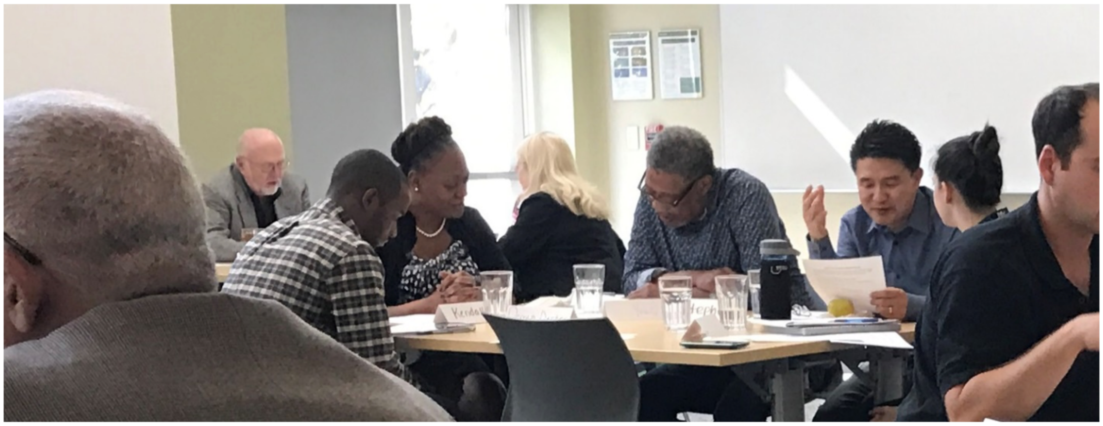
Atlanta Makes Strides for Affordable Housing: Passes $40 Million in Bonds

by Michael Anderson // 2017, Spring



Atlanta advocates at workshop developing messaging for the City for All Campaign

In early March, Atlanta city council unanimously passed a $40 million bond initiative, called the Housing Opportunity Bond, of which $32 million will go to fund affordable housing programs in the city. Councilmembers Michael Julian Bond and Andre Dickens originally introduced the ordinance that approves the sale of the bonds that will fund a new iteration of the Housing Opportunity Bond program.

The approval to issue the Housing Opportunity Bonds will help to fund important initiatives including homeowner renovations, multifamily developer loans, down payment assistance, nonprofit development loans and land assemblage for affordable and workforce housing development.

"Of significance was a late amendment by the City Council which added all Councilmembers as Ordinance sponsors. In a remarkable moment on the Council floor, a number of members commented on the importance of the legislation, their commitment to affordable housing, the leadership of City and Invest Atlanta staff and the important and appreciated role of advocates in the development and passage of the legislation," wrote Georgia Act'sRelationship Manager, William McFarland, in an update to advocates.

Advocates pushed to make the legislation stronger to include some Atlantans who have been historically left out of development in the city. Acting quickly, since advocates did not find out about the introduction of the ordinance until February of this year, they were able to insert language that will prioritize the allocation of the funding to:

· Multi-family rental development will be serve households at 60% of AMI.

· Established that "priority" for Down Payment Assistance Loans for single-family households be made for those at 80% AMI or below.

· Established that Owner Occupied Rehabilitation Loans will serve seniors, disabled and veteran headed households at 60% AMI or below.

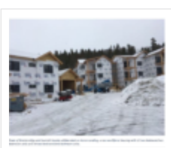
Councilmember Andre Dickens said the goal of the ordinance is to help people stay in the city. “As you’ve seen over the past four, five years, all this new development and only about 4 to 5 percent of it has had any affordable housing,” Dickens said. “So that’s why it’s necessary.”

With momentum from city council’s support for affordable housing, advocates are continuing to organize in order to secure a dedicated public revenue source for the Housing Opportunity Fund prioritizing development for the families and people at 30% of AMI. Advocates are also looking at other tools to increase affordable housing through a mandatory inclusionary zoning and community land trusts. The first step is to hold workshops that educate the public on their campaign, City for All, and build support for a comprehensive Atlanta affordable housing strategy.

This is the second time Atlanta has taken out bonds to support affordable housing. In 2004, then Mayor Shirley Franklin established a goal of creating 10,000 units of affordable workforce housing by 2009. To assist in accomplishing this endeavor, the city authorized a bonding authority of a $75 million for workforce housing initiatives. The first series of bonds closed in April 2007 for $35 million. Significantly, the earlier bond was dedicated to “workforce” housing at or below 120% of the AMI, without the specifications that the bond funding serve people at the lower AMI levels as is in this year’s ordinance.

The Housing Opportunity Bond is administered by a collaboration between the Atlanta Housing Authority, the City of Atlanta and Invest Atlanta. The Atlanta Housing Authority’s Atlanta Housing Opportunity Inc., a designated housing corporation and borrower of the funds, serves as the program manager and contracts with Invest Atlanta for program implementation. The bond issue is scheduled to close in May and funds will be available early summer.

For more information email William McFarland or call: 404-586-0740



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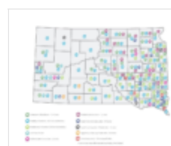

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