



Morristown United for Healthy Living

January 30, 2017, 5:30pm- 7:30pm, St. Margaret's Catholic Church



Agenda

Minutes in blue

5:30 **Morristown United Overview**

Visit www.njhealthmatters.org/tiles/morristownunited or contact morristownunited@njhealthmatters.org for more information

5:45 **Welcome & Introductions**

Welcome to our new Community Organizer, Carlos Sotelo!

We had 34 people in attendance! For a copy of the coalition contact list, e-mail

Ashley.anglin@atlanticehealth.org

6:00 **Joint Learning: Housing & Community Infrastructure**

This month's guests include Phil Abramson, Morristown Town Planner & Douglas Priester, Housing Operations Manager, Morristown Housing Authority; Q & A

- Notes from Phil's Q & A (including statements from the audience):

- o NJ has never had a set of rules to follow when it comes to affordable housing
 - The Council on Affordable Housing (COA) never met
 - The NJ Supreme Court has taken over (over the past two years) and all planning is happening through litigation (basically towns ask the court to declare that you are compliant); this process takes a long time.



- All of the money that the Town has from development is tied up in litigation (around a million dollars). The town 2.5% of any new commercial development, 1.5% of all new residential, with 12.5% for projects with over 8 units.
- Click here for the [Town Housing Plan](#), click here for the [Affordable Housing Trust Fund Spending Plan](#), click here for the Town’s [Master Plan](#)
- There hasn’t been a property tax increase in many years; competition among renters and high demand for housing is what Phil sees as the main issue driving up costs
- Housing is distributed via lottery and covers the counties of Morris, Essex, and Union
 - The Housing Authority can give residency preference
 - The League of Municipalities are the ones advocating for residency preference in all affordable housing lotteries; they are opposed by housing advocacy groups that believe in promoting/allowing mobility in housing
- From Homeless Solutions: there are 409 homeless individuals and 253 homeless households in Morris County
- Phil sees the following as **opportunities for our coalition to make a positive impact on affordable housing:**
 - Give a voice to this issue
 - Support existing housing organizations—find out their needs
 - The town addresses housing in three ways: 1) retrospective (did you do the right thing and what do you owe if you didn’t do the right thing?), 2) present need (address current issues; for example, look at the number of low and moderate income households living in “substandard” housing. The Town has an obligation to repair and make the units deed restricted for 10 years; we could advocate to earmark funds for this purpose in the 435), and 3) prospective need (looking ahead to future housing needs). Option 2 is probably the best way for us to intervene.
 - Reach out to the Fair Share Housing Center



- Notes from Douglas Priester's Q & A (including statements from the audience):
 - The majority of Section 8 vouchers are in this neighborhood (435)
 - It is very difficult to develop new housing and there are many more applications for affordable housing than there are units
 - The Housing Authority can't approve someone if they don't meet income requirements
 - There have been major cuts to the HUD funds that were available in the past
 - There are at least 500 people on the waiting list for public housing
 - Rents are very high and there are limitations to rent control (rent control only applies when the tenant is in the unit; rents can be raised between renters)
 - This led to a discussion about the abuse of these rules by landlords; those in attendance mentioned that non-renewal of rental agreements without a reason is a huge problem, even though this is illegal. A resource for this is the Rutgers's Housing Legal Aid division.
 - Through the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) project, public housing can request assistance to remodel or build new units (this work is contracted out)
 - Landlords can be sued for "unconscionable rent" but this term is not defined by law
 - There was also a great deal of discussion about the Mount Laurel Doctrine and how the language should be tightened
 - Here is a really great overview of the [Mount Laurel Doctrine](#) and a historical perspective
 - Need to focus on preparing people to be eligible for housing
 - There is a need to bring in subsidies and be creative to pull money together

6:45 **Strategy Review, Discussion & Brainstorming**

See pages 6 & 7 for a list of strategies that are currently "on the table" for discussion (taken from ideas shared at previous meetings); additional items were added from the discussion at this meeting.

7:30 **Upcoming Events/Announcements**

- Free tax preparation is now underway through the United Way of Northern NJ (visit www.unitedwayNNJ.org/FreeTaxPrep for more information
 - They also have a free online tool for eligible participants: www.myfreetaxes.com.
MyFreeTaxes provides community members with a free online service to file taxes from



their personal computer. Families and individuals with household incomes of \$64,000 or less in 2016 are qualified to use this website for both federal and state returns.

- New Jersey is not sending out early refunds, so beware of scams
- Wind of the Spirit is accredited to provide legal counsel; their team is willing to come to your organization to provide information and to help people understand the issues facing immigrants in our community and how you can help
- St. Margaret's is hosting a Citizenship Clinic on February 25th from 2:00pm-5:00pm (in the Church Hall where we usually meet)
- St. Margaret's is holding a Service Fair on February 26th from 10:00am-2:00pm. If you would like to have a table for your organization fill out the form (accompanies this document in the email) and send to Maria E. Vargas at ismedaga@gmail.com
- Sign up to be a member of the Morris County Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce. Visit www.MCHACC.org

Next Steps

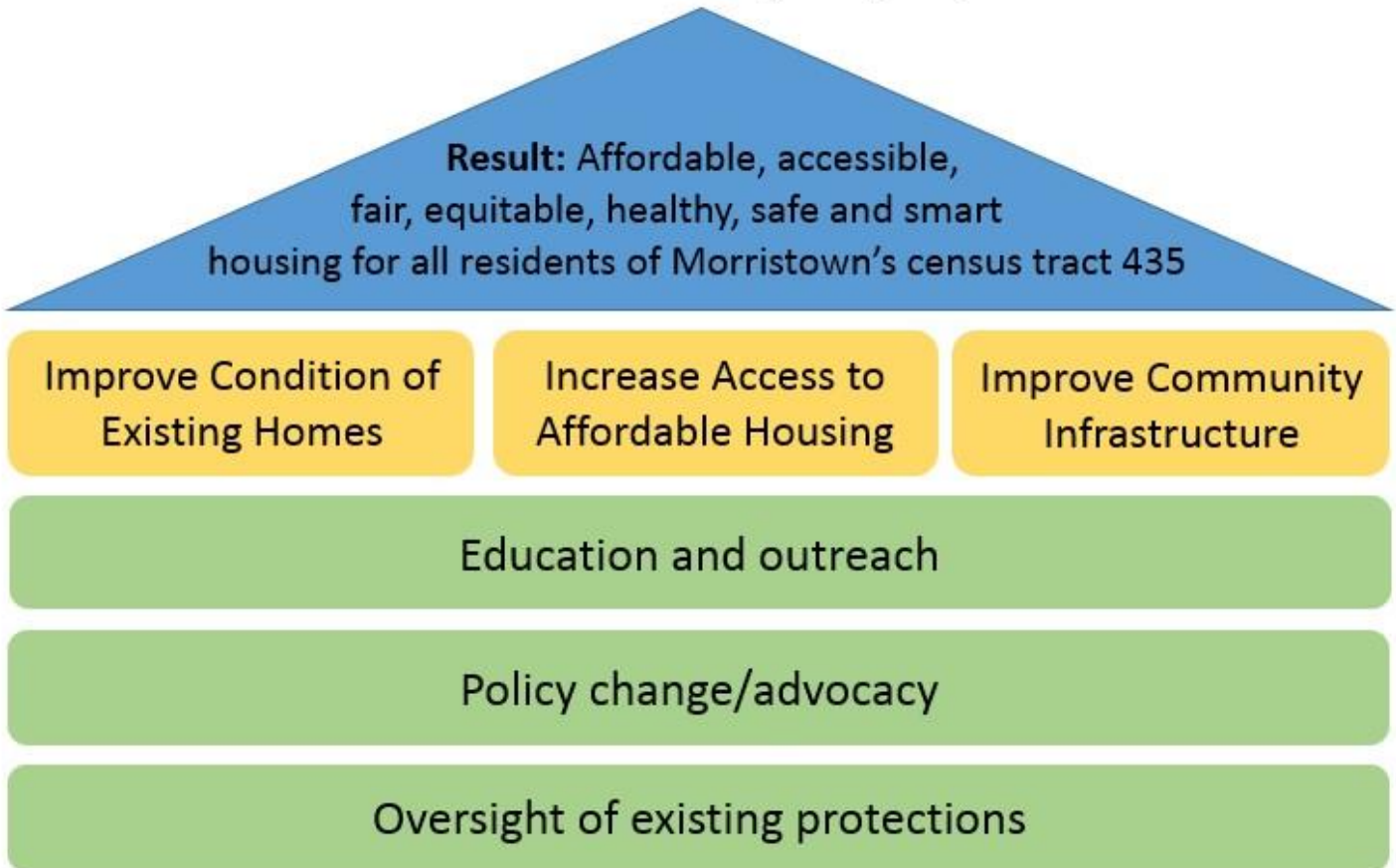
- Review the list of strategies on pages 6 & 7 and come to the next meeting with a list of those strategies that you think we should pursue as a coalition.
- Propose additional strategies or ways that you/your organization could be involved.
- Vote as a coalition on which strategies to pursue.

Next meeting February 27th, 5:30-7:30pm



Draft Impact Model:

Morristown United for Healthy Living: Impact Model



Our Impact Statement: We will improve the condition of existing homes, increase access to affordable housing stock (rented and owned), and improve the built environment/community infrastructure via resident education and outreach and policy change/advocacy, and oversight of existing protections for all people living in 435 with a particular focus on equity.



Strategies on the Table (from previous meetings)

- Mini grants for improvements to storefronts
- Mini grants for improvements to existing housing stock
- Organizational mini grants for programs that improve housing/infrastructure/financial equity within census tract 435
- Neighborhood clean-up day
- Community art projects; focus on community pride
- Advocate for structural improvements to neighborhood roads, sidewalks, lighting, crosswalks, etc.
- Partner with local organizations like Grow it Green to create a community garden within the 435
- Support community resources mobile application (underway)
- Hotline/pathway for housing violations + peer and other support
- “Tenants’ rights” and “landlord responsibilities” educational sessions/campaigns
- Help assess the number of residents living in “Substandard” housing; make the case with the Town and earmark funding for repairs (Town has an obligation to address these needs)
- Education/outreach around existing housing opportunities/programs (e.g., loan and savings programs, qualifying for affordable housing)
- Creation of new housing resources (e.g., Habitat loan model)
- Help identify properties for construction/renovation
- Mobilize residents; identify specific policy mechanisms
- Town Hall Meeting to engage mayoral and other candidates on the topic of housing, the built environment, and financial inequity (election year!)
- Monthly neighborhood events/resources calendar/handout (for Community Organizer to distribute in the neighborhood)
- Target use of weatherization funding in the 435 (via Proceed Inc.)
- Home health environmental inspections (by trained health professionals)
- Homeownership Literacy Training (e.g., Habitat model)
- Expand Self-Sufficiency training (Morris County Housing Authority)





- Good Neighbor Training (via Family Promise)
- Housing Trust Fund (proceeds from fees for home ownership applications that can go toward rental assistance, home energy assistance, etc.)
- Housing voucher set-asides or preference for census tract 435 residents
- Support homeowners in paying/restructuring mortgages
- Advocate for resident preference in affordable housing lottery; advocate for names to carry over from unit to unit (right now, if you aren't selected for a lottery, you aren't on a waiting list—the lottery starts with a new set of names each time, meaning people who have been trying for a unit for years could be turned down in favor of someone who just applied for the first time)
- Provide creative incentives for developers and local investors to provide more affordable housing
- Share all housing opportunities in our region with census tract residents along with support for applying (advertise when units become available; outreach via Community Organizer)
- Advocate for alternative development types and collaborations such as housing collectives/"collectivos," mixed use housing, funding by governmental and non-governmental partnerships (e.g., Long Branch model)
- Create a homeownership taskforce that covers many of the strategies above (savings & budgeting projects, home repair, maximizing/leveraging community resources, gardening, etc.)
- Engage in additional data collection via the Association of Realtors