

NOVEMBER 2025; ISSUE 6

MARSHALL HEIGHTS COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION



NEWSLETTER



THE IMPACT

IN POUNDS

FROZEN PRODUCE

430



CANNED GOODS

450



NON-PERISHABLES

68



FRESH PRODUCE

152



Each month, MHCDO staff assemble and distribute an average of 1,100 pounds of food to senior households in Ward 7.

Nourishing Our Neighbors: MHCDO & Capital Area Food Bank Support Ward 7 Seniors

For more than two decades, Marshall Heights Community Development Organization (MHCDO) has partnered with the Capital Area Food Bank to ensure seniors in Ward 7 have reliable access to healthy, high-quality food. What began as a modest distribution has grown into a steady, trusted lifeline—one that reflects MHCDO's commitment to dignity, health, and community for our older residents.

More Than a Box of Groceries

Food distribution days are also moments of connection. Neighbors greet neighbors, volunteers check in on regulars, and first-time participants find a welcoming environment that removes barriers to accessing help. For seniors managing fixed incomes, rising food prices, or mobility challenges, that combination of nutrition and community matters.

Built on Partnership, Powered by Community

Our long-standing collaboration with the Capital Area Food Bank allows MHCDO to match supply with local need, bringing large-scale regional resources to the doorsteps of Ward 7 seniors. MHCDO coordinates logistics and outreach; the Food Bank provides volume purchasing power and food sourcing expertise. Together, we make it simple—and dignified—for seniors to get the food they need.

Keep the Work Going

This program thrives because of collaboration: the Food Bank's resources, MHCDO's neighborhood roots, and the support of residents and partners who care. If you're interested in volunteering, spreading the word, or exploring sponsorship opportunities, let us know. Together, we can keep Ward 7's seniors nourished, connected, and strong—month after month, year after year.

How to Get Help—or Help Someone You Know

If you are a senior living in Ward 7—or if you know a senior who could benefit from monthly food assistance—please reach out. MHCDO can explain eligibility, share upcoming distribution dates, and help with simple enrollment steps.

Contact: Bridget Gaskins
Email: bgaskins@mhcd.org





Blythe Patenaude
Director of Workforce Development

Workforce Development

Envisioning MHCDO Headquarters as a Community Resilience Hub

The Marshall Heights Community Development Organization (MHCDO) is proud to be collaborating with Howard University and the Ward 7 Resilience Hub Community Coalition to explore the transformation of MHCDO's headquarters into a community resilience hub—a central location designed to support residents before, during, and after emergencies.

As part of this effort, Dennis Chestnut, Community Partner from the Ward 7 Resilience Hub Community Coalition, joined MHCDO leadership, professors, and students from the Howard University School of Architecture for a comprehensive tour and evaluation of the building. The visit marked an exciting step in reimagining how MHCDO's existing space could serve as a vital community resource in times of disaster or crisis. During the visit, students reviewed the building's architectural drawings and explored how design innovations could enhance energy resilience, emergency preparedness, and community accessibility. Their analysis will help inform a vision for how MHCDO's facility can not only serve as an operational headquarters but also as a safe, resilient, and adaptive hub for Ward 7 residents.



Workforce Development, Cont...

DOES Job Readiness Training

With the new DOES award of \$175,000 for Job Readiness Training, the Workforce Development Unit was busy taking applications and interviewing prospective participants. Residents are anxious to become engaged in programs that will provide them with certifications in Construction Basics, OSHA 10, Fall Prevention, CPR, and even Food Handlers and Managers training.

Both men and women have been actively involved in setting new goals for their lives, improving their digital literacy skills, and improving financial literacy basics leading to higher credit scores and better opportunities for lowering their interest rates.

The Workforce Unit continues to work with NRPGROUP to place NOMA Cohort graduates in jobs affiliated with our 301 Florida Avenue, NE project. New hires report starting salaries ranging from \$18.75 to \$65.00/hr. Congratulations to all!

For more information about programs now being scheduled for 2026, contact Blythe Patenaude, Program Manager – Workforce Development at 202-650-5649 or bpatenaude@mhcdco.org.



Mary Dade
Program Manager, Housing Department



Housing Department

MHCDO's Housing Department Debuts on the National Stage

On January 14, 2025, MHCDO became part of the National HUD Intermediary, Housing Action Illinois (HAI). HAI has grown exponentially from an Illinois-specific intermediary to an organization that leads 36 community-based HUD-approved housing counseling agencies in multiple States, including Marshall Heights in the District of Columbia. Housing Action has been a leader in the movement to end homelessness, address the affordable housing shortage, and expand homeownership opportunities for nearly 40 years.

Because of MHCDO's substantial housing counseling program, it received an invitation from HAI to its annual training conference, "Housing Matters," to present its globally recognized Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Recovery PowerPoint presentation and to showcase, by way of a review, our successful Second Annual Global Readiness Conference held on September 19, 2025. MHCDO is among a tiny group of HUD-approved Housing Counseling agencies approved to offer preparedness and recovery programming.

Mary Dade delivered a 75-minute presentation. The presentation was characterized as great, prompting an urgency to prepare, and HAI would like to see more of its agencies add the service to their programming. One HAI staff member stated, "She only went to peek into the workshop location to see if everything was okay, but stayed because the information was so good."

The annual training conference keynote speaker, Leah Rothstein, co-author of the book "The Color of Law," gave a presentation very similar to that of Dr. Mustafa Ali, our keynote speaker for our Second Annual Global Readiness Conference. Both make the case that policy is the root of racial segregation and inequalities. They are clear that Slavery, the Japanese Internment Camps, Restrictive Covenants, etc., were a result of explicit unconstitutional government policies. Both agreed that there are positive remedies that require collective effort among individuals, groups, and the government.

The MHCDO housing department has demonstrated its willingness to broaden its programming beyond traditional housing services and to implement necessary programming that meets a broader set of clients' needs. As such, HAI is interested in further unique presentations on its national stage.



Eldridge R. Allen
Director, Small Business Development Program



Small Business Development

Small Business Financial Tips

While managing your business' cash flow should be a constant focus and consistent activity, it is even more essential during these turbulent economic times. Assessing your past and current cash inflow (money coming in) and cash outflow (money going out) allows you to monitor and maintain your business' financial health. From this information, you should be able to forecast your future cash flow to prepare/plan for possible shortfalls.

Understand that "growth of profits" is not the same as "positive cash flow." A company can be profitable but still have funds tied up in accounts receivable. Here are a few check points to consider for better cash flow management:



Prompt Invoicing



Accelerate Receivable



Reduce unnecessary expenses



Manage inventory/Avoid overstocking



Find and use mentors and advisors



Implement depositing for work/services rendered



Consider a business line of credit for accessible funds (when needed)



Implement depositing for work/services rendered



Ariana L. Vasquez
Associate Director of Economic Development and Sustainability



Post Office, Before Beautification



After

Safe Commercial Corridors

Marshall Heights Community Development Organization, Inc. (MHCDO), through its management of the Pennsylvania Avenue East Main Street (PAEMS) program, continues to strengthen Ward 7's most vital corridor with new investments that enhance safety and community confidence.

Through the Safe Commercial Corridors Grant administered by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ), MHCDO is implementing targeted safety and beautification strategies—especially in the lower node of the PAEMS corridor, where revitalization is most needed. Out of twelve grantees citywide, MHCDO is proud to be one of only two organizations that is not a Business Improvement District (BID). This recognition underscores MHCDO's leadership in advancing community-based, resident-centered solutions in neighborhoods that historically have not benefited from BID-level resources.

What the Grant Supports:

The Safe Commercial Corridors initiative aligns closely with PAEMS's mission to foster a thriving, walkable, and welcoming environment for residents and businesses. Key components of MHCDO's FY26 workplan include:

- Enhancing Corridor Safety through Technology and Coordination
 - Installation of five (5) security cameras connected to the MPD Real Time Crime Center to improve surveillance and police response times.
 - Convening a Corridor Safety Taskforce—including local business and property owners, ANC 7B, MPD's 6th District, WMATA, DDOT, NPS, and the DC Office of Planning—to review crime data, identify prevention strategies, and coordinate on safety improvements.
 - Developing and implementing violence-prevention strategies to reduce incidents and promote a stronger sense of safety and collaboration.
- Creating a Safe and Vibrant Corridor through Beautification
 - Façade enhancements for 2–4 high-priority properties in visible, underinvested areas.
 - Lighting upgrades in poorly lit zones to deter unwanted activity and make the corridor more inviting after dark.
 - Public space beautification projects designed to enhance the corridor's visual appeal and foster community pride.

Together, these efforts reinforce MHCDO's broader work under PAEMS: promoting safety, supporting local business growth, and cultivating an environment where residents feel secure and invested in their neighborhood's success.



Paul Spires
Program Manager,
Deanwood Heights
Main Street

Deanwood Heights Main Street

The Deanwood Heights Main Street Tour, held in collaboration with Events DC's Walkingtown Series, attracted 23 participants. The guided tour explored the vibrant history, culture, and community of Washington, DC's Deanwood neighborhood. Participants visited key landmarks, learned about local businesses, and gained insights into the area's unique heritage and ongoing revitalization efforts, fostering a deeper appreciation for this historic community.





Racquell Perry, Esq.
Director, Pennsylvania Avenue
East Main Street

Pennsylvania Avenue Main Street

From Vacant to Vibrant: Kangaroo Car Wash Opens Its Doors on Penn Ave East!

After years of sitting vacant, Kangaroo Car Wash at 2334 L'Enfant Square SE has officially reopened — bringing new energy and convenience to the Pennsylvania Avenue East corridor.

As part of the Kangaroo Car Care Group, this fully automated, 24/7 car wash is designed to make car care easy, affordable, and efficient. Customers can enjoy a complete wash in under 10 minutes, with pricing options that fit every budget — including a monthly subscription plan that simply can't be beat.

The opening of Kangaroo Car Wash is another exciting step in transforming vacant properties into thriving neighborhood assets. Stop by soon to support this new local business and experience a fast, fresh shine right here in Southeast DC!

