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Oakland, California Dedicates Funds to Affordable Housing Trust Fund

by Michael Anderson // 2013, Fall



East Bay Housing Organizations’ Speak Out for Affordable Housing! Oakland Budget Campaign mobilized more than 500 residents from every part of Oakland and more than 100 community members, concerned citizens, and faith groups to write letters, make calls, meet with City Council members, and speak out at public meetings. The result: Immediate and long-term funding for affordable housing in Oakland! The state closure of redevelopment agencies in California has created tough challenges for affordable housing, but EBHOs’ resident organizing showed that residents organizing together can turn the tide.

This summer, the Oakland City Council made two decisions to fund affordable housing. The first, in June, to place \$1.8 million into affordable housing for the coming budget year and the second, in July, to pass a policy proposal that sets aside 25% of all boomerang funds starting in FY2015-2016 to affordable housing. The funds will be placed in the Oakland Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

So-called “boomerang funds” are former redevelopment agency property tax increment revenues that now flow from the city to the state and back to be redistributed among county, school district, and other local taxing entities. The portion of the funds coming back to the city that originally sponsored the redevelopment activities are now commonly referred to as “boomerang funds”. The closure of redevelopment agencies in California resulted in the loss of significant dollars previously committed to

affordable housing through the development and implementation of tax increment districts. Numerous jurisdictions throughout California have taken similar steps to recapture some of these funds to support affordable housing in their communities, including: Emeryville, Foster City, Fremont, Los Angeles, Redwood City, San Leandro, Santa Clara County, San Mateo County, and Los Angeles County, among others.

The Oakland Affordable Housing Trust Fund was established to provide assistance in developing and maintaining affordable housing in the City. It has received developer impact fees established by ordinance. Funds deposited into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund are used to increase, improve, and preserve the supply of housing affordable to low and very-low households. Amie Fishman, Executive Director of EBHO, points out that: *“Affordable housing provides great benefits to all Oakland residents. Residents of affordable homes managed by today’s nonprofit developers enjoy supportive services, increased consumer spending power, healthier environments, and the opportunity to stabilize and strengthen their neighborhoods.”*

After the loss of other state and federal funding for affordable housing, shoring up the Affordable Housing Trust Fund was crucial to ensure that future homes would be built and preserved for low-income Oaklanders. Throughout the budget season, each City Council representative is required to host a community meeting on the budget in the district that they represent. These meetings are an opportunity for constituents to speak about how and why affordable housing is an important issue to them, and why affordable housing needs to continue to be funded. Residents shared their stories about how affordable housing strengthens communities, improves health & public safety, helps kids succeed in school, and creates quality jobs.

Residents also hosted City Council members in their affordable housing properties, going to individual meetings with their council person, and/or sharing their testimonies at public hearings. Resident leaders advocated alongside hundreds of EBHO members, creating an unbeatable team! EBHO worked in tandem with Community Economics and East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation and brought dedicated resident leaders from nearly twenty affordable housing developments to public forums where they testified before the Oakland City Council as part of the Speak Out for Affordable Housing! Campaign.

EBHO praised their resident leaders and members who came in solidarity to community meetings and public hearings, speaking out for affordable housing. The Speak out for Affordable Housing! Campaign exemplifies the power of collaboration, community organizing, and advocacy in advancing the housing options for those who need it most.

Contact: Jean Cohen or Amie Fishman, East Bay Housing Organizations, 538 9th Street, Suite 200, Oakland, CA 94607 (510-663-3830) www.ebho.org



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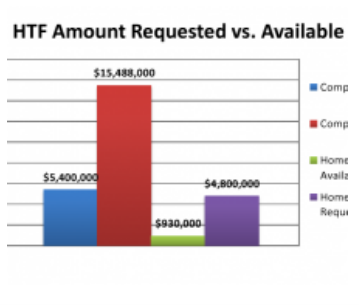


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