

City of Houston
Housing and Community Development
Spring Public Meeting
March 24 2020

>>MR. McCASLAND: We appreciate you joining us tonight. We know these are difficult times for the city and country. If you've been impacted by the virus, our hearts go out to you, but we are here to let you know that the City of Houston and particularly the housing community and development department is open for business. We provide essential services and fund organizations that provide essential services throughout the city and it is important that we keep these funding sources available to our nonprofit and for-profit partners assisting people on the front lines.

Before we get started, I do want to go over a couple of items that are important. As I mentioned we are open for business but we are doing business differently. The employees are working from home if they can, holding conferences, doing business by phone. We're making sure the business of the city and department goes forward.

We are hoping to innovate as we go forward. We're glad to bring you a virtual meeting tonight. We've been wanting to do this for a number of years. A couple -- almost three years ago now, we changed up our format to provide a lot more interactivity with folks. If you've been to one of our meetings in the last few years, you've joined at small tables where we've huddled around and engaged in in-depth conversations. That was new three years ago and we hope to continue that kind of engagement. Tonight we won't huddle around tables for obvious

reasons, but we're looking for your input and guidance as we move forward and we want to make sure that as we seek this community engagement you help us learn how to do this. We've experimented with a variety of different engagements on these plans. Tonight's meeting is not the beginning of community engagement. In many ways, tonight's meeting and the subsequent meeting we're scheduling is kind of the wrap-up of a very long process for community engagement. More than 7300 surveys have been filled out by Houstonian -- more than 3,000 surveys have been filled out. More than 3500 Houstonians engaged with us in community and public meetings throughout the city. Over the last nine months 48 focus groups were held and at the suggestion of community partners we launched a fair housing ambassador program working with individuals to in the community to make sure we were using their voice to spread the message of the work we do and gain the feedback from the people they were interacting with. So as you can tell, we've been busy long before tonight and we are going to continue that experimenting, that flexibility but also seeking multiple ways to get your engagement. I do want to recognize that there are concerns with us moving forward with this meeting. I got two e-mails directly. One was concerned with holding this meeting. The other e-mail was very concerned with us cancelling a different meeting. As you can see, some tension pulling in different directions. The thing I'll say is we understand we're in unprecedented times and we're going to learn with you to figure out how to best do community engagement, to make sure the work is not slowing to make sure essential services are available but also to hear your voice as we move forward. We're committing to that and looking forward to learning with you as you pilot models in your organization, if you're working with an organization, but also as you give us feedback on what we can do right and what we can do better. We're working to

reschedule the meeting originally scheduled for the 31st. We're hoping to have it scheduled sometime in the next two weeks. We're looking for waivers as we work with the primary funder to make sure that slowness or slowness throughout the country does not slow the funding in the city. We're looking for alternative ways of communication. We've received several suggestions for those and we'll continue to look for additional suggestions on ways we can get this message out differently, and in the coming week or so, look for additional documentation in multiple languages on these plans, and we're working to translate the entire documents and get them up on our website as quickly as possible. I'll say that community engagement for much of the last four years has been a continual process for us. We don't hold these meetings once and disappear. We're in the community on a regular basis, whether it's a formal public hearing or informal meeting. Later in the year we'll be launching community engagement and public meetings around a comprehensive housing plan, so this is one of many engagements we'll be doing, much of it on going engagements, and the two plans we're looking at and talking about today are plans that can be amended. As engagement changes, as we get additional feedback from the community, we'll be working with you to make sure these plans stay up to date, appropriately amended as possible.

Our purpose of this meeting is to get you -- continue to gather community input on our draft 2020 to 2024 consolidated plan. You'll hear more about what that means later, as well as the proposed 2020 budget. And the draft analysis of fair housing choice. That's a lot of bureaucratic language. What it boils down to is we have very important resources from the federal government that can be deployed to assure we achieve our mission in the city, assuring that every Houstonian has a home they can afford. That's our goal and we need to you to help us achieve that.

We recognize in the past the dollars were not always spent in a way that was fair and addressed all communities -- especially communities that were underserved or had fewer resources than others. We're committed to changing that. We want your assistance in doing that and we hope tonight's conversation helps us with that. Our format is virtual. In a moment I'll hand the mike to Kris Robinson. Hearing the presentation, please send any questions you might have through Facebook live. After the presentation, there will be a public hearing by phone. If you would like to make a three-minute public comment -- less than three minutes but no longer, we'll ask you to call 832-394-8874. With that, let me thank you again for joining us tonight. Please give us feedback as we move forward not only on the plan but on this virtual meeting.

With that, I'll hand the mike to Kris, who will take it from here.

Thank you.

>>MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. Welcome everybody.

(Audio difficulties).

>>MS. ROBINSON: The short presentation will cover past accomplishments, some of the summary data we've collected, the public engagement findings and our five migrant farm worker year goals along with our actual allocation and proposed budget. The presentation is meant to provide some sort of context for the public hearing portion that will happen after concluding of this presentation.

Our vision is that we provide a home that everyone can afford and in a community where they can thrive. We always provide affordable housing, infrastructure, neighborhood services, along with community engagement activities for development and supportive services to assist people. We do that threw four

entitlement grants, which is CBD home -- and all these things help to move the vision forward.

So what are we doing here tonight? We are working -- we're here to get input about our consolidated plan. This is the five-year plan that helps us drive our goals with metrics that our funding will help to drive our goals throughout the next five years.

(Audio difficulties).

So we've allocated -- excuse me. We're having some difficulty.

The consolidated plan -- it's a five year plan that will drive what we do over the next five years.

(Audio difficulties).

This plan just talks about improving how things (indiscernible) families that are low and moderate income.

Our 2020 analysis of the (indiscernible) to fair housing, which we call the AI. (Indiscernible). It helps them form strategies we use and with other departments to affirmatively (indiscernible) fair housing.

(Audio difficulties).

What we've heard so far -- this is based on our data research and through our public engagement process we've been going through. Our population has increased. Our population is about 2.3 million people, about 10 per cent account for persons with disabilities. And almost half of the labor force -- excuse me. Almost half of the population makes up the labor force in Houston. We have almost 850,000 house holds that are accounted for since this data, and the median income has been increased to \$51,000. Rent prices are almost \$1,000. Our low to moderate house holds make up about 51 per cent of the population, and 39 per cent

of the population is experiencing (indiscernible). This is anything that is structurally based -- electrical, plumbing, or mechanical defects in the home. Sometimes these homes can be substandard and may be deficient and not suitable for rehabilitation. 32 per cent of houses experience lead risks.

We review home values from 2000 to 2016 and we found the sale prices and rent prices are not keeping up with income. House prices have increased by almost -- over 100 per cent, and rent prices have increased by 69 per cent. At the same time income has only increased by 40 per cent.

We also assessed how to (indiscernible). What you see on the slide is cost burden households versus severe cost burden.

(Audio difficulties).

(Indiscernible) on rent, mortgage, and utilities and severe cost burdens are spending 50 per cent or more on their housing costs. At the low to moderate income levels, you see that at least 65 per cent of those households are experiencing (indiscernible). Across the board we saw that every income level is actually experiencing problems, but the highest rate of progress is occurring at the (indiscernible).

Since July of 2019 we've engaged with the public. We've talked to many people, gone to many community meetings. We have done over -- received over 3,000 surveys. We've had at least 3500 participate in our community. We've hosted or attended at least 75 community meetings or public meetings and we've established our fair housing ambassadors program. This was to reach populations we couldn't reach through the department alone. (Indiscernible).

(Audio difficulties).

In the survey we talked to almost 800 people. Of those people we found that

20 per cent do not know what fair housing is. We found that almost 13 per cent experience housing discrimination -- experienced in the past five years. And 50 per cent did not know how to report housing discrimination.

In our community needs survey, we asked several questions. One of them dealt with housing challenges. Almost 55 per cent of homes or households had trouble getting to and from home when it was raining. 38 per cent of those people had trouble getting repairs, and almost a third also had trouble finding a better place to live. Another concern for households was paying for home insurance. I'll say that the greatest challenges dealt with in this survey were all related to housing or weather conditions and (indiscernible).

(Audio difficulties).

Our community needs survey asked about improvements needed to be made in the neighborhood. What we found is that mental health services was one of the services that needed the most improvement. For neighborhood services we discovered that the greatest challenges we're dealing with are infrastructure, (indiscernible) sidewalk maintenance, and flooding drainage. Of course we're still concerned about health and safety code enforcement.

Some barriers to affordable Housing include the current market conditions, travel and transportation costs, our quality of housing, and the list really goes on but we included some in the slide to show what kinds of things are keeping people from affordable housing.

With respect to the analysis of impediments to fair housing choice, we discovered, or we at least amended a list of impediments. Previously we had a longer list but we consolidated some of these. We ended up with a list of 12 impediments, some that include discrimination, lack of fair housing, lack of

affordability options. NIMBY resistance, lack of transportation options. What are we doing to combat those impediments? We have written down 30 action items to address the impediments to fair housing that we've listed in our plan. Some of those include educating people about fair housing, preserving and constructing affordable homes, and completing a regional -- comprehensive regional study about housing.

For our consolidated plan, we have also -- we've taken a look at the past and what we've found is we've reached over 5,000 people in fair housing calls. We've launched 3,000 campaigns.

(Audio difficulties).

We have provided 200 low to moderate income families be assistance as well.

(Audio difficulties).

About 26 new or improved facilities for funded. Our strategic goals will carry on through the next five years. These goals -- these metrics will change but the overall strategies will remain the same in that we want to preserve and expand the supply of affordable housing. The list of our strategic goals is based on research we've done over the past nine months. We've talked to many residents and found these goals will help drive our funding over the next five years.

Our grant allocations have stayed steady since 2016, so based on the HUD (indiscernible) these are the amounts we're expected to receive for almost \$50 million.

Our total allocation amount is 47 million 2 hundred 3 -- \$43,203,667. Our CDBG funding will amount to 24 million. Home, about 10 million, HOPWA about \$10,000,000, and ESG, 2.1.

For our public services we've allocated 3.7 million. ESG match, about 500,000 -- about 4.5. We've allocated 4.6 million for public facilities and 7.6 for home repairs. (Indiscernible) \$250,000 to fund prior year activities that will include through program year \$2,020. Code enforcement will (indiscernible) totalling 2.9 (indiscernible).

Some of our accomplishments include providing public services to 18,000 house holds. Improve 2 public facilities. 32,000 code enforcement visits and lead abatement of 50 homes, constructing 75 affordable rental homes and repairing 250 rental homes.

For our 2020 grant allocation, we anticipated spending (indiscernible). We've also (indiscernible) for single family developments. 3 million for tenant based rental. Our anticipated accomplishments for 2020 will include multifamily development, home TBRA, and single family home development as well.

The 2020 grant allocation for HOPWA includes budgeting (indiscernible).
(Audio difficulties).

\$100,000 for resource identification and (indiscernible).

Our anticipated accomplishments for 2020 -- this includes rental based, utility subsidies and any permanent or transitional facilities serving 300 households. Our grant allocation for ESG includes 84 million for the homeless management information system. 750,000 for supportive services. 536,000 for homeless prevention, and about 568,000 for (indiscernible) housing, which is for persons who have recently become homeless with finding a new home and 500,000 for administration. Our anticipated goals for ESG include assisting persons with homelessness prevention. About 85 households with rapid re-housing services and another 1,000 persons with emergency shelters.

Our 2020 and 2024 consolidated plan and action plan are posted online and are available for comment now through April 16, 2020.

The plans are located at HoustonTX.gov/housing/caper.HTML. Copies can be obtained at 2100 Travis on the ninth floor. Comments can be mailed to HCDDplanning@HoustonTX.gov or mailed to HCDD at the attention of planning and grants management at the office of 2100 Travis on the ninth floor, Houston, Texas 77002.

Now we're opening up the lines to take calls.

The call-in number is 832-394-8874 or you can ask questions from Facebook live.

Now we'll be transitioning into our public hearing, and thank you for your time.

>>MR. SELLERS: Good evening. We're going to begin the public hearing portion at this moment. Please call in. 832-394-8874. We want your comments. We want to hear your feedback on the information that was presented by Kris a few minutes ago on our draft documents on the website or how we're doing in implementing our programs, projects, and as we spend the federal funds. Please call in. Each speaker will be given three minutes. When you call in, we'll ask that you state your name first and we'll give you three minutes. All calls will be heard in the order received. You're not allowed to yield time to another person. Each person is given their own opportunity to provide their three-minute comments. This testimony is recorded and transcribed and we'll include your comments as part of the document. After that we'll provide responses to your comments. We mentioned a few moments ago where those documents can be seen so we welcome you to view our website and view that. We'll take questions through Facebook live and we'll interweave some of those together as we have those available.

We have one up from Allen. His question is the ESG allocation seems low relative to the other three categories, and that is true. It is a lower amount -- ESG stands for Emergency Solutions Grant. It's the grant we receive from HUD to help with homelessness issues, operations of homeless shelters and such. If you look at the allocation amounts it's been a steady increase, in line with what we received in previous years. If this is something you think is important, speak to your congressional representatives to see if we can get more funding to assist there.

Looks like we have another question coming through. Give me just a minute.

The question we have up is who can help with my Harvey app? We have a hope program, Houston homeowner assistance program. We have the -- if you call into our main line it can be found on our website. We'll direct you to the right person to make sure you get the responses you need to give you the updates on your Harvey app, let you know where you're at in the queue and if there's anything outstanding we need to get from you to assist.

So the next question is coming up. It says will your offices still be open to pick up documents due to the pandemic?

So as the director mentioned, we are open for business. But we are also -- that's by Adam. We're trying to mitigate our exposure and interaction with the public back and forth. What we can do is you give us a call and we'll look to see what we can do to best facilitate passing along the documents. We're doing the best to provide documents by e-mail if possible. If all else fails we'll see what the best methods are to keep the process moving forward.

Looks like we have a comment.

Caller, if you'll just state your name and you'll have three minutes to speak.

>>> Can you hear me?

My name is LAURIE. Since 2016 the housing collaborative has united the voices of over 120 individuals, builders, developers, neighborhood associations, advocacy groups and residents. We deeply care just like HCDG does about the housing for all of Houston. We are thankful for the on going engagement and processes that can change with the time, effort and energy by the entire team. Your work is participated, in particular during the times of heightened crises like today. We ask to have these drafts -- everyone deserves affordable and resilient housing which provides access to economic opportunities and high quality of life. Housing serves as a corner stone of access to economic opportunity, transportation, quality education, healthcare and many other systems responsible for the high quality of life. Housing and stability result from issues such as high costs -- instability -- or as we're facing now, a health crisis. These challenges are acute for populations that are already vulnerable -- people of color, immigrants, domestic violence survivors, and low income residents. With this consolidated plan we're excited to hear the city is looking to create a comprehensive plan to address the housing challenges. We hope the plan would articulate strategies, goals, and priorities and provide a concrete road map for the next 20 years. Having such a road map would ensure local government has a strategy for a consistent approach to new issues and opportunities that arise due to national policies and initiatives. We urge you to prioritize the initiation of the plan that would work in conjunction with the plans you outlined tonight. We ask for a task force that would provide reactions to support of the development of the critical need of a comprehensive housing plan. This committee or task force is your additional arm to community engagement, which is the basis for program development, especially on issues as complex as

housing. Local governments can engage with diverse stakeholders on the committee and through the committee to learn from expertise whether (indiscernible) and not for profit developer struggle with financing or advocacy organization announcement of resilience issues. This is necessary for city wide policies and neighborhood projects. Complete communities initiative has demonstrated each community has its own challenges. We look forward to working with you. As (indiscernible) is created -- along with the creation of the committee or task force or group that could work with you.

Thank you.

>>**MR. SELLERS:** Thank you for your comment. It appears we have a question from Facebook live.

What type of emergency aid is being offered to the multifactor sector and residents during this crisis?

We are actively working with our partners to determine their needs, looking at available funds to see where we can makeshifts to make funding available, and so we hope as we have those continuing conversations and as we look at what the federal government is choosing to do in their aid package that we'll be rolling out additional funding and programs to assist as we move through this crisis.

Do we have anybody else that wants to offer a public comment? Or if you would like to present your question through Facebook live.

Give it a couple more minutes real quick.

Once again, the number is 832-394-8874. Looks like we have a incoming call. Just a second and we can get that transferred over.

So as the director was presenting earlier in the night, we are looking at doing

this again, potentially in about two weeks. As that information becomes available we'll pass it along and post it on our website under "social media" and share the avenues we have available to us for engagement and make sure you'll have further opportunities to comment on the draft documents.

Commenter, please state your name and then you'll have three minutes to provide your comment.

>>> This is Mary. I'm executive director of avenue community development corporation. And I want to thank the department and all the staff for holding this hearing in this difficult time. Appreciate the information that was presented today. I want to echo the comments of Laurie from Houston housing collaborative about the need for comprehensive housing plan for Houston. I'm struck by the presentation by the fairly low number of units -- housing units that can be produced with the very limited federal funds that Houston has available, and with a comprehensive housing plan, the city could really take an overall look at all of the resources that are available and set goals for the different types of housing that can be produced to meet the needs of the different populations in the city who need housing assistance. So again, thank you for all the work that went into this hearing and the presentation, and avenue and others in the Houston housing collaborative. Look forward to working collaboratively with the city on the production of a comprehensive housing plan.

Thank you.

>>**MR. SELLERS:** Thank you for your comment.

We'll do one last call for comments, and then for questions, and hearing none, we'll get this wrapped up.

All right. So as we look to close out the everyone, first we want to thank you

for viewing the presentation on Facebook live, through HTV, on the call-in live we have available here. We would like to hear your feedback even through Facebook live to let us know what worked and didn't work, what we can do better. As we look to do this again in a couple of weeks and in the future, your feedback is important and is good critique to help make this better. A copy of the presentation will be posted on the website for viewing and for you to share with others that maybe couldn't make it tonight and we'll look to do this again in a couple of weeks. Visit our website to find out more information about our department, projects and to view the documents and get the latest news on what's going on.

With all that being said, we want you to have a great evening, and thank you for attending, and we'll see you soon.

Thanks.