

First, it deconcentrates poverty, and racial and socioeconomic integration. High concentrations of poverty are associated with negative child and family outcomes.

Mixed-income communities provide a safer environment that offers a greater range of positive role models.

Secondly, mixed income developments serve as an effective tool for Economic Development. The influx of higher income residents lead to higher property values, better schools, improved access to transportation, and more retail options.

Lastly, mixed-income developments are attractive and well-maintained; they offer desirable amenities and services. As a result, lower-income tenants enjoy better quality homes and neighborhoods than they generally would in developments that are 100-percent subsidized.

Families with low incomes value the same things as other county residents, good schools good parks, access to high quality services and a decent stable environment. Many of CAC's clients are low income families who work hard and play by the rules. They deserve to live in a neighborhood that has housing that is affordable but also provides pleasant amenities and educational opportunities for their children.

Public housing strategies that target only low and extremely low income residents create concentrations of severe poverty. Areas of concentrated poverty tend to have older, lower quality housing stock, and any new stock built in these areas is often of lesser quality. As concentrated poverty increases, communities begin to see out-migration of businesses, elevated levels of crime, and a public disinvestment in community wellbeing; in effect, these distressed communities may be "left behind." Through the development of income-diverse neighborhoods, there is an increase in the quality of housing available to all

residents while reversing the trend of disinvestment, making each neighborhood a neighborhood of choice and improving the quality of life for all.

This development will do just that. The Hilltop-Ellicott Terrace-Carter Center will be well planned, beautifully designed, and well managed - Above all it will have a positive impact on the neighborhood.

I strongly recommend that you support CR-24-2011.