Before   **After**

Town of Edmonston, Prince George's County

Population Estimate (7/1/19): 1,490

Partners: Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, Community Members, Local Businesses, and Women and Minority Owned Contractors

Before   **After**

Key Takeaway: *Leveraging state level community development funding with local staff capacity, community input, and business partners can preserve and maintain affordable housing for low income and senior residents while also enhancing community aesthetics and reducing code violations.*

Description

Edmonston is a small to moderate sized town in central Prince George's County not far from the DC line. The town consists predominantly of single-family detached homes, multiple apartment buildings and one townhome community, but has not witnessed any new housing development in recent years. According to the 2014-2018 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, median household income in Edmonston was $62,955 - significantly less than HUD's Area Median Income (AMI) for the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD metro income limit area, which is $126,000. According to the ACS 2015-2019, homeownership in Edmonston is close to 55%. However, with median incomes significantly below those of the larger region, many homeowners do not have the financial capacity to maintain their homes the way they would like to. This has led to code violations and potentially declining residential aesthetics. While many housing plans seek to address code violations, it is a challenge for many low-income residents to pay for needed improvements to remedy violations. That is where a program like Edmonston Beautiful comes in.

The town started Edmonton Beautiful in 2018, following a series of planning sessions where the public recommended a program to help those in need. Edmonston Beautiful is designed to provide sustainable home improvements to senior citizens and low-income residents with a "green approach," one that uses only biodegradable products, installed by approved contractors. The primary objective of the program is to keep these individuals in their homes.

Edmonston, in partnership with the towns of Bladensburg, Colmar Manor, and Cottage City, combined known as Port Towns, developed a Sustainable Communities Action Plan to access the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) State Revitalization Program funding. Specifically, Edmonston Beautiful is an implementation measure for "Housing Outcome 2: Improve the housing conditions of Port Town residents, Strategy A: identify rehab assistance programs through the county and state for senior and low to moderate income homeowners to participate in." The action plan also notes DHCD as an implementation partner. This strategy is an excellent example of how affordable housing can both equitably support existing residents to pursue a better quality of life, while simultaneously enhancing community pride and marketability, strengthening homeownership, promoting sustainability, and reducing code violations. The success is demonstrated by Edmonston receiving DHCD Community Legacy grants for the program in fiscal years 2018-20.

Program Details

Potential properties for the program are initially identified by the Mayor, Town Council, and residents during planning sessions, via newsletter advertisements and social media. There is a waiting list for assistance, which clearly demonstrates local need. As part of the process, staff verify income and eligibility based on tax returns, that the applicant is a property owner living in the home, and that they are not delinquent in paying taxes. Applicants are required to develop a plan outlining how they will maintain their home following the completion of the improvements, which safeguards against future housing unit deterioration and strengthens household pride. Following the submission of successful applications, the town's Community Compliance Officer completes a preliminary inspection of the home to help develop a scope of work.

As the program began, Edmonston released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for qualified general contractors to complete the work. The RFP focused on façade improvements, such as exterior painting, including facia and window trim, gutter replacement, fence repair, front door repair, power washing, screen replacement, and deck repairs. It also included the scope of work for the first nine projects. Edmonston engages the public and the business in the community using its social media accounts. The Town partners with a local business, Community Forklift to obtain recycled building materials where appliable. The contractor is encouraged to use green materials where available.

Connection to Plan 2035, Prince George's and 2009 Port Towns Sector Plan

The Town of Edmonston does not have planning and zoning authority and is therefore governed under the planning policies of Prince George's County. Appropriately, Edmonston Beautiful implements the following Plan 2035, Prince George's Housing & Neighborhoods policies:

- Stabilize existing communities and encourage revitalization and rehabilitation.
- Expand housing options to meet the needs of the County's seniors who wish to age in place.

- Increase the supply of housing types that are suitable for, and attractive to, the County's growing vulnerable populations. These include the elderly, the homeless, and residents with special needs.
- Increase funding for county housing projects and programs and leverage state, federal, and nonprofit funding and resources.

Similarly, the program also implements the following 2009 Port Towns Sector Plan strategies:

- Preserve and enhance existing housing.
- Explore mechanisms to provide financial support for rehabilitating existing housing.

Funding Sources

DHCD awarded Edmonston $50,000 Community Legacy grants for fiscal years 2018-20. Over that time, the program has rehabilitated 20 senior and low-income homes, bringing them up to code standards. Since the program started, code citations in the community have been reduced by 50%. The town leverages the DHCD funding with $10,000 per award in project administration.

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