

Advancing Equity Through Inclusive and Affordable Housing

FUSE Corps - Washington, DC

Washington D.C. is working to improve the supply of affordable housing through the preservation and production of more units. To support this work, the Department of Housing and Community Development and Office of Planning will partner with a FUSE Executive Fellow for one year to develop a strategic investment framework to expand and strengthen affordable housing options, yielding more affordable housing outcomes and addressing the structural racism that has plagued the district's real estate market for decades.

This fellowship project begins on July 26, 2021, and ends on July 25, 2022. The fellowship begins with a multi-day virtual orientation the week of July 26, 2021. The selected Executive Fellow will begin their first day of providing services to the host agency on August 2, 2021.

PROJECT CONTEXT

The growing demand for housing in Washington, DC has made it difficult for low- and moderate-income households to afford to live in the District. From young adults just starting out to seniors seeking to remain in neighborhoods that have been home for much of their lives, housing costs present a growing challenge, particularly for the District's lowest-income households. More than 70,600 renter households in 2019 were burdened by housing costs, meaning they spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing. The greatest share of these households burdened by housing costs are the District's lowest-income households who earned less than 30 percent of Median Family Income (MFI). More than 35,300 of these lowest-income renter households spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing, and 80% (28,600 households) were severely burdened by housing costs and spent more than 50% of their income on housing costs. In addition, nearly 4,000 of these lowest-income households are overcrowded (defined as having more than one person per room) and 2,000 of these lowest-income households lack kitchen or plumbing facilities. Inequities in accessible, safe and affordable housing close to community amenities impacts not only resident quality of life, but also life expectancy and economic opportunity.

To address the affordable housing need in DC, Mayor Bowser ordered a review of how existing affordable housing is concentrated in some parts of the city, threatened in others, and is extremely limited in availability in some areas due to a historic legacy of exclusionary and discriminatory land use decisions. The Mayor's Order elevated housing as a key priority and directed the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Office of Planning (OP) to coordinate on the preservation and production of affordable housing. This past year, the District began working towards a goal of an additional 12,000 affordable housing units between 2019 and 2025; however, COVID-19 has delayed some production efforts and has shifted other efforts to stabilize communities from the effects of the pandemic on the housing market. As part of an interagency strategy to strengthen and expand the supply of affordable housing, the agencies continue to pursue approaches to address DC's affordable housing

shortage—both by the preservation of existing units and the production of new units, including in neighborhoods that are close to existing and proposed transit and employment.

The District will partner with FUSE Corps to support the development of a strategic investment framework intended to expand and strengthen affordable housing options. The framework will draw from the affordable housing production targets developed for the District's ten planning areas, and will focus on specific areas to be selected in alignment with area-based planning and analysis that OP is conducting. The framework will also identify ways to leverage the First Right Purchase Assistance Program to preserve pre-existing affordable housing options. The Executive Fellow will work with OP and DHCD and their partners to move the framework forward, including by influencing citywide policies and programs that impact and achieve concrete results for underserved populations. The strategies and recommendations proposed will yield more affordable housing outcomes, strengthen and expand housing rental and purchasing opportunities, and address structural and systemic racism that has plagued the DC real estate market for decades. What does the path forward look like for DC to ensure 12,000 affordable housing units are established by 2025? The Fuse Executive Fellow will lead the charge.

PROJECT SUMMARY & POTENTIAL DELIVERABLES

The following provides a general overview of the proposed fellowship project. This project summary and the potential deliverables that follow will be collaboratively revisited by the host agency, the Executive Fellow, and FUSE staff during the first few months of the fellowship, after which a revised scope of work will be developed and agreed upon by the FUSE Executive Fellow and the host agency.

Starting in July 2021, the FUSE Executive Fellow will work in collaboration with both the Office of Planning (OP) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to draft a strategy to help strengthen and expand the supply of affordable housing – both by the preservation of existing units and the production of new units.

In terms of production, the FUSE Fellow will work with OP to assess the potential for affordable housing production in various communities and contexts. As part of this, the Fellow will conduct market analyses and reviews of land use, acquisition, development and conversion potential to determine the thresholds and financial feasibility for producing affordable housing and addressing displacement. The Fellow's work will be under the umbrella of the Mayor's Order and the follow-up Housing for Equity and Growth (HFEG) initiative, which analyzed affordable housing distribution for the District's ten planning areas and developed production targets. The work will also be guided by the proposed Comprehensive Plan. The geographic areas of interest may include high opportunity communities as well as those targeted for increased density and housing under the proposed Comprehensive Plan. The areas for study will be determined in the first phase of the Fellow's work program and in alignment with OP's area-based planning efforts.

The Executive Fellow will work quickly to orient on the unique context of both geographic areas and identify the opportunities to produce more affordable housing units and create diverse

communities of opportunity. Working in collaboration with DHCD, the FUSE Executive Fellow will evaluate the past efforts to preserve affordable housing specifically assessing the First Right Purchase Assistance Program and the viability of the program to preserve affordable housing.

The Fellow will listen and learn from stakeholders—internally and externally—to expand partnerships with the private and philanthropic sector in service of reaching affordable housing goals. He or she will work quickly to build deep relationships with a wide range of critical stakeholders, including staff across local and federal agencies, local universities, community-based organizations, the private sector, philanthropic partners and advocates for affordable housing. Utilizing this initial listening tour with key stakeholders, the market analysis and evaluation of the First Right to Purchase Assistance Program, the Executive Fellow will then analyze gaps in policy and programming and devise solutions to mitigate gaps and will also determine barriers to implementing any strategies.

By early-2022, the Executive Fellow will draft a comprehensive strategic investment framework that includes analysis and recommendations for policy and program formation, as well as budget implications to expand affordable housing in the target geographic areas. The framework should identify a clear, unified vision for the future of the work, emphasizing metrics, solutions and strategies that achieve the District's equity goals and create economically equitable environments in housing by leveling the playing field and enhancing opportunities for traditionally underserved communities. The Executive Fellow will develop initial policy and program recommendations that address the gaps identified and set up a process for continued review of community needs. He or she should also determine when and how to leverage all available partnerships, resources, and existing projects for maximum support moving forward.

The Executive Fellow will then create an implementation roadmap that rolls out the strategic investment framework. This roadmap should also define roles and responsibilities for internal and external stakeholders. The Executive Fellow will then work to initiate recommendations and activities that are considered priority and can be implemented quickly. Overall, the Executive Fellow will enable the OP and DHCD to prioritize and advance initiatives that support the development of a more equitable and inclusive housing in Washington DC.

By July 2022, the Executive Fellow will have overseen the initial implementation of the strategic investment framework and decisions on recommended policies and budget as outlined in the framework. This will include the following:

- *Understand current affordable housing efforts and targets and engage with stakeholders* – Survey the current efforts by the District and its partners to provide affordable housing. Review the Housing Equity Report, Housing Preservation Strike Force Report, research, case studies and supporting documentation, including the existing regulations for the First Right Purchase Program (<https://casetext.com/regulation/district-of-columbia-administrative-code/title-14-housing/chapter-14-27-first-right-purchase-assistance-program>). Assess opportunities and challenges for implementation. Identify and engage with all stakeholders at a strategic level, including government officials and agencies, other private developers and potential land trust donors.

- *Review and synthesize data, metrics and assessments.* – Review real estate data, market factors, financial/real estate development data, and recently-conducted housing market assessments Synthesize information and develop a crosswalk to housing equity metrics and indicators.
- *Develop assessment tools and related products* - In the context of the affordable housing targets for the ten planning areas, create and refine analytical models/ matrices/toolkits that assess feasibility, gaps and opportunity by geographic areas. The tool(s) will be rooted: in financing, real estate development costs, and zoning tools; apply the equity crosswalk and indicators; and could incorporate various typologies such as those related to opportunity areas, housing cost, type, tenure and income.
- *Conduct a deep landscape and market analysis* - Conduct a market analysis of targeted geographic areas for development and determine financial feasibility and financing gaps. Collate all relevant programming, policies, and processes; map gaps and identify how to leverage and/or refine existing programs in efficient and equitable ways. As part of this and where relevant, review the potential for conversion from office to residential. Develop public-facing materials that communicate the market analysis including the affordable housing potential and how to achieve a diversified housing stock.
- *Evaluate the First Right Purchase Assistance Program* – Evaluate the First Right Purchase Assistance Program and assess the program’s viability to preserve affordable housing. Identify any necessary program changes to improve the program and its effectiveness and make recommendations on how the District could better leverage the program to achieve its affordable housing goals.
- *Expand partnerships across the public and private sector and catalyze buy-in*– Identify resources (provided by philanthropy, private companies, social impact investors, community-based organizations, academic institutions); build new partnerships and strengthen existing lines of communication between stakeholders. Identify opportunities to expand affordable housing and work to align perspectives and address any conflicts. Identify barriers to implementing any recommendations; solicit and incorporate input from stakeholders to build consensus around the framework.
- *Develop recommendations and form a comprehensive strategic investment framework* – Under the umbrella of the Mayor’s Order and HFEG, articulate the analysis, findings and recommendations as a shared vision with City officials across agencies, community partners, and private partners to produce and preserve affordable housing; design policy, program and budget solutions and build on existing initiatives; build out recommendations that maximize impact in each policy area and help achieve the planning area affordable housing targets. Determine overall objectives and methodology for goal setting, evaluating potential partners and land investments. Establish financing models, tools and approaches that promote housing production through creative and efficient financing, including via public-private partnerships. Identify a role, if any, for the First Right Purchase Assistance Program including any necessary program changes. Establish a timeline for implementation aligned with the city priorities.
- *Develop implementation roadmap and roll out recommendations* – Establish a roadmap proposing short and long-term initiatives; timelines; priority areas; clear roles of internal and external stakeholders; and how to coordinate and leverage all resources for

maximum impact. Determine and document how ownership of affordable units can be achieved by identifying the number of ways investments can be made that are private, public.

- *Support long-term expansion and development* – Identify housing equity indicators and relevant success metrics, setting benchmarks for tracking progress; support capacity building, creating internal infrastructure and systems; develop assessment tools and other leave-behind products that OP and DHCD can apply to work going forward; work with leadership across agencies and partners to effectively advance recommendations; and integrate accountability mechanisms for long-term deployment and continual evaluation of the policy, programs and/or procedures ensuring community needs and economic equity is centered in all strategies

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- **Sakina Khan**, *Deputy Director for Citywide Strategy and Analysis*, DC Office of Planning
- **Tsega Bekele**, *Chief of Staff*, Department of Housing and Community Development

QUALIFICATIONS

- At least 15 years of professional experience in the housing field, strong finance background with a focus in real estate and asset management
- Experience in affordable housing, economic development and urban planning with a track record of developing innovative real estate development ideas from conception to implementation
- Demonstrated innovative critical thinking, analytical and market research skills with the keen ability to synthesize both qualitative and quantitative information to make a case
- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills; able to make a business and policy case
- Proven ability to make and deliver powerful presentation, with ease in public speaking
- Experiencing engaging the philanthropic community for investment and partnership
- Cross-cultural agility, relating to a wide variety of diverse audiences
- Strong emotional intelligence and empathy
- Strong cross-team collaborator
- Self-motivated and goal-oriented leader who can also be an independent worker
- Capacity to sustain progress within potentially ambiguous environments
- Ability to synthesize complex information into clear and concise recommendations
- Understands the need for solutions to support all people in a community regardless of race, religion, gender, immigration status, or ethnicity

[Apply here](#)