



CITY OF HOUSTON

Housing & Community Development Department

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Mayor

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Heather Lagrone
Texas General Land Office
1700 North Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78711

Re: City of Houston Homeowner Assistance Program Waiver Requests for COVID-19 Program Impacts

Dear Heather:

Concerns regarding COVID-19 have required limit interaction with homeowners to collect documentation required to move their file forward to the Texas General Land Office (GLO) for approval. To provide continuing assistance through the City's Homeowner Assistance Program, the City recognizes the need to balance documentation requirements and our efforts to keep our applicants, many who are in vulnerable populations, safe during this time. Unfortunately, many of our applicants do not have access to technology to submit this documentation.

To keep the application approval process moving, the City is requesting the following documentation requirement waivers, effective immediately, upon approval by the GLO, to allow flexibility in the completion of application packages and expedite submission to the GLO for approval.

We are asking the GLO to waive the requirement to update the documents listed under *Outdated Documentation* or allow for self-certification by the homeowner; allow for self-certification by the homeowner for items listed under *Payment Plans*; and allow for delayed documentation collection (prior to any requested draws) for documents listed under *Title Documents*.

Outdated Documentation

- **Expired Driver's License or State ID:** As State of Texas driver's license offices are currently closed, homeowners are unable to obtain a new driver's license or ID. In all cases, the driver's license was not expired at the time of intake and should always have been sufficient for establishing identity of the applicant. Requiring a resubmission has never made any practical sense, and it makes even less sense now that offices are closed.

- **Out of Date Social Security Statement:** As federal Social Security offices are currently closed, homeowners may be unable to obtain an updated Social Security statement. Those that do have an updated Social Security statement may be unable or unwilling to provide a copy at this time. To date, no person receiving Social Security under 80% AMI has had income change sufficiently from one year to the next to make them ineligible. We are willing to work with GLO to hold files where incomes fall in the range of 75-80% AMI, but we would ask that all other applicants move forward with the current documentation from the prior year.
- **Out of Date Pension or Retirement Statement:** As many companies and organizations are currently closed, homeowners may be unable to obtain an updated pension or retirement statement. Those that do have an updated pension or retirement statement may be unable or unwilling to provide a copy at this time.
- **Out of Date Mortgage Statement:** Many applicants are unable to access online methods to obtain such documents. We would ask that the GLO allow documentation previously submitted even if it is past the 60-day cutoff requested by the GLO.
- **Out of Date Texas Workforce Commission Income Print Out (Zero Income):** As the Texas Workforce Commission Offices are closed, homeowners are currently unable to obtain an updated income print out to validate zero income. We would ask that the GLO allow the Zero Income Certification to already provided to suffice without the additional documentation requested by the GLO from the Texas Workforce Commission.
- **Out of Date Forms 1040 Individual Income Tax Return/1099 US Income Tax Form:** Due to the tax filing extension, many homeowners have not completed their 2019 tax returns. We would ask that the 2018 Income Tax Returns be sufficient documentation of income at least through August 2020.

The City is requesting the GLO to waive the requirement to obtain updated documents noted above or to allow for written or oral self-certification from the homeowner that the information provided has not changed, using the 1010 or 1011 forms, as appropriate.

Payment Plan Documentation

- **Proof of Child Support Payment Plan:** Some files currently in the pipeline were submitted to the Attorney General's Office per prior requirement/process and were determined delinquent. As this Office is currently closed, there is not an opportunity for these homeowners to establish required payment plans to move their file forward.
- **Proof of Property Tax Payment Plan:** Documentation of property tax payment plans is typically gathered after an initial applicant eligibility review is conducted. If it is determined that they are delinquent on their property taxes, they are advised to establish a payment with the taxing authority. Due to the closure of both the Harris County Tax Office and the Harris County Appraisal District Offices, homeowners may be unable to obtain required documentation at this time.

The City is requesting to allow for written or oral self-certification from the homeowner, using the 1010 or 1011 forms, as appropriate, indicating that the homeowner is under a required payment plan for the items noted above.

Title Documents

- **Documentation Requirements Resulting from Title Search Results:** The following items may be required following title search completion: Release of Lien, Death Certificate, Marriage License, Divorce Decrees, Additional Owner Signature on Form F. Homeowners may be unable or unwilling to provide a copy at this time.

The City will ensure that all required title related documentation is collected at the earliest possible opportunity, and no later than during the award signing process, and will provide proof of such documentation, by whatever means required by the GLO, prior to expenditure of funds.

Thank you for your consideration during this difficult time. I hope we can find a means to continue assisting homeowners and not allow COVID-19 to delay their assistance through the City's Homeowner Assistance Program. If you have any questions, I may be reached at 832-394-6200.

Very truly yours,



Tom McCasland