

City of Houston
Housing and Community Development Department
Spring Public Meeting
April 7, 2020

>> **MR. McCASLAND:** Good evening. I'm Tom McCasland and welcome to our second spring public hearing for the Consolidated Plan and Analysis of Impediments for the City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department. Thank you for joining us. We hope that you and your families are safe during this trying time.

We know that we have to do business differently in the current circumstances. And one of the things that we are committed to at the Housing and Community Development Department is ensuring the work moves forward and that we as your city partners are figuring out how to do this work differently, even under different circumstances.

I'm joined here by a number of City of Houston employees who have come in during this period of time while we've been primarily telecommuting. We are working hard to keep money moving, funding our partners, making sure that the documents that have to go to HUD go to HUD, and we want to make sure that in the process we're listening closely to our community partners as well. So that is what tonight's meeting is about.

So we are gathered here to seek community input about the draft 2020 to 2024 Consolidated Plan, which is a plan that goes to the Housing and Urban Development Department of the federal government. And it will include our 2020 proposed budget for federal funding as well as the Draft Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice within Houston.

Beginning last summer, our staff has gathered feedback from over 6,000 Houstonians to help inform the development of these plans. This includes more than 3,000 surveys, more than 3500 people reached through community and public meetings, 48 advocates that participated in a variety of focus groups, and the creation and deployment of our Fair Housing Ambassador Program, one of the suggestions made by some of our community partners.

The feedback that we have gathered over this entire time is processed into the Draft 2020 to 2024 Consolidated Plan, and the Draft Analysis of Impediments. And the feedback we gather here tonight will be incorporated into these plans as well.

The format of our meeting is different tonight. Tonight's meeting is going to begin with Kris Robinson who will give a short presentation reviewing the highlights of the plans. During that presentation, please feel free to send questions you might have about the plans 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, please call (832)394-8874. That number is (832)394-8874.

Before we go to the main part of the agenda though, I do want to just take a couple of minutes and review some of the feedback that we received from some of our community partners. At our first virtual hearing, I mentioned that we were thrilled to be -- we were thrilled to be working with you on our -- virtually on plans. While it is difficult to be doing it under these circumstances, we believe that virtual hearings may actually help more people participate. We want to make sure that people can participate live in the future, that people can participate via FaceBook, via HTV, via the telephone call-ins, but as we open up more avenues for people to participate, we want to make sure that we are learning with you how best to use these mechanisms.

with that in mind, I just want to comment on a few items. First of all, tonight, we'll be keeping the phone lines open for longer. I know that there were some folks who called in later at our first hearing after the hearing had already closed. In a normal hearing once our -- once the commenters and the line for public comment ends, we usually wrap up. And we apologize for not communicating that more clearly. So tonight we're going to have actually a longer presentation that will allow us to keep the phone lines open.

Additionally, we're only going to be using one phone line and muting folks until it is time for public comment. So even if you're called in on that group phone line, you will be able to make comments later on.

And then as I mentioned, we do recognize that while we had advertised this meeting last time for 6:30 to 8:30, we did wrap up early, and I wanted to express my sincere apology for those who called in after the meeting was wrapped up. We do hope that you're able to get your comments in tonight and we look forward to hearing them.

Additionally, we have worked with our partners to drive a -- to help people get additional comments, to make sure people know about the meeting, that they know how to participate in the meeting and we are hopeful that there are additional people calling in tonight related to that partnership.

In addition to this English channel, there is a Spanish channel you call in to for the translation and we are grateful for the Spanish translator who will be doing that. And of course in addition to that, we also have an American Sign Language interpreter here that will be helping as well.

I will say that last meeting's transcript is already posted on our website, and tonight's transcript, as soon as we have it, will be posted there as well. You can go to our main website and you can see it.

I know that there was some issues with the screen on the first meeting and we hope that that has been resolved this meeting. So thank you for the feedback from our community partners on that.

Just a couple of other comments. We will be translating both the entirety of the Consolidated Plan and the entirety of the Analysis of Impediments for Fair Housing into both Spanish and Vietnamese. The Spanish and Vietnamese of the executive version or the PowerPoint presentation that is shown here tonight is already translated. They are both translated and already on our website. You can find them on our main website, but the fall plans are in the process of being translated and those will be added to our website as well. I believe I have covered the main items there.

We'll give you this several times throughout the evening I'm sure, but our main website is houstontx.gov/housing and as I mentioned, you can provide -- you can read the transcripts there.

One last item, as it relates to these plans, we've received several comments asking us why we are not just asking HUD to delay the submission of these plans. We've had that conversation with HUD, and HUD has a particular process that they go through and they have indicated

that while they could delay the submission of the plans, that would mean that the funding of the plans would be delayed as well. And one of the things that we are committed to, as we go through these trying times, is to make sure that the funding does not slow down.

We are here. We are working, whether in this office or telecommuting remotely to make sure the funding gets out to the partners who need it. We are working with HUD to make sure the funding gets from D.C. to here and we're grateful for you for joining us in this virtual meeting to make sure that we can go through the process that we need to to truly engage with our partners while making sure that the funding that our communities rely on so desperately continues to flow into the city.

So with that I'm going to invite Kristen over to -- for the rest of the meeting. We'll be here for the entirety of the meeting. Our staff will be here, but with that the presentation will get kicked off and then comments to follow shortly.

>> **MS. ROBINSON:** Thank you, Tom. I just want to welcome everybody again to our fair housing -- excuse me -- to our virtual public hearing for our 2020 Consolidated Plan and our 2020 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.

Just to cover again our presentation, our short presentation regarding the Consolidated Plan will cover our past accomplishments, our data research, as well as our public engagement findings, our five-year strategic goals and our annual grant allocations and proposed budget. So this presentation is just meant to provide some context for the public hearing portion of the meeting, where you'll be able to make public comments and they will be recorded and addresses in the Consolidated Plan and Analysis of Impediments.

And, hey, guys, my name is Kris Robinson. I do work for the City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department as a senior planner. So welcome again and I hope that you guys are able to hear us clearly if you have any questions or comments throughout, you can always go to FaceBook Live and let us know what your questions are.

(Announcement in Spanish)

>> MS. ROBINSON: Please make sure that during the public comment period you are able to call at (832)394-8874. So even after the public hearing portion has concluded, you will be able to still make comments through several ways. You can do so by E-mail, you can do so online through voice mail and you can also do so through postal mail.

I also want to just take a little time to acknowledge our callers who are listening in. Thank you for joining us, guys.

(Announcement in Spanish)

>> MS. ROBINSON: So let's jump right into our presentation. We're going to do a brief overview of HCDD and its vision, its entitlement grants that we receive from HUD, and the strategic plans that govern our goals and strategies using the entitlement grants. Ultimately, we would like for you guys to comment on these strategic plans. And again don't forget during the presentation you can leave comments on -- or you can leave questions on our FaceBook Live.

So our vision at HCDD is to empower every resident to live in an affordable community where they can thrive. And we do that by providing affordable housing, infrastructure and neighborhood services, community economic development and supportive services.

To achieve our vision at HCDD, we use approximately \$50 million each year in federal entitlement grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which we also call HUD. And you'll hear us say that a few times throughout the presentation. But I will say as we continue through the presentation, you can follow along through our toolkit which is a summary of our Con Plan and our AI for 2020.

The annual grant amounts are based on a specified formula determined by HUD that considers various demographics, housing and market characteristics of Houston. So for CDBG, which stands for Community Development Block Grants, this grant provides housing, public services, public facilities and economic development.

Our HOME grant which stands for Home Investment Partnerships grant, we use this money to provide affordable homes for renters and homeowners.

Our HOPWA grant, which stands for Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS, we provide housing and social services for persons with HIV/AIDS and their families.

And lastly, our ESG which you see in the green box stand for Emergency Solutions Grants where we provide shelter and support services to homeless persons and persons at risk of homelessness.

Now let's talk about why we're even holding this public hearing. The Con Plan is a five-year strategic plan that reviews Houston's housing conditions and its market, which affects housing needs in Houston. And the Con Plan also incorporates our Annual Action Plan which outlines annual goals and strategies for allocating the 50 million anticipated dollars from the HUD formula grants.

The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice also reviews several barriers that impede Fair Housing. This is our second plan that we'll be covering throughout the night. It helps to inform our strategies that HCDD and other departments use to affirmatively further Fair Housing.

As I said earlier, we've also developed our new toolkit for the 2020 Consolidated Plan and AI and it gives a brief overview of our mission, our goals, our engagement processes and you can also pick up copies in our office. It's available in Spanish and English and Vietnamese. And we're working to get it translated in other languages, like Chinese and Arabic and Urdu. This document is a resource you can use. It talks about our public engagement efforts and our budgets for entitlement grants like CDBG, HOME, HOPWA and ESG. And these grants you can also look at what the acronyms stand for even though we covered it just a few slides ago. You can look in the toolkit to get a better understanding of what they are.

(Announcement in Spanish)

>> MS. ROBINSON: Now let's talk about why HCDD has written these strategic plans and let's talk about the information that drives the strategies and the goals within the Consolidated Plan and the Analysis of Impediments. Since July, we have talked with many community members and advocates and we surveyed and researched about Houston's current market and its needs. And this is what we have found.

Houston is situated in a fast growing region. Since about 2000, the population has grown by 17.5 percent, which means that we have almost 2.3 million residents. Persons with disabilities make up about 9 percent of our population. And the workforce makes up about 52 percent of our population as well. There are about 850,000 residents in Houston and the median income in Houston's households is a little over \$51,000. The median home value is about \$161,000, and the median rent prices have increased to a little less than \$1,000. We have also found that 51 percent of households are LMI. This means that over half of Houston's households have low to moderate incomes. And this varies by the number of people you have in your home and the actual income. Additionally, almost 40 percent of households are having housing problems. This means that homes have structural, electrical, plumbing or mechanical defects that can be repaired and some units are deficient, but they may not be suitable for rehabilitation. We also found that there are approximately one-third of homes with lead poisoning which has great negative impacts on children under the age of 6.

Our research has also found that while home sale prices have increased by over 108 percent, and two bedroom rents have increased by 69 percent since 2000, income has not increased at the same rate. Incomes have increased only by 40 percent, which means there is a gap between income and the cost of homes for home buyers and renters.

On this slide you'll see percentages are in blue boxes and you'll see percentages in green boxes. The percentages in blue indicate one -- or a household that is housing cost burdened. This means that they are spending between 30 to 50 percent of their income -- their household income on rent, mortgage and utilities, which you can see in the first group they are extremely low income households. And in these households about 17 percent are cost burdened.

You'll also see in the green, which are severely cost burdened households, this means that they are spending over 50 percent of their income and almost 80 percent of those households are severely cost burdened for extremely low income individuals. And what we see just across the board is that nearly all income levels have some sort of cost burdening, even at our moderate or higher incomes.

As we talked about before from June to October of 2019, we reached about 7,000 people during our public engagement activities. We conducted over 3,000 surveys through the Community Needs Survey and the Express Survey. We also attended 75 meetings and reached about 3500 people. And in addition to surveys and meetings, our team developed a new Fair Housing Ambassador Program and partnered with Rice University students to reach more Houstonians.

And here are some of the results of our Express Survey. In the Express Survey, we asked three simple questions about Fair Housing: One, do you know what it is? Two, have you experienced housing discrimination? And three, how did you report it?

And here is what we gleaned from that Express Survey. 20 percent of our survey participants didn't know about Fair Housing at all. 13 percent said that they recently experienced housing discrimination, and of that population, 51 percent of those people said that they did not know how to report housing discrimination.

In the Community Needs Survey, we also asked about housing challenges, and what we found out is that over half of the survey participants said that they experienced some challenges related to their home. Weather conditions and flooding were the greatest challenges that survey-takers dealt with, and over half of the people who said that they had trouble looking for a home said that they had trouble paying for rent, mortgage or paying for their down payment on their home. And they also said that finding a quality home was also difficult.

In the Community Needs Survey, we also asked about services that were rendered to people socially or in their neighborhoods. And health services, particularly mental health and substance abuse services, were the top concerns for our social service improvements. And generally, the greatest area of improvement noted by survey-takers was infrastructure maintenance in our neighborhood services. This would include streets and sidewalks and flood drainage. And overall, a greater percentage of survey-takers said that neighborhood services needed more improvements.

Here are some of our barriers to affordable housing, and we base these barriers on an analysis of data from research and public engagement. For our current market conditions, we found that rising costs of construction,

labor and land, especially in areas of high opportunity, they limit affordability for home development and sale prices and rents are increasing faster than income, which we talked about earlier. Additionally, lower cost homes are often located far from job centers and high frequency transit routes, and these high transit costs, along with long commutes to jobs and services, impact overall affordability for families. We also have quality of housing as one of our barriers, regulations, lack of financial resources and financial literacy, and in accessibility, and you can find a more fleshed out description of these in your toolkit if you'll go online to www.houstontx.gov/housing. You can find the summary of these barriers to affordable housing or you can look at our actual Con Plan which is also posted online.

In the AI or the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice which provides the basis of our Fair Housing plans, we're tasked with reviewing data, private subsidies and barriers to Fair Housing. And our AI includes a Fair Action Plan on how to lessen that impact of Fair Housing barriers.

We've decided on 12 impediments to Fair Housing Choice such as housing discrimination, lack of knowledge, or affordability, lack of accessibility and financial education and these are some of the impediments in Houston, but they are not all. So this list is not exhaustive. However, this list is intended to be broad and more specific barriers are identified in the summaries of each of the impediments.

To address the impediments, we have identified 30 action items, and within these action items, we've provided measurable outcomes. For instance, educating people about Fair Housing and creating new campaigns, and our goal is to reach at least 500,000 people with Fair Housing information.

We have also said that preserving and constructing about 1,300 affordable homes is important to Fair Housing and removing those barriers. And also expanding home ownership opportunities and we intend to build 200 new homes. And that's a way for us to remove these impediments to Fair Housing.

And additionally, we also have tasked ourselves with completing a regional housing study. So among all of these impediments that we have and all of the action items, our foremost impediment that we'll focus on is educating people about Fair Housing and their rights.

As we said earlier, about 51 percent of people who said that they experienced discrimination didn't even know how to report it. And almost 13 percent said that they didn't even know what Fair Housing was. So educating people about Fair Housing continues to be important to HCDD.

Now let's briefly talk about the Consolidated Plan which discusses our five-year strategic goals for improving housing, public facilities, infrastructure, quality of life for low and moderate income Houstonians. I don't want you guys to forget though you can send your questions in through FaceBook Live at houstonHCDD. We will be taking comments from our callers in a little while. You can call (832)394-8874.

(Announcement in Spanish)

>> MS. ROBINSON: So let's take a brief glance at the past. We're looking from 2015 to 2019 which is another five-year span. We've assisted about 500 -- excuse me -- 5,300 individuals through Fair Housing -- our Fair Housing hotline and another 1600 new and existing multi-family rental units have also been developed or repaired. We have done about 1,000 single family homes in repairs and another 200 with down payment assistance.

We've reached over 2 million people through our Fair Housing campaigns as well. We have also assisted 5,000 families and individuals through our homelessness prevention. 26 neighborhood facilities with new construction or improvements and 100,000 people with job training, child care and other public services.

Moving forward to the next five years, again, spanning from 2020 to 2024, we've developed eight goals that will drive the work that HCDD has done over the past five years.

We've developed these goals based on what we've gleaned from the past as well as what we have gained from our research and public engagement, and we have also assigned numerical metrics to each of these goals to help identify what kind of work we anticipate completing over the next five years.

For instance, for preserving and expanding the supply of affordable housing, we anticipate preserving or expanding by 1,244 households.

We intend to expand home ownership by 38 households, provide assistance to persons affected by HIV/AIDS by assisting 16,000 households or more. And to reduce homelessness and we can just go through this list, but I do want you to also reference your toolkit and the actual Con Plan for the goals that are laid out in the Consolidated Plan.

Now the Annual Action Plan, which is a piece of the Consolidated Plan, it spans for just one year. The five-year goals that we just talked about will start in our new fiscal year which begins July of 2020, and each year we will assess our previous goals and our outcomes and then we develop our Annual Action Plan based on what we've done previously. And the Annual Action Plan covers all of our strategies and our goals for 2020.

So we've specified our anticipated outcomes for each of these goals and developed a budget that will best assist our achieving those goals.

And the budgetary numbers are based on the grant allocations from HUD. Based on HUD's February 14th posting of grant allocations, these are amounts that we expect to receive from HUD in formula grants, which is the CDBG, HOME, HOPWA and ESG, and again, these acronyms can be found in your toolkit.

Generally, we receive about \$50 million every year, and we anticipate the same for 2020. And what is shown in this graph is that over time our grant allocations have remained steady since about 2016, but there is a slight bump up in funding, but generally our programs will continue and we will just have to address -- adjust our priorities based on inflation, increased costs and the needs of Houstonians.

So now let's talk about the budgets and our actual goals. Every year we budget funding for specific programs and activities based on the money that HUD has said that they would give to the city. And on February 14th, HUD posted its 2020 allocations for the City of Houston. And the budgets on the following slides are based on what HUD has granted to the City of Houston.

The total entitlement grant allocation is about \$47.8 million. This includes CDBG, HOME, HOPWA, and ESG.

And just to briefly recap, you can review the toolkit online which gives you an outlay of all of these numbers that we're presenting. So CDBG totals

about \$24.8 million. \$10.2 million for HOME is expected to be allocated to the city. 10.3 million for HOPWA, and \$2.1 million for ESG. And again, these following budgets for HCDD are based on the grants from HUD.

Based on our 2020 HUD grant allocation for CDBG, which totals \$24.8 million, we've budgeted about \$4.5 million for public services together with ESG match in housing services, \$4.6 million for public facilities, 7.6 million for home repair and remediation activities, and economic development anticipates using \$250,000 to fund prior year projects that will continue through 2020. And Code Enforcement will also fund activities that total approximately \$2.9 million.

Through our \$10.3 million of CDBG funding, we've anticipated -- \$24.8 million of CDBG funding, we've anticipated the following goals for 2020. Providing public services to over 18,000 households, two public facility improvements, 3200 code enforcement visits, removing lead hazards from about 50 homes, 75 new affordable rental homes and 250 homes to be repaired or reconstructed.

Based on our 2020 HUD grant allocation for HOME, which totals \$10.2 million, we've budgeted \$4.5 million for multi-family rehabilitations and developments, \$1.7 million for single family developments, \$3 million for tenant-based rental assistance, and \$1 million for planning and administration.

In 2020, the \$10.2 million for HOME funding from HUD, HCDD expects to develop approximately 75 new multi-family units, provide rental and utility assistance to about 200 homeless or near homeless clients, develop 10 affordable single family homes.

Now based on our 2020 HUD grant allocations for HOPWA, which totals \$10.3 million, we have budgeted \$2.2 million for operating costs, 2.1 million for supportive services, 2.4 million for tenant-based rental assistance, another 2.4 million for short-term rental, mortgage and utility services or subsidies, 100,000 for resource identification, and 1 million for administration. Services through HOPWA funding are geared towards helping households or persons living with HIV/AIDS and in 2020 HCDD anticipates assisting over 1,700 households with its HOPWA funding through tenant-based rental assistance, short-term rental and mortgage

utility subsidies and permanent or transitional shelters and wrap around or supportive services.

Based on our 2020 HUD grant allocations for ESG, which totals \$2.1 million, we've budgeted about 84,000 for our homeless management information system, approximately 757,000 for supportive services, about 536,000 for homeless prevention, and about 568,000 for rapid rehousing, which assists persons who have recently become homeless with finding a new home, and another 100,000 for administration. Through ESG funding in 2020, we expect to assist over 3,500 persons and 85 households through rent and utilities, relocation and stabilization services, rapid rehousing, which is similar to the services provided under HOPWA, and emergency shelter operations as well.

So with this slide, I've concluded the informational session about the 2020 Con Plan, and the 2020 Analysis of Impediments. We'll be transitioning to our Fair Housing presentation in just a bit, but I do want to let everyone know that you can call in and make public comments. You can call (832)394-8874, and you can ask questions through our FaceBookLive@houstonHCDD. Our public hearing segment will also begin after the Fair Housing presentation.

And we just want to let everyone know that the 30 day comment period began on March 16th and it will continue now through April 16th, 2020. Both plans are available at the Housing And Community Development office which is located at 2100 Travis Street on the 9th floor and copies will be available -- you can pick them up in Spanish -- in English and the Spanish translations are coming down the pipe. The plans will not be located at the library due to COVID-19 closures, but we are still striving to connect with everyone within our community given the current context.

So please stick around for the public hearing segment where callers can comment live.

(Announcement in Spanish)

>> **MS. ROBINSON:** Again, the public hearing will begin shortly, and you can call us at (832)394-8874. And we do have a few ground rules. One, we're going to allow every speaker about three minutes to testify. And calls will be heard in the order that they are received. And we cannot

yield time to another person. And we will have a timer just in case you guys want to see -- or you will hear something to let you know that your three minutes is up. And additionally, each commenter, if you can, please state your name for the record.

Now here is Kim Johnson with our Fair Housing presentation.

>> MS. JOHNSON: Thank you, Kristin. Welcome. My name is Kim Johnson and I work in HCDD as an administrative coordinator. As my colleague mentioned earlier, informing people about Fair Housing and their rights continues to be our focus. The Con Plan and AI are important as they certify our work to affirmatively further Fair Housing.

I'm here today to give you a brief overview of Fair Housing, why it matters, its history and who is protected. By 2030, Houston will become the nation's third largest city. Housing costs are outpacing income levels and from 2010 to 2018 --

(Technical Difficulties)

homes grew --

Very low and extremely low income populations are growing the fastest.

Children whose families move to better neighborhoods by the age of 13 earn higher future earnings than their peers and had higher college attendance rates.

Fair Housing is more than just receiving equal treatment when looking for a home because housing plays a significant role in determining a person's quality of life. Where you live matters because it affects your access to transportation and recreation and neighborhoods and affordable housing, social, cultural and educational opportunities, and employment, medical services and entertainment opportunities.

Now we'll transition to the Fair Housing Act history. On April 11, 1968, just seven days after the assassination of Dr. -- Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr, President Johnson signed into law Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 and this is commonly known as the Fair Housing Act. The federal Fair Housing Act later amended in 1988 prohibits landlords, real estate agents, lenders, local, state and federal governments and individuals from

unlawfully discriminating against protected classes in housing transactions for rental, sale, mortgage lending, zoning and land use.

Each year, the month of April is dedicated to reaffirming our commitment to the equality of opportunity in housing. This month marks 52 years since the passage of the act in 1968.

It's illegal not to provide equal treatment to people seeking housing. The Fair Housing Act prohibits the following: Landlords or lenders cannot steer a black family from renting or purchasing a home in predominantly white neighborhoods because they are black. They cannot include different terms or conditions in leases or loans such as imposing higher interest rates on loans for Hispanic persons. Landlords or realtors cannot produce discriminatory advertisements like advertisements that say no children or only provide advertisements in English in an area highly populated by people with limited English proficiency. And they cannot say that a certain housing is unavailable based on a protected class. For example, saying that a second floor apartment is unavailable to a person in a wheelchair when it actually is available.

Most housing is covered by Fair Housing laws, although there may be differences in how some laws and provisions are applied. The exemptions include: Selling your own home without a broker or realtor, renting a room or unit out of your home where you also live, housing units in a church shelter that are designated for church members, assisted living facilities for seniors, and shelters and other temporary housing that offers supportive services and is not a permanent housing unit.

Now we'll cover who is protected. Despite the passage of the Fair Housing Act, marginalized groups are still excluded from access to quality and fair housing. This limits their access to jobs, schools, transportation and more. The seven protected classes are: One, race, it's a group of humans based on shared physical or genetic traits. This includes skin color, hair texture, facial and other physical or genetic traits associated with a racial or ethnic group.

Color -- refers to one's pigmentation of the skin as an indication of someone's race. Color is included separately from race because someone can discriminate solely on color. For example, someone can discriminate against another person whose skin is lighter or darker.

National origin -- is the relationship between an individual and a state and refers to a person's ancestry, birthplace, ethnic background or language. Religion can either be overt discrimination against a member of a particular religion or indirect discrimination such as zoning to limit use of homes, private homes as a place of worship.

Sex describes the range of characteristics that pertain to differentiating between masculinity and femininity based on biological sex.

Family status protects families with children under the age of 18 from discriminatory actions including couples adopting children, legal guardians of children, foster parents, grandparents with dependents and pregnant women.

Finally, handicapped or disability -- this is the functional limitations of three or more of the following areas of life including self-care, learning, mobility, self-direction, receptive or expressive language, capacity for independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. Discrimination based on disability can also occur if a person is denied reasonable accommodations such as allowing service dogs or providing an assigned parking space closer to the unit, as well as reasonable modifications that will allow persons full use of housing features such as lowering cabinets and light switches or installing a ramp.

The following are not protected classes under the law: Source of income and age, although age is not a protected class, disability is, and it supports elderly individuals. Sexual orientation and gender, the Fair Housing Act does not specifically include sexual orientation and gender as a protected class, but some states do. Marital status and persons with a criminal record.

According to HUD, due to racial and ethnic disparities in the United States justice system, criminal history-based restrictions on access to housing are likely to disproportionately affect African Americans and Hispanic persons. Although this is not a protected class, policies of refusing to rent to persons with a criminal record could in fact be discrimination.

On this slide, we'll cover how you can make a complaint if you are indeed a victim of housing discrimination. If you have a right to file a housing

discrimination complaint with HUD that telephone number is 1-800-669-9777 or visit the HUD website for more information.

The Texas Workforce Commission is the entity responsible for enforcing the Fair Housing Act in the State of Texas.

Their phone number is 1-888-452-4778.

And finally, the Greater Houston Fair Housing Center assists people in the metropolitan area who have been discriminated against in housing. Their number is 713-641-3247.

As Kristen mentioned earlier, these are the ways that you can leave a comment on our documents, by E-mail, online, you can leave a voice mail or through the mail. Thank you for joining us, and this concludes the Fair Housing portion of the presentation.

At this point I will turn it over to Derek for our public hearing portion. Thank you.

>> MR. SELLERS: Good evening. My name is Derek Sellers. I'm the Assistant Director in the Housing and Community Development Department for the City of Houston. At this point in time, we're going to turn it over to our public hearing portion of the evening.

So as Kristen mentioned earlier, for this portion, these are some of the rules that govern this. Each speaker will be given three minutes to testify and we want to hear from you. This is your opportunity to tell us your thoughts on what was presented tonight during the presentations on the draft documents that we have posted online and have had there since March 16th. So please give us a call in. Let us know your thoughts. Calls will be heard in the order that they are received and then there is no yielding of time to another person. There is enough time here for us to hear from everyone. There is no need to yield time. We want you to be heard fully for that three minutes.

I think I went too far. Anyways, so the phone number as we've mentioned a couple of times tonight, the number is (832)394-8874. So give us a call. Call in at that number. Our lines are open and ready for you.

Right now we don't have any callers on the line. So we're going to take some of the questions that we've received via FaceBook Live and run through those and give you a little bit more time to give us a call.

First question that we have: What does it mean to affirmatively further fair housing? That is a fantastic question. One of the things when we received our grant funds every year we have to certify to HUD that we're affirmatively furthering fair housing and this is one of the goals of our Analysis of Impediments document as we look at what are those impediments to Fair Housing Choice in the city and what are we actively doing to remove those barriers, those impediments.

And so we've identified 12 impediments in the document and I believe we have 30 different actions associated with those impediments to try to remove those barriers. Some of those that we will do directly, we'll see it in our programs and the activities we choose to fund over the next five years as we move forward. Some of those we have to work with our community partners, advocates and other entities to overcome. We have to get some of the private market involved in some of these situations. Our goal is to remove Fair Housing barriers within the city and ensuring we're doing everything possible to make that happen.

Our second question: How do you intend to build affordable housing in high opportunity areas? I believe this is one of the greatest successes we've had so far in our disaster recovery funding. Some of this is outlining scoring mechanisms within our multi-family RFP's that where we are saying these are the things that we're going to prioritize, that we are not going to let NIMBY issues get in our way. And so as we -- so it's being intentional with our RFP's, our Request for Proposal documents, the programs we put out there.

Some of it is about going in and acquiring land directly ourselves and looking to construct on that land in these high opportunity areas. We want to allow people to live where they work, live where they have access to good schools and then providing incentives where possible to ensure that happens through development and through the activities we fund.

Our third question: What resources exist for first time homeowners that do not receive Section 8 housing choice vouchers? We have a down payment assistance program we're offering currently. Go to our website, you can

find information on our down payment assistance program that we have out there that will help provide up to \$30,000 for the purchase of a new home.

So I believe we have a caller on the line. So caller, will you please clearly state your name and you'll have three minutes for your public comment.

>> Caller: Thank you.

This is [INAUDIBLE] Middleton, the Southeast Co-Director for Texas Housers. We're a policy advocate organization that focuses on Fair Housing.

First of all, let me say that I appreciate the adoption of many suggestions [INDISCERNIBLE] to make this hearing more accessible than the previous one. We're the nation's most diverse city, and it's heartening to see a public agency acknowledge and attempt to include various ways of communicating.

Now for some high level remarks on the draft AI that's available on your website. It's our view that the Analysis of Impediments should provide an accounting of Houston's [INDISCERNIBLE] with Fair Housing as well as provide meaningful plans and metrics.

In the document's current form there is history at work. There is a mention of the conciliation between the City of Houston and the EPA around wastewater infrastructure which disproportionately impacts protected classes across the city.

Passing mention is made of the recently expired voluntary compliance agreement and the [INDISCERNIBLE] is mentioned in describing NIMBYism in the city, the onus is placed on private citizens and not on elected representatives. As a recipient of the CDBG and other grants, [INDISCERNIBLE] to complete the AI, violation in quality of life issues don't stop at the doors of its offices.

The city or region must be committed in equal measure to the preservation of historic neighborhoods and affordable housing stock as well as the integration of mostly white, high opportunity areas. HCDD has to lead the way with ambitious and better defined goals.

The draft AI alludes to partnerships with the city and county agencies as well as nonprofits to meet broad goals attached to each impediment or barrier but it does not detail collaboration.

Likewise, the I-45 expansion is listed as a Fair Housing issue in the Houston area, but HCDD is not explicitly linked to the displacement and destruction of the project plan footprints to any of the -- [INDISCERNIBLE] and as Houstonians learn that we're facing a severe upcoming hurricane season, there is not a plan for improving the quality of the CDBG-DR program. Thank you so much.

>> MR. SELLERS: Thank you for your comment. So getting back to the questions that we've received so far: Has any thought been given to using some of the rental assistance money to people displaced and losing employment due to COVID shutdowns? We are talking about providing funding for tenant-based rental assistance to assist with this very issue. Discussions we're having actively to do it. We hope that HUD will provide some waivers to assist us to expedite that effort; but we are talking with our partners and looking at our available funding to do everything we can to assist in this situation.

A couple of components to this one, and we'll see if we may have to phone a friend to assist in some of these responses in these details.

Given that Houston is one of the racially segregated major cities in the U.S, Houston is one of the most economically desegregated cities in the U.S.

There are more than 850,000 households in the City of Houston. House does the HCDD realistically believe that programs it proposes to undertake in furtherance of the obligation to its AFFH will measurably further fair housing?

I think this comment does put into perspective just how great this need is and some of these obstacles that we're facing. The reality is that \$47 million a year in federal funds from HUD isn't going to address or eliminate all these issues, but our goal is to call them out and try to create strategic initiatives to start addressing that. And that means some of our partners have to come to the table as well.

These partners may be nonprofits, some of these partners may be in the banking community or lenders, and it's kind of our role to help facilitate

those discussions to get those programs running and to bring Fair Housing to the forefront.

Tom, did you want to speak on this?

>> MR. McCASLAND: Thank you, Derek. And I came to jump in on this because I think this last question, despite its complexity, really gets to the heart of what we're trying to do.

We know that the City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department cannot address the kinds of issues -- cannot by ourselves address these kind of issues. And one of the things I often say when I go to public meetings is the fastest way to solve the affordable housing crisis in this country is to solve this livable wage crisis. A lot of the issues that we regularly face, both in terms of Fair Housing and in terms of affordable housing could be addressed at least in part if people made a livable wage when they went to work. So we know that livable wage, health care and affordable housing are all intimately linked.

It's about where this housing is located and it's about the availability of resources. We have an obligation to make sure that the funding that we are spending leans in this direction, but we know that we cannot do it alone. We need the support of elected officials, we need the support of the business community, and we need the support of the nonprofit world to make sure that collectively we are bringing Houston forward and that Houston can become one of the first largest cities or maybe even the first largest city to be a place where everyone has a home they can afford in a community where they can thrive. It won't be us doing this alone. It certainly will not be just with these federal dollars, but if we use these dollars, plus a lot of the work that the city does in a lot of other areas, this is an achievable goal.

>> MR. SELLERS: Thank you. The next question: Will the AI or Analysis of Impediments provide a detailed accounting that quantifies its accomplishments? Such a detailed accounting is not included in the draft.

We'll discuss that internally and see what we can do. If it isn't included, we'll look at means to effectively communicate what we've been able to do during that 2015 through 2019 time period.

Looks like we have another public commenter. So please state your name and you'll have three minutes to provide your public comment.

>> **CALLER:** Hello.

>> **MR. SELLERS:** Yes, you're on the line.

>> **CALLER:** I can barely hear you. My name is William Lyons. And I just want to thank the time y'all have given today.

I will express my disagreement with going forward in this modality just because I experienced a lot of technical issues on my end, and I can imagine the people who are directly impacted by this on a daily basis are not in the capacity to be patient with the process. And I think alternative modalities should have been attempted.

My first comment is about the chart on Page 4 on your Consolidation Plan. I found that it was not in plain language for even me to understand. I would just provide feedback if there can be some type of rubric or key or some type of explanation of what the chart means that would be helpful.

The next comment I have is about affordability of housing, particularly for homeowners.

I know a community member who is really struggling to maintain her housing because of her extreme high water bill, so in the last three years she became disabled. So her income directly decreased. And yet her water bill continues to increase a significant amount versus her -- what she's compensated by the federal government on her disability check.

And so recognizing those [INDISCERNIBLE] make owning and maintaining a single family household is a struggle for a lot of people. And I'm wondering given the current circumstances of COVID-19 how people are recognizing that on a daily basis [INDISCERNIBLE] that are unaffordable for people and how the city can leverage more community partners to keep housing affordable.

So I'm thinking of how on a typical day hundreds of people are evicted from their homes and forced into homelessness.

And people with -- [INDISCERNIBLE] with an epidemic that hundreds of people are being evicted, there has not been a city response to that or a

city collaboration with Harris County to address that to minimize that direct impact that there shouldn't be a right for a landlord to put people out of their homes without a means of getting back in the homes or a means of mediating people being able to not end up homeless.

There are very few, if any, emergency shelters who are able to house 100 people every day.

But given the [INDISCERNIBLE] of the number of people being evicted versus the number of shelter beds available, there are just some gaps there.

In addition, I wanted to -- I'm not sure -- [INDISCERNIBLE] have the opportunity to talk more about the city's plan to address impediment three to meet the existing -- looks like a huge gap in the number of affordable units versus the number of people who need it.

The Consolidation Plan -- the hundreds of thousands of people who need affordable housing, only so many units are available in the City of Houston.

And let's see with my time I have two more comments. One, what is the city's response to the cancer clusters and preventing further disease of communities? I think recently it was authorized that a community would be built next to a concrete manufacturing site and recognizing that that is going to cause health concerns for that community.

And with rental applications, I know that with loan applications, that it's become public knowledge to see how many applications are denied and [INDISCERNIBLE] and I'm wondering if something is similarly available for rental applications?

Are we able to get public information about how many applications are denied based on the same demographics or the people who make the same income versus the difference in their gender, how that plays out in Fair Housing and Analysis of Impediments?

Thank you.

>> **MR. SELLERS:** Thank you your your comment. We appreciate it.

So moving along through the additional questions that we've received. The next one says: Given the 13 percent of respondents the city surveys say they've been discriminated against, what will the city do to enforce an enforcement program or to prosecute people who violate the law?

Right now we currently have a tenant/landlord line to let people know what their rights are under the Fair Housing Act. We tried to mediate where possible to the tenant's benefit to inform landlords of their rights under the law.

We also do active referrals over to HUD to investigate when it appears that they are violating the law. We also look at ways that we can promote Fair Housing even more. We've done that through some of the campaign we have had over the last few years and providing education to the public in the Fair Housing arena, but there is always more we can do and we're going to be leaning into that as we move forward as we have been the last couple of years.

Have you considered implementing small area fair market rent in the Houston area? I'm not sure that we have. Maybe Tom can speak a little bit on that.

>> MR. McCASLAND: Yes, the small area market rents is something that the housing authority implements. And so this is a rental situation -- or a looking -- rather than looking at the fair market rents for an entire area, looking at fair market rents for particular neighborhoods and so housing authorities do this very regularly.

We are separate from the housing authority because we do not oversee either the voucher program or the public housing program. But in the City of Houston's housing department or housing authority, which is a separate organization from us, they do look at small area fair market rents to make sure that there are differing price points throughout the city, recognizing that not -- the City of Houston is a very large place and rents in one area may not be equal to rents in another area.

This is another example of affirmatively furthering Fair Housing as well, making sure that the subsidy is available so that people can move to those higher market rents.

One of the things that was asked about earlier in the FaceBook chain was about -- specifically about vouchers. Well, vouchers are not particularly underneath our purview. We do recognize that families with vouchers frequently do not have the opportunity to take those vouchers to places that are near quality schools, near the job centers within the city, or near some of the better housing within the city. And so we are working with nonprofits to make sure that that opportunity is available. Again, not something that we see directly or oversee directly, but one of our many partners that we're working with ensuring that people have those rental subsidies available to them.

One of the things that should be obvious to us as we talk through this, is that the need far outstrips the demand -- I'm sorry -- the need far outstrips the supply. We have an affordable housing crisis, not only within the City of Houston, but throughout the country.

And while the crisis has risen, while the need has risen, the funding has not risen with it. In fact, most of the funding has either stayed fairly flat or have gone down. And so one of the things that we are going to have to ask ourselves as a country, as a state, but also as a city, is how are we going to find the resources necessary to address the crisis that we're in and ensure that more affordability is injected within the community, in the smartest possible way and in the largest number of units possible.

This is a challenge of the comprehensive housing plan quite frankly. It's a challenge we look forward to wrestling with with our partners and we certainly hope that you have additional comments on these questions as we move forward even within this public hearing.

>> MR. SELLERS: Next question that we have: Will the City of Houston undertake a systemic testing program to uncover discrimination against home buyers that expose widespread illegal discrimination by real estate agents in light of high levels of experienced discrimination in the city surveys? HUD has direct grants to organizations to do exactly this kind of work.

The fit program, the fat program -- those grants are geared towards educational opportunities, but also to go in and do this kind of testing that's out there. We've talked about doing it. If we fund it, most likely it wouldn't be able to come out of our federal funds.

In reality, fair housing is not a direct activity under any of our grants. It has to come out of our administration dollars. The same administration dollars that we have to utilize to oversee the rest of our programs to implement the rest of our programs. So it gets pretty tight pretty quick when you have caps on those administration funds.

And so we have to look for those kinds of opportunities outside of our federal funding. And we're always pursuing those types of opportunities through our local dollars such as our TIRZ funding. This may be an area we can lean into as we wrap up this AI process and look to tackle the Analysis of Impediments that we have identified.

So do we have any more questions? I'll give it another minute or so because I think that was a maybe that I heard.

The question is: Would Red Cross or who are the other partners for families being contacted after April 19th for vouchers to assist with rent and eligibility? So we are working with a variety of different partners. We're trying to look at contracts that we have existing and activities we have existing and add additional funding to it to assist in this effort.

We're also working with the housing authority and looking at adding more funding to our contract with them to deal with these issues. Before we can award funding, we do -- we disclose that publicly what we're going to be spending money on. We expect those contracts to start moving forward either late this month or early next month. We want to get this funding out the door.

Some of this is dependent upon the timing of when HUD can get their grant agreements to us and the process we have to go through to get that, but we'll be working with the current nonprofits and with the housing authority that's kind of where we sit right now in trying to roll out any rental assistance that we may have.

How can residents help? Oh, wow, that's huge. We like your feedback. We want your feedback. And so, you know, going on to our website and seeing what we have going on, taking part in these hearings that we have, providing comments, showing up to hearings, and our surveys. And I also invite you to pay attention to our FaceBook feeds and our Twitter feeds as we post about open office hours.

Prior to the COVID situation, we were having office hours here where anybody can come in and ask any question about any program we have going on. We did a mobile on the road thing through multiservice centers that were the same way, and we ask that you just be engaged. We want that engagement. It's something that we're actively seeking, we want to hear directly from you.

We also are going to be starting virtual office hours starting tomorrow April the 8th from 1 to 4. And then we'll be doing that each Wednesday. So if you got engaged here through this virtual public hearing, finding out about our virtual office hours, probably through the same means, FaceBook Live will be posting updates about it and have the information on our website about how to hang out with us from 1 to 4 and ask any questions about our programs and projects and what we have got going on.

All right, so doesn't look like we have any callers on the line. And I think that might be -- let's see here. Let's blow that up.

So it says the 2015 through 2019 AI used the frame of the four rights as advocated by TOP. The right to choose where to live, the right to stay in your neighborhood and not be displaced, the right of neighborhoods of color to equal treatment by the city, and the right to have a say in issues that affect low income people and neighborhoods.

Why did the city decide not to include the framing in this draft? I think if you go through the draft, you can find those types of -- what we're trying to -- the impediments we found and then how we're going to overcome those impediments, touches on all four of those different areas. I understand the framing of it, some of it we were looking at guidance where initially HUD was going to ask us to go through a new method of doing this document.

We were looking at that and kind of going back and forth based on the HUD guidance we received, but ultimately I think we land in a good place where we have identified some really -- what we think impediments to Fair Housing Choice and actionable items we can do to combat those impediments.

Okay, seeing no more comments and no more questions on FaceBook Live, we'll turn it over to Tom to get us wrapped up.

>> **MR. McCASLAND:** Thank you, Derek, and thank you Kim and thank you to the HTV staff who came out tonight. We appreciate you being here.

Thank you to our translators. Both translators here but also our Spanish translator on the phone for the folks in the call center. We appreciate people who have been traditionally telecommuting coming in tonight. We appreciate those of you who are at home calling in and being engaged.

I just want to go back to one of those last comments asking what residents can do.

And it's a very important question because these are tough issues. We at the city do not claim that we have all the answers. As I said before, we cannot do this alone.

Oftentimes, we are working on a project or on a development that will bring quality homes near a quality school close to good jobs, close to transportation and only a few community residents come out and say no.

And if the residents who want this, the residents who believe that this needs to happen don't stand up and say yes, it won't happen oftentimes. We're here to make it work, but we need you to speak up as we push. We need you to be here with us.

We have elected officials who are -- will make the tough calls, who will do the right thing, but they need to hear from you as well. So as we are doing our work, we invite you to stand alongside of us and tell us when you have recommendations for how we can do our work better, but please stay engaged. Please stay informed.

And if you want this city to be a city where every resident has an affordable home in a community where they can thrive, then we ask that you speak up. And push us to do our jobs better and make sure that when the decisions are being made, that you're in the room. And that you're asking that the elected officials, the federal government that's funding this is making the right decisions in terms of the funding, and in terms of where these developments and homes are being placed.

I thank you again for your participation tonight. Please give us feedback on what we did well tonight and how we can improve, and most of all, be safe.

Take care of your family and friends and take some time to rejuvenate emotionally, whether that be meditation or prayer, yoga, exercise, cooking good food. We know that this is hard staying at home, staying at home with kids, and we want you to know that we are here for you. We are working hard. We have some of our employees working with their toddlers right next to them throughout the day. We have folks making sure that the work continues. We appreciate your participation tonight to help us as that work continues.

I guess I don't have to say drive safely home, but be safely at home and until next time, we will continue the work here and take many of the comments and suggestions tonight. Those will be incorporated into these plans.

Thank you and good night.