

Best Practice: Residential Zoning Density

City of Havre de Grace, Harford County

Population Estimate (7/1/19): 14,018

Partners: [Green Street Housing](#)

Key Takeaway: *Combining zoning ordinance amendments, leveraged funding sources, and partnerships can help create attractive, affordable housing serving as a community asset.*



Maryland Department of Planning

Description

The Havre de Grace area of Harford County is highly sought after by affordable housing developers. However, such development proposals often lack access to transit and other amenities, which are key considerations in the provision of affordable housing. The Blenheim Run project proposal was different. While the preferred location for [Green Street Housing's](#) Village at Blenheim Run had potentially good access to transit, it faced another challenge because Havre de Grace could not provide municipal water service without first annexing the property. Once annexation was approved, the Havre de Grace Planning Department enhanced the affordability of the development by facilitating the adoption of a new ordinance that allowed mixed-use development in commercial zoning districts for parcels of at least 5 acres, served by municipal water and sewer, and having direct access to either Route 40 or Route 7.

The zoning modification, [Ordinance 1026](#), outlines requirements for mixed-use projects in the city's commercial corridors to create opportunities for developments that "mix multifamily residential uses with retail trade, service and institutional uses, with an emphasis on creativity, quality design and in close proximity to mass transit within the C/Commercial district." ([Baltimore Sun Article, Dec 31, 2019](#)) The city is focusing on pedestrian and transit amenities to help a commercially developed area feel more hospitable to residents. This ordinance will open new opportunities for housing development and fills a need for Havre de Grace to provide diverse housing options.

Director of Planning Shane Grimm said of partnering with Green Street Housing: "The development team came into Havre de Grace, and from the start entered into productive discussions. The reason Blenheim Run is moving forward is that they were open and transparent with the Mayor and City Council as well as the Planning Commission. Affordable housing is vital and necessary, but it requires a mutual understanding of the needs and goals from advocates, developers, and the jurisdiction they are working in. The development team was able to address all the concerns of the Planning Department, the Commission, and the Mayor and City Council. It is a rare circumstance when a developer throws a plan on the table and says "what is going to make you happy". That is Green Street's approach, and it made all the difference in the world. Collaborative understanding and working towards a common goal make all the difference. I believe that Blenheim Run will be a model project that provides

affordable housing in an attractive and well managed project. I will take the opportunity to be bold and say that Blenheim Run should be a model of how communities can successfully implement affordable housing into their communities in a positive manner that counteracts the stigmas often associated with affordable, workforce, or low-income housing. I look forward to the grand opening of Blenheim Run and how it will benefit our growing and diverse community.”

Project Details

Green Street Housing is dedicated to creating and preserving affordable housing in rural areas. The Village at Blenheim Run project will feature 111 apartments when completed, and phase one includes four one-bedroom units, 29 two-bedroom units, and 18 three-bedroom units. Forty-five of the units are to be rented at below market rates to meet the program’s tax credit criteria requirements and the final six will be market rate, rental units. The development also includes approximately 7,000 square feet of commercial space.

Making sure that developers can meet program demands while keeping housing affordable is necessary for these types of developments. Accommodating affordable housing will help ensure that municipalities meet the demand for a range of housing needs for its residents, while also making sure that private investment is being protected and ensuring successful, long-term investments in communities is sustainable.

Connection to 2010 Comprehensive Plan

The city’s [Housing Element](#) (page 11-2) includes the recommendation to “Amend the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate new residential zoning districts and requirements to meet the opportunities for innovative development in the annexed areas.” The Blenheim Run example effectively implements this recommendation.

Funding Sources

[Low Income Housing Tax Credits](#), [FHA 221 \(d\)4](#), [DHCD Rental Housing Program Funds](#)

Havre de Grace Contact Information: Shane Grimm, Director of Planning

shaneg@havredegracemd.com