

3/4/2021

Good evening members of the racial equity task force and the Howard County Council,

My name is Ainy Haider-Shah and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Howard Progressive Project, I am delighted to represent our organization in support of the racial equity task force.

As a progressive organization, we were very pleased to see the formation of this task force. The county as a whole has long needed to reckon with the systemic racism that has been rooted in the past but has had a pernicious hold on our present day residents and will continue to do so until we make long needed changes.

On the topic of land use and housing, HPP recommends a focus on ensuring that there is affordable housing in the county. We recognize that development is an important part of this puzzle, but there's more to it than just that. While we are in favor of building far more affordable housing units, we are also in favor of finding creative solutions for the dearth of housing in the county.

Remote employment is likely to increase now that some residents have worked from home for a whole year. This means we should consider extending the water district in the west and we should allow the building of duplexes and other creative housing units there too. Last, we need to eliminate exclusionary zoning.

In the realm of public safety, we support body cameras to be used by the police department and that school resource officers need to be removed from our schools.

On the topic of economic and workforce development, but also environmental policy, we ask that our county work with the State of Maryland to create more accessible public transportation systems.

In the public health space, we believe that our residents deserve to know what the racial health disparities are in the county across each demographic and what we can do to reduce them.

Again, we applaud the formation of this task force and we support any changes that we can make in the county.