

Other Harris County CEDD Actions

Fostering Decent Housing

To foster decent, safe, and affordable housing, CEDD will continue to collaborate and partner with local non-profit housing developers, for-profit builders and the residents of Harris County to measure the needs, discuss the issues and find solutions to problems of the Harris County housing market. Through these programs, CEDD will work to foster and maintain decent and affordable housing for low- to moderate-income residents of Harris County through homeownership and rehabilitation programs.

CEDD will promote the transition of low- to moderate-income families to self-sufficiency through funding support of homeownership programs. In addition, through escrow accounts and other opportunities provided by the Housing County Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency program, Section 8 families and individuals are able to move toward becoming self-sufficient, thereby increasing the availability of rental assistance opportunities for at-risk families.

In an effort to remove barriers to affordable housing, CEDD will use the following strategies:

- (1) Promote and support affordable housing opportunities, including downpayment assistance programs, new construction, minor home repair, and rehabilitation of affordable housing units for the purpose of increasing the availability of housing to the very-low-, low- and moderate-income persons.
- (2) Continue administering a Housing Resource Center that will be an information clearinghouse for those interested in the search of affordable housing in the CEDD service area.
- (3) Promote the development of collaborations and partnerships of both non-profit and for-profit builders, developers, and other interested parties for the purpose of increasing the capacity for the development of affordable housing in the CEDD service area.
- (4) Promote and assist in the development of applications for additional funds for the use in development of affordable housing in the CEDD service area, including Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.
- (5) Promote and provide technical assistance for the review and revision of land-use regulations in cooperative cities that may present an obstacle in the development of affordable housing.
- (6) Ensure that the department will monitor both single and multifamily contracts and construction for compliance with HOME, the Fair Housing Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Tenant-Based Rental Assistance

The ability to which the housing market is responding to household income needs is another factor affecting housing availability. To adequately meet the housing needs of all households, housing products must be available at a wide variety of prices. Due to current market conditions and strong higher-end housing demands, housing development in Harris County primarily meets the needs of higher income households. For reasons such as perception and low profit margins, the development and availability of low-income/affordable housing is not adequate to meet the needs of the low- and moderate-income population.

There are approximately 4,656 multi-family, renter-occupied low-income housing units available in Harris County supported through federal and state programs. These units are supported by HUD's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program. In addition to these units the Harris County Section 8 Program assists approximately 1,780 individuals and families with housing certificates and vouchers for housing units located throughout Harris County. In total, approximately eight percent of the multi-family housing stock is available specifically for low-income persons in the service area. The total number of affordable housing units available to low- and moderate-income persons is not expected to decrease over the next 5 years. Five out of six low-income families who qualify for government housing assistance do not receive it because of the shortage of subsidized housing.

Evaluating/Reducing Lead Based Paint Hazards

The Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services Department will administer the Harris County Lead Hazard Control Program. This program tests for the presence of lead-based paint and provides abatement services to low- and moderate-income households.

In accordance to HUD's lead-based paint reduction regulations, CEDD began implementing its Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction strategy in the fall of 2000. As a result, subrecipient training includes information regarding implementation, documentation and reporting on all housing activities that are affected by changes in regulations.

Anti-Poverty

According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, 14.9 percent of Harris County residents' incomes were below the poverty level within the previous 12 months. The largest household group below poverty level was married-couples at 42 percent. However, the most severely impacted population was that of female head-of-household families with no spouse at 32 percent of households below poverty level. Of those female householders, 88 percent had related children under the age of 18. This population must overcome significant barriers, such as the need for affordable housing, childcare, and increased employment opportunities, to reach a greater socio-economic status.

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)

Provides funds to non-profit and governmental agencies to develop viable community; provide decent housing and a suitable living environment; and expand economic opportunities,

principally to low- and moderate-income persons. This program is directed toward neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and the provision of community facilities and services.

Emergency Shelter Grant Program (ESG)

This program provides non-profit agencies funds to local non-profit agencies that assist the homeless. These funds are used to expand and improve the availability of emergency shelters and transitional housing, to provide social services essential to attaining self-sufficiency, and assist those at risk of becoming homeless.

HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME)

HOME is a partnership program between states, local governments, non-profit and for-profit organizations. It is designed to increase homeownership and affordable housing opportunities for low- and very-low income individuals through tenant-based rental assistance, housing rehabilitation, rental housing development, downpayment and mortgage assistance, new construction of multi- and single-family housing, property acquisition for permanent housing, and relocation expenses for temporary and permanent displacement.

American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI)

The American Dream Downpayment Initiative Act was signed into law in December 2003. ADDI is a new component of the HOME Program and CEDD will incorporate these funds into the Mortgage Assistance Program. ADDI funds will be utilized in conjunction with either HOME, CDBG or TIRZ funds to increase the amount available to eligible first-time homebuyers.

ADDI funds have a limit of \$10,000 or 6% of the purchase price of the home (whichever is greater). CEDD's Mortgage Assistance Program will combine that award with either HOME, CDBG or TIRZ funds to bring a total award of \$14, 900 for new homes. The department is continuing to add new Mortgage Lenders to MAP in order to ensure that the Harris County service area is covered for all potential low- to moderate-income homebuyers who are eligible for this program.

Harris County Neighborhood Revitalization Strategies

Due to its unique nature, the urban county, which is largely the result of the sprawl of a large metropolitan city, suffers the ills of urban decline but benefits from the least federal programs offered to urban areas. This unique problem emphasizes the need for the urban county to be creative in solving problems for low- and moderate-income areas, which, in Harris County's case, are many in number but far between in distance. Harris County's response to assisting its low- and moderate-income communities is the development of the Harris County 2000 program. The main purpose of Harris County 2000, a neighborhood level planning process, is to stimulate the depressed HUD target areas in the county through a grassroots, community-oriented planning process. The ultimate result of the planning process being the creation of an action plan specifically tailored to the community and which identifies other resources available to assist in meeting the needs of the community.

Harris County 2000 has three phases: 1) awareness and preparation, 2) actual development of the plan, which consists of meetings to garner community input, and 3) implementation of the plan.

Through the planning process, community residents guide direction and address problems critical to improving the quality of life.

Mortgage Assistance Program (MAP)

The department's Mortgage assistance Program serves as the county's primary downpayment, closing cost, and mortgage assistance program. This program provides opportunities for homeownership to low- and moderate-income persons. This program is funded with CDBG, HOME and ADDI funds.

Major Rehabilitation Program

The major rehabilitation program will provide grants for major repairs of housing owned by eligible individuals. This program is funded with HOME funds.

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

The Harris County Housing Authority manages the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. This program provides rent subsidies for very low- and low- income individuals and families. The program offers participants the freedom of choice in finding units suitable to their needs and desires.

Family Self-Sufficiency

This program is operated under the Harris County Housing Authority. The program is the next step for families who have been assisted by Housing Authority program. The program offers escrow accounts to be eventually used for tuition, job training, home improvements or purchases.

Economic Development programs

CEDD houses the county's economic development division. This division is responsible for developing and implementing strategies that will stimulate Harris County's economy. The Economic Development division works with other taxing entities and economic development consortiums to implement programs that will convince businesses to build or expand in order to revitalize communities. The Community Development and Economic Development divisions work together to ensure that Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) affordable housing set-aside funds are dedicated to the development of affordable housing throughout CEDD's service area. In addition to participating in the development of TIRZs, the county participates in the development of tax abatements. If the request is approved by Commissioners Court, the county will abate property taxes up to ten years for owners of businesses that make new capital investments and commitments to job creation.

Benefits of Neighborhood Planning for CEDD target communities

Communities that are a part of CEDD's target neighborhoods slated for redevelopment gain a number of benefits from the planning process. Once a plan is developed, the community will receive priority consideration for Federal funding from CEDD, given that the project is consistent with goals and objectives identified during the neighborhood planning process. The process pulls together various forces in the community that promotes positive community development.

The plan can be used as a basis for obtaining funding from federal, state and local governments, as well as private foundations, since it represents a well thought out, clear-cut strategy for redeveloping the area with a comprehensive focus. (Most governmental entities fund organizations that have a strategic plan that incorporates the overall benefit of funding individual projects.) Organizations can partner with precincts to enhance local infrastructure development projects given that the precinct will coordinate capital improvement plans with CEDD's planning efforts.

Typical Planning Process

The typical process for neighborhood planning is as follows:

- Collect data and factual information on target area
- Identify issues and obstacles to neighborhood development
- Formulate goals, objectives and strategies to arrest negative patterns in these areas
- Develop final plan document
- Create neighborhood based Community Development Corporation (CDC) to implement revitalization activities

CEDD has proposed to complete community plans for at least five target areas in the five-year planning period, as outlined in the 2003-2007 Consolidated Plan. During PY2004, CEDD intends to continue to develop and submit to HUD a Community Revitalization Strategy for the east Harris County communities of Barrett Station and Cloverleaf. During PY2002, the McNair community, located in East Harris County, was selected to participate in the neighborhood revitalization program. The plan was completed and submitted to the community in August 2003. As a result, CEDD has committed to provide technical assistance to the McNair CDC during its first years of incorporation.

Developing Institutional Structure/Enhancing Coordination

Coordination of Efforts, Institutional Change

Over the course of the past year the Harris County Commissioners Court has concentrated on the mission of community development, strengthening the administrative and financial oversight, and resolving all outstanding issues. As a result of CEDD's success in meeting the Court's goals, in September 2003, Commissioners Court approved an order to change the Office of Housing and Economic Development to become a separate department on November 1, 2003. During the October 21, 2003, court session, Commissioners Court renamed the Office of Housing and Economic Development to the Community and Economic Development Department. As a stand-alone department, it is charged with administering the County's HUD Entitlement Program.

CEDD will continue to maintain and improve the coordination of its internal divisions, as well as communication and coordination with other service providers, local governments and other county departments. Examples of how CEDD will continue its community development efforts are listed below:

1. CEDD will continue working with the County's Public Infrastructure, Public Health and Environmental Services and Library Departments, as well as the County Commissioners' precincts. This department and the Public Infrastructure

Department will continue to develop and implement strategies to address the County's capital improvement efforts in CEDD's target areas. CEDD works with the Public Health and Environmental Services Department (PHES) to provide much-needed health care services to the low- and moderate-income residents of Harris County. This department has also provided PHES funds to improve and/or expand current health clinics that are located within CEDD's target areas. Further, CEDD has established a partnership with the Library Department to improve current libraries and to assist in the building of libraries in CEDD's target areas. CEDD and the Library Department will continue to meet with residents, especially in the communities participating in CEDD's neighborhood revitalization programs, to ascertain the needs and desires for libraries within those communities. CEDD will also continue to work with the County Commissioners precincts to provide funding to implement the precincts' community development projects.

2. CEDD will continue to support non-profit organizations, CDCs, CHDOs and CBDOs. The department will actively recruit eligible organizations to become CHDOs and CBDOs. In addition, the department will continue to offer regulatory training to these organizations in order to ensure a better understanding of CDBG, ESG and HOME rules. To further assist current CHDOs address operational issues, the department will encourage the organizations to participate in ICF HOME training programs, organizational development seminars and capacity-building workshops. For CHDOs that do not agree to participate in training or meet other HUD regulatory requirements, the CHDOs will not be able to apply for HOME CHDO set-aside funds or for operational funds.
3. CEDD will continue to support the Harris County Housing Authority's efforts to expand the availability of affordable housing units.
4. Harris County and the City of Houston have initiated a working group to address common housing and community development issues and programs. The goal is to improve the community revitalization and the delivery of services within Harris County, and to better coordinate community development activities so that programs and services do not overlap and are absent from any specific population or geographic location.

Affirmative Marketing, Minority/Women's Business Outreach

All subrecipients of CEDD contractually must follow the affirmative marketing procedures and requirements in accordance with 24 C.F.R. § 92.351 of the HOME Program, for HOME-assisted housing containing 5 or more housing units. The affirmative marketing steps consist of actions to provide information and otherwise attract eligible persons from all racial, ethnic, and gender groups in the housing market area to the available housing. CEDD will annually assess the affirmative marketing program to determine the success of affirmative marketing actions and any necessary corrective actions.

Affirmative Action

1. Approved Plan

The CEDD Subrecipient agrees that it shall be committed to carry out pursuant to the Grantee's specifications an Affirmative Action Program in keeping with the principles as provided in President's Executive Order 11246 of September 24, 1965. The Grantee shall provide Affirmative Action guidelines to the Subrecipient to assist in the formulation of such program. The Subrecipient shall submit a plan for an Affirmative Action Program for approval prior to the award of funds.

2. M/WBE – Minority/Women's Business Enterprises

The CEDD Subrecipient will use its best efforts to afford minority- and women-owned business enterprises the maximum practicable opportunity to participate in the performance of this contract. As used in this contract, the term "minority and women business enterprise" means a business at least fifty-one (51) percent owned and controlled by minority group members or women. For the purpose of this definition, "minority group members" are Afro-Americans, Spanish-speaking, Spanish surnamed or Spanish-heritage Americans, Asian Americans, and American Indians. The CEDD Subrecipient may rely on written representations by businesses regarding their status as minority and women business enterprises in lieu of an independent investigation.

Harris County's Affirmative Marketing Policy And Procedures

CEDD has adopted policies and procedures regarding affirmative marketing for housing containing five or more HOME-assisted units.

This affirmative marketing policy pertains to all Community and Economic Development Department subrecipients, internal homeownership programs, and all Community Housing Development Organizations receiving HOME program funds for HUD-assisted housing containing five or more units. CEDD will annually assess the affirmative marketing program to determine its success and will take any necessary corrective actions.

The affirmative marketing requirements and procedures include the following:

1. CEDD will use the Equal Housing Opportunity logotype and/or slogan in all press releases or notices to the public or solicitations pertaining to housing of more than five units.
2. CEDD will require owners of HUD-assisted housing of five or more units to adhere to the following:
 - a) When advertising or listing vacancies, owners must use major and community newspapers, community contacts and Equal Housing Opportunity logotypes or

slogan. Owners must also display the Fair Housing poster in high traffic areas on the premises of the assisted housing.

- b) Owners must perform special outreach to persons in the housing market area who are not likely to apply for the housing without special outreach. Targets of special outreach could include community centers, places of worship, employment centers, housing counseling agencies, etc.
- c) CEDD will assess the results of efforts taken by the owners to affirmatively market the housing units. Copies of all materials used to affirmatively market the housing and records describing actions taken by the owner to affirmatively market the housing must be submitted to the CEDD or on a quarterly basis. The quarterly report must also include information on families residing within the property. The family information must include the following: the number of units and monthly rent (utilities included) by bedroom size; number of tenants remaining in place; size of household and for each head of household, age, race, sex, and gender.

CEDD will assess the success of the affirmative marketing efforts. If the affirmative marketing efforts do not result in attracting eligible persons from all racial, ethnic and gender-groups in the housing market area, CEDD will determine the necessary corrective actions. Owners that fail to comply with affirmative marketing requirements will face the possibility that reimbursement payments will be abated until corrective action is taken. If the owner fails to take corrective action in a timely manner, the remainder of the grant funds will be due and payable upon demand.

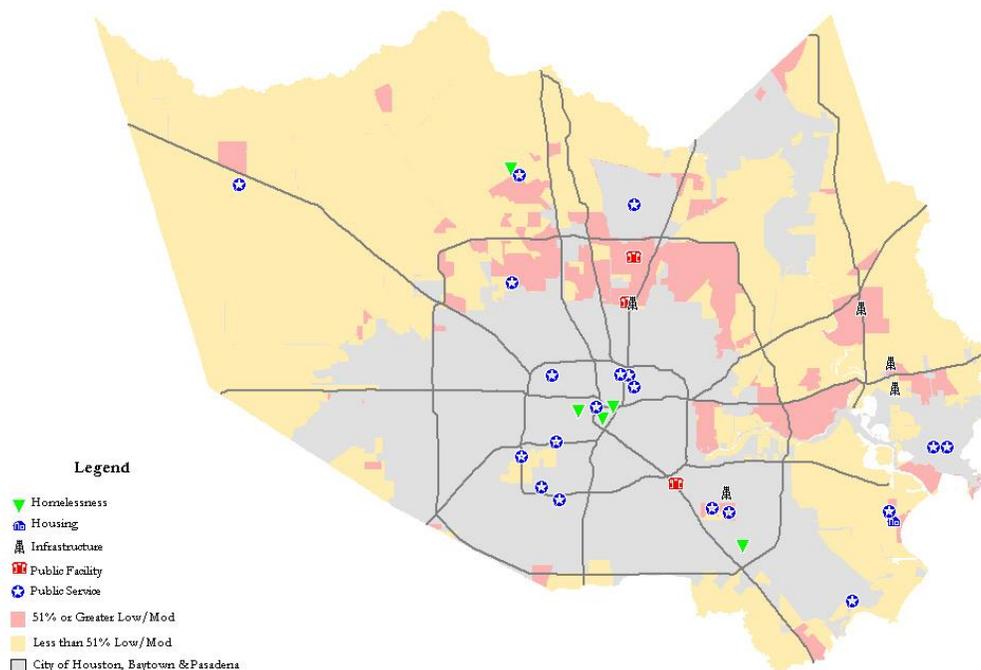
Geographic Distribution

Concentration of Low- and Moderate-Income Persons

Harris County defines a concentration of low- and moderate-income persons as a block group in which at least 51 percent or more of the total population is low- and moderate-income according to HUD guidelines. Forty-two areas within the county meet this criterion, and CEDD has designated these areas as targeted areas for community development in Harris County. Priority consideration is given to projects that impact the target areas of Harris County, particularly those that provide local impact, such as infrastructure projects and community centers. Furthermore, 15 of 33 incorporated cities within Harris County have signed cooperative agreements with the county, and also submit applications for funding.

For PY2004, 11 projects were selected to specifically meet infrastructure and public facility needs in 8 of the 42 unincorporated target areas. Additionally, two of the fifteen cooperative cities are to be assisted with meeting priority needs for low- and moderate-income persons. Cooperative city projects range from public facility planning to infrastructure improvement projects. Map 2 illustrates all proposed projects in relation to the low- and moderate-income areas of the county.

Map 2: Proposed Projects and Low- and Moderate-Income Areas



Concentration of Minorities

Harris County defines a concentration of racial minorities as a census tract in which 30 percent or more of the total population is non-white. Minority concentration and low- and moderate-income areas coincide within Harris County. Primarily, minorities are concentrated within the incorporated areas. Map 3 illustrates locations of proposed projects in relation to areas of minority concentration.

Map 3: Proposed Projects and Areas of Minority Concentration

