

Testimony supporting CR 146-2017 PILOT for Shalom Heritage Limited Partnership

Good evening County Council Members

My name is Grace Morris and I reside at 5980 Avalon Drive in Elkridge, MD. I have lived in Howard County for 19 years. For the past 9 years I have served as the Executive Director of Heritage Housing Partners Corporation a 501 c 3 that has provided quality affordable housing in Columbia for 50 years. Currently, we own and or manage nearly 150 units of housing for the elderly and disabled.

I am here this evening to ask you to approve CR 146-2017, a PILOT for Shalom Heritage Limited Partnership. Our organization built the Shalom Square property located at 6240 Foreland Garth in Columbia in 1979 and has acted as the owner and management agent ever since. The property has 50 units, 35 one bedrooms and 15 efficiencies. Even though we have done our best to maintain this lovely property, it is showing its age.

Our organization is extremely excited about this project for a variety of reasons. First and fore most we are pleased to be preserving these affordable housing units in our community for seniors and the disabled by entering in to a new HAP contract with HUD (our current agreement ends in 2019 at which time we could have chosen to make it a market rate property). With the new HAP, the tax credits and hopefully, this PILOT agreement, this property will stay affordable for another 40 years. We are delighted that these sources will enable us to provide our current and future residents with more energy efficient, up to date homes and a property that will be more accessible for them as they age. We are pleased that the residents will be able to stay in place during the construction process and that we are upgrading our five barrier free units and will have an additional three units for persons with hearing and visual impairments.

We are also very pleased that this project will be our first ever Tax Credit deal. It has been a very long, challenging, frustrating, exciting, and interesting learning experience to say the least. You have heard Carl's very well organized detailed presentation of all of the funding sources involved and why this PILOT is such an important piece of the puzzle. Clearly, it takes a village to rehab affordable housing.

I want to share with you a little bit about our residents. We have 56 residents living at the property currently. All of the residents are below 60 percent of area median income (AMI) and a many fall at or below 30%. Several of the residents love to plant flower gardens around their units. They love to decorate for the holidays. Many participate in day programs and are they active in their churches. Our oldest resident is a beautiful lady who is 92 years young. Our longest tenured resident is a gentleman who has lived at the property for 22 years and the average age of our residents, is 74. Our Resident Council President Ms. Dolores who is testifying next, has 10 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren. By approving this legislation, you will enable us to give our deserving residents a wonderful place to live that they will truly be proud to call home. I thank you for your time and your consideration.

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Good evening County Council Members

My name is Dolores Foreman and I live at Shalom Square, 6220 Apt.C, Foreland Garth, Columbia MD 21045. I have lived at Shalom Square for 16 years. I am speaking with you this evening as the President of the Resident Council. I have served in this position for 14 years.

As you have heard by now, Shalom Square was built in 1979 for seniors and the disabled and while the owners have done their best to maintain the property, it is clearly time for a face lift.

We had a resident meeting on Friday where we learned more details of the project and the way the work will be handled. We are all pleased that we will be able to stay in our same units. We are excited to have new washers and dryers in each unit and to have all new appliances, flooring, lighting fixtures, doors and windows.

While all of this work will significantly improve the quality of life for the current and future residents, I think I am most excited for the changes that will be made to the community building. These changes will make it a much more inviting place to spend time. Our small galley kitchen which barely holds two people will be expanded, providing us with plenty of room to cook and serve. It will be great to have all new appliances. The rental office will be moved to the front of the building which will be much better for the residents and management. The restrooms will be made fully accessible. There will be new mailboxes and a new lobby area. There will also be a well-stocked library with new computers. But most of all I am really looking forward to hosting our monthly meetings and birthday celebrations in a comfortable attractive community room which will include new table and chair sets for eating together and playing cards and games, and other seating areas with couches and recliners which will be great for watching television, relaxing or having a conversation with our neighbors.

I ask that you please pass this legislation which will make it possible for the owners to provide us with all of these wonderful amenities. We will be sure to invite you all over for a visit when the work is done! Thank you for listening to my testimony this evening.