

## Cambridge Housing Revitalization Update - by Sharon Smith

Hi. I attended both the November 15, 2018, community input session and the November 16 City Council work session, both of which centered on revitalizing Cambridge, beginning with housing. The focus of revitalizing Cambridge is driven by public input and priorities.

In this second Pine St public input session, a number of excellent ideas were put forth by the participants to take full advantage of the revitalization. These ideas included engaging the thousands of visitors to the Harriet Tubman center, by including "living history" as a component of commercial redevelopment on Pine St. This can include a civil rights museum featuring local heroes, jazz and blues club, soul food restaurant, living history reenactments, etc., as well as, banks, shops, activity center, adult day care, and youth center. There are a number of efforts that have begun, some of which you may know about.

The City hired a new Code Enforcement Officer this summer, Susan Webb, who brings a wealth of experience from similar employment in Salisbury. She has begun gaining access to the interiors of some of the rental properties, finding lots of code violations, and issuing citations and fines against some landlords. Word is spreading within the rental community, and tenants are contacting her for help.

The City also hired a very experienced housing consultant, Yvette Robinson, to lead the Cambridge Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The program represents a collaboration among the federal, state, county and city governments, as well as Habitat for Humanity. Collaborating with Habitat, a non-profit, enables Cambridge to pursue JP Morgan's Advancing Grant Program, which may bring as much as \$5M in housing funds over a three-year period. This allows the housing improvement efforts to expand beyond the Pine Street neighborhood. Habitat is already carrying out the Historic Pine Street Neighborhood Repair program with the \$1M+ in grants already received, making repairs to houses for the needy.

In addition, Herve Hamon, a planner on staff with the City, is beginning a collaboration with the carpentry program at the Dorchester County School System's Career and Technology Center. To improve the facades of blighted houses, Herve, a registered architect, will draw-up plans for new porch components - steps, railing, posts/columns, etc., - and the carpentry students will fabricate the porch parts in the school shop, and then install them on-site. This effort is called "One Porch at a Time," may extend beyond Pine St, and may eventually include landscaping, as well. There is a lot happening in Cambridge!!!

*Sharon Smith*

*Chair, CAN Strategic Development and Monitoring Committee*