

Quarterly Report to Secretary of Personnel on part-time positions.

Quarterly Report to Senate Budget & Taxation Committee, House Appropriations Committee, & Department of Fiscal Services on encumbrance activity for each housing loan program & any transfer of funds between programs.

Report to Secretary of Budget & Fiscal Planning & Legislative Auditor on account examinations of private care providers under State contract due periodically.

Report to Senate Budget & Taxation Committee & House Appropriations Committee on goals & objectives of future development of Historic St. Mary's City due prior to expenditure of funds.

Semi-annual Report to State Treasurer on anticipated debt during next seven-month period due Jan. 1 & July 1.

ORIGIN & FUNCTIONS

In 1987, the Maryland legislature combined programs concerned with low-income housing, home financing, building codes, planning and community development, and historic preservation to form the Department of Housing and Community Development (Chapter 311, Acts of 1987). The Department works to ensure available housing at all income levels, encourage strong neighborhoods and viable communities, and preserve Maryland's historical and cultural heritage. The Department funds or insures loans for purchase and construction of housing for low-income families; assists low- and moderate-income families to buy or rehabilitate houses; and aids nonprofit organizations with grants or loans to provide housing for special-needs groups such as the elderly, developmentally disabled, and homeless. The Department also distributes federal rent subsidies to low-income families; oversees construction, including prefabricated buildings and mobile homes, to ensure that it meets building code standards; and offers weatherization and energy conservation aid to qualified groups and households. To revitalize commercial districts and blighted areas, plan future growth and resource development, and provide adequate housing for citizens not served by the private sector, the Department funnels federal and State funds to communities and supports community action and regional development agencies. In addition, the Department finances historical preservation, archaeology, museum services, and cultural heritage commissions. Departmental programs help communities plan for the future.

Most functions now supervised by the Department originally fell outside the scope of government. Maryland communities grew initially with few restrictions and little planning, and shelter was a private responsibility. Local jurisdictions had little authority or interest in overseeing construction or development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. How houses were built was limited by the skill of the builder, the availability of supplies, and the pocketbook of the owner. No governmental codes or regulations labeled structures substandard, although many must have been. In rare cases, the legislature sheltered the poor in private homes or later in county almshouses, but generally, poor persons, like everyone else, housed themselves and their families as best they could. Local building codes began tentatively in some localities in the eighteenth century; planning and zoning did not emerge as governmental responsibilities until the twentieth century. Zoning legislation, now a major tool for community development and planning, was passed for Baltimore City in 1927 and for the counties in 1933.

New Deal legislation of the 1930s initiated federal involvement in housing. In its housing programs, Maryland followed the federal lead and relied upon federal funding. The Housing Authorities Law of 1937 sought to remove the menace of insanitary and unsafe housing and to alleviate unemployment (Chapter 517, Acts of 1937). By this act, municipal governments could set up housing authorities to receive federal grants or loans for public housing projects. As with most subsequent laws for low-income housing or community renewal, the act followed on the heels of federal legislation which provided funds for its purposes.

During World War II, the influx of workers into Maryland caused a housing shortage. The Federal Public Housing Authority built thousands of units on vast tracts, but existing communities were hard pressed to provide necessary services and schools. After the war, the federal Veteran's Emergency Housing Act permitted the sale of government barracks and construction equipment to counties and municipalities to build or convert to civilian housing. The Maryland Veterans' Housing Commission coordinated the work of State and federal agencies dispensing funds or material to provide homes for returned veterans (Chapter 878, Acts of 1947).

The private sector embarked on a postwar building boom, marked by suburban developments containing miles of modest houses on treeless lots for veterans and their new families. Federally funded highway projects demolished housing and cleared slums, perpetuating the housing shortage, since construction of public units could not keep pace. The Federal Housing Act of 1954 financed local and regional planning assistance, including the Baltimore Regional Planning Council (created in 1956). Under the 1954 law, the Department of State Planning oversaw comprehensive planning assistance grants in Maryland.