

NOTES

THRESHOLD

Lexington's Housing Commission
Tuesday, October 20, 2020 – 4:30 p.m.
Zoom e-meeting

Threshold:

Present: Fred Kirchner, Chair
Marylin Alexander, Council Liaison
Jen Handy
Nadine Craney

City Staff:

Arne Glaeser, Planning Director
Bonnie Tombarge, Administrative Assistant

Absent: LaTonya Douglas
Cristyl Vozzo, Vice-Chair
Monique Moore

CALL TO ORDER:

F. Kirchner called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm. A. Glaeser read a statement of emergency and permission to hold public meetings electronically.

MINUTES:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Discussion of Comprehensive Plan adoption and Housing Chapter – A. Glaeser said that C. Vozzo had said there was too much emphasis on Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). He said there was no time to make any other changes to the document, although M. Alexander could suggest changes at the City Council public hearing for the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. A. Glaeser also pointed out that accessory dwelling units will be part of the next Zoning Text Amendments considered by Planning Commission. He also pointed out a strategy that would have Threshold help facilitate workshops and seminars on the local housing issues identified in the needs assessment section of the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission Chair suggested seminars with Threshold to provide educational opportunities. A. Glaeser also mentioned that there is a suggestion to reevaluate the rental housing inspection program. The City Council has suggested removing it from the City's code as it is not currently being enforced. M. Alexander requested more information on accessory dwellings. A. Glaeser said the idea behind accessory dwellings is to help improve affordability by allowing a homeowner to increase their property value by having an extra unit. He did point out that that the current ordinance on accessory dwellings is very limiting in its definition and he would like to add some flexibility to what can be allowed to include allowing. F. Kirchner said that he did not think that any changes needed to happen to the Housing Chapter, though he would not pursue CDBG. J. Handy suggested changing the funding wording to include such as when referring to the grant

possibilities. She asked about Strategy 3.1 referring to rehab resources for aging in place and if that was intended for Threshold. A. Glaeser said that currently there are no agencies assigned to strategies. He also said that funding sources have not been fully identified, so some strategies will be reliant on City Council delegating funding to those tasks. J. Handy then inquired what was meant by the phrase neighborhood character. A. Glaeser said it means to preserve what is currently in a neighborhood, possibly trying to limit the number of rentals coming in, and to restrict any commercial interests from overtaking the residential interests.

B. Discuss “Call to Action” need for home ownership program – M. Alexander introduced Tuck Bowerfind from Grace Episcopal Church. Mr. Bowerfind is looking to encourage and build services that will help those who have been underserved by the housing market, and to help those who have always rented to be able to own a home. He said he would like to try to address the historic racism in the system against black people trying to purchase homes, and the fact that they often do not receive the same value for their homes when they try to sell them. F. Kirchner said that a hurdle is often credit scores, and it is a struggle to help rectify that problem. J. Handy said her concern is that it is not a problem that will be solved just by putting money into it. This will require the development of supportive infrastructure to fix. She questioned if this would be something that could be built from existing organizations or if it would require the creation of something new. M. Alexander said that a way she sees Threshold helping with this project is not as the organization that helps with the actual purchasing of the home, but if a member of that theoretical program is purchasing an older home in need of repairs, she could see Threshold being a resource as they are currently being for homeowners in the Green Hill neighborhood. She did not think that Threshold had the resources or the staff to walk someone through the entire process of purchasing a home. Mr. Bowerfind asked if the City had any land that could be proposed for affordable housing. M. Alexander said there were a couple properties available that could become affordable housing, but that would rely on the developer wanting to do that, as the parcels are also available for market rate housing. Mr. Bowerfind asked if this would be owner occupied homes or rentals. M. Alexander said she has been hearing more of rentals than single family homes. She said she has been hearing interest in multi-family housing. J. Handy said that can also help with density. F. Kirchner said that he would like to make sure that the City’s neighborhoods are kept up to standards. Mr. Bowerfind asked if the City had an Equitable Development Policy. He said it was to ensure that funds for housing and maintenance is equitably flowing into the historically underfunded neighborhoods. A. Glaeser said that the City did not have one of those policies, and that places such as Fairfax have the room for the growth that would be supported by this. He did said that Lexington, while it doesn’t have the same growth, is still investing in their neighborhoods. M. Alexander asked if it would be possible to encourage a home owner to sell their home to another owner rather than someone who would like to rent it out. J. Handy said that it could be restricting what the selling family can get out of the home if there is a restriction on that. M. Alexander said homes in underserved communities are being lost to rentals, rather than preserving a home owner community, but she was not sure that it was something the City could do anything about. M. Alexander left the meeting at 4:40, and the quorum was lost. Mr. Bowerfind

said that Grace Espicopal was interested in supporting equitable development in support of equity, wealth, and sustainability in the black community in Lexington. J. Handy pointed out again that these projects require infrastructure in place for them to work. She has experienced at her work being offered money to do a project, but still not being able to as she did not have the staff or other resources required. There was general agreement that while this

OTHER BUSINESS:

ADJOURN:

The discussion ended at 4:50pm.

Fred Kirchner, Chair
Threshold Housing Commission