

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF
THE BOARD MEMBERS OF
THE HARRIS COUNTY HOUSING POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

THE STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF HARRIS

The Board Members of the Harris County Housing Policy Advisory Committee (HPAC) convened in their bimonthly session at 10:00 a.m. on the 17th day of March via Microsoft Teams, and roll was called at 10:02 a.m. of the duly constituted acting members of the Committee, to-wit:

Daphne Lemelle	Harris County Community Services Department
Allison Hay	Houston Habitat for Humanity
Sophie Elsner	Precinct 1
Mike Moody	Greater Houston Builder's Association
Mike Nichols	Coalition for the Homeless
Zoe Middleton	Texas Housers
Oudrey Hervey	United States Veterans Initiative
Lance Gilliam	County Judge
Starla Turnbo	Houston Apartment Association
Mary Green	Harris County Children and Adult Protective Services
Tom McCasland	City of Houston Housing and Community Development
Quentin Wright	Lone Star College
Eric Heppen	Precinct 3
Horace Allison	Harris County Housing Authority
Mercedes Sanchez	Precinct 2
Assata Richards	Sankofa Research Institute
Gwen Sims	Harris County Public Health
Lloyd Smith	County Engineering
Paul Shanklin	Precinct 4
Jennifer Herring	Harris County Sheriff's Department
Wayne Young	Mental Health Authority

And all of said members were present at the convening of such meeting, except Sophie Elsner, Mike Moody, Zoe Middleton, Lance Gilliam, Eric Heppen, Horace Allison, Mercedes Sanchez, Assata Richards, Loyd Smith, Paul Shanklin, Jennifer Herring, and Wayne Young, thus not constituting a quorum. The following persons also attended the meeting: Roberta Burroughs, Miguel Garcia, Kyle Shelton, Richelle Henderson, Mary Itz, Robert Paterson, Elizabeth Mueller, Aimee Shultze, Stephen Zigmund, Ross Hosket, Janae Ladet, and Patrick Trahan.

Daphne Lemelle noted that she is the designated chair for this particular meeting so will be leading the group through the agenda. Because no quorum was reached at the start of the meeting, approval of minutes was pushed toward the end of the meeting.

Affordable Housing Study Progress Update

Public Survey Update

Kyle Shelton began the discussion on the affordable housing study by mentioning a document shared to HPAC members comparing the priorities that the community has so far shared regarding their housing desires and needs and those that HPAC members themselves identified as housing priorities. There were differences between the HPAC member survey and the public survey in terms of options available, so the surveys cannot be directly compared; however, many of the items on both surveys were similar. Results from the public survey suggested that, so far, the community holds neighborhood safety, walkable neighborhoods, and affordability as their top priorities. A second-level list of priorities from the public included access to services, proximity to family and friends, and good schools. The biggest difference between responses from HPAC members and the public was the prioritization of good schools, with HPAC members placing this as a top priority while the public placed this lower on their list, according to the most recently available survey data. Starla Turnbo commented in the chat that gauging and comparing community responses to HPAC members was valuable.

Shelton noted that the survey currently has around 15,400 responses, with the team making their final push for responses in the final weeks of the month. Lemelle acknowledged that the survey is closing at the end of March 2021. It is important to reach all communities, Lemelle mentioned. In an effort to reach as many people as possible, an application was developed – described in the meeting as a “game” – to try to encourage younger folks to complete the survey. Patrick Trahan said that the application would be shared with HPAC members. Lemelle added that the application could help combat COVID and survey fatigue.

Suitability Analysis Update and Discussion

Robert Paterson began the presentation on the research team’s suitability analysis by outlining the process of the presentation. Shelton added that the goal was to start at a high level of analysis and move to smaller areas to highlight what land is most suitable for housing development and the factors that play into the suitability determination. Paterson presented several different maps showing different layers involved in the suitability mapping. These maps described what areas of land are and are not suitable for housing development using a variety of variables. Hazards were split into “Type 1” and “Type 2” hazards. Type 1 hazards include airports, major roads, hazmat routes, rail spurs, the Houston Ship Channel, superfund sites, risk management program areas, toxic release sites, special flood hazard zones, and levee and reservoir extent flood areas; Type 2 hazards include the 500-year floodplain, six-foot sea level rise zones combined with 100-year flood events, brownfield sites, smaller toxic release areas, municipal settings designations, and less volume roads. Paterson explained the symbology used in each map and how HPAC members could digest the information presented.

While the team is showing their work using the data collected, Paterson explained that every jurisdiction in Harris County will have access to the geodata used to create the maps being presented, so that individual jurisdictions may make weighting changes or other modifications for community-specific analysis. Shelton commented in the chat that an upcoming suitability analysis workshop will allow for a deeper analysis of the different elements at play in the suitability analysis and corresponding maps. Paterson warned that there may be a predisposition to see the maps being presented and ignore areas of land that are currently designated as not suitable for housing. Paterson commented that, while there are areas that are designated as such, that does not mean that

policy cannot alter the conditions in these areas – either through mitigation of the underlying issue or modifications of housing to accommodate the issue – which would allow for more land to be made “suitable.” The term used to describe this phenomenon is “status quo bias.”

A focused map of the Greenspoint, Harris County area allowed for the audience to gauge how the smaller-geography analysis from the team would look like. Paterson commented that, because the particular map shown is rasterized, a large parcel that may be the site of a future multifamily housing complex could be analyzed for hazards even within the parcel, providing benefits not just for larger-scale determinations but for site-specific decisions on needed hazard mitigation efforts. Paterson explained that an upcoming suitability analysis workshop will allow for further interrogation of hazard buffers used in the analysis. Shelton added that the current buffers will be used for Topic Brief #3 but that the input gathered from the workshop will influence the final report. Buffers used currently align with industry standards, per Paterson. Miguel Garcia asked if information on hazards and desirability exist for current housing development on the maps provided. Paterson said this aspect could be shown on the map, with a further analysis identifying what current housing development is being affected by multiple hazards at once. The team called this a “hotspot analysis.” Paterson mentioned that a hotspot analysis will be focused on in the final report; however, from initial analyses, it appears areas with the most intense hotspots are located along the Houston Ship Channel. Another way to use this information would be to locate hazards that can be completely removed in the wake of a disaster or other events, such as gradually phasing out industrial areas after a hurricane. One layer that Paterson noted as missing is a land cost layer, although that is currently being worked on through Spiller Associates.

Miguel Garcia brought up the point of many apartment complexes in the Greenspoint area mentioned earlier being surrounded by deed-restricted neighborhoods. He asked whether any of the layers provided by the team could indicate whether it would be preferred to modify or destroy and rebuild a development based on suitability and other factors. Shelton answered that is likely closer to a case-by-case analysis rather than something the suitability work could answer. Shelton added no layer is included describing current infrastructure. Paterson mentioned a project in Austin which identified which apartments were most likely to be gentrified but that such work would be outside the scope of the team’s charge. Lemelle asked if the age of housing could be incorporated into the analysis. Paterson responded that such indicator was not reliable in terms of the outcomes expected which is why the system mentioned before was created. Elizabeth Mueller, who worked on the project, will send the product to HPAC for review. Mueller commented in the chat that her app was not meant to be used at the parcel level. The app was meant to help the City of Austin compare corridors in terms of risk of loss of currently affordable housing and the value of those locations to low-income renters in terms of access to jobs via transit. Shelton said that age of housing and similar characteristics, while not necessarily a layer, could be included in the smaller geography analysis through descriptive statistics. Roberta Burroughs asked if U.S. Census surveys ask whether households have functioning plumbing. Shelton answered that such issues get lumped together with a general quality of housing question, which also incorporates factors such as the number of people in the home. No standalone question on plumbing exists in these surveys, though.

Lastly, Paterson highlighted the team’s efforts to weight public input appropriately as had been previously underscored by Assata Richards. Paterson explained the team handled this item by weighting layers based on the public response to what factors were prioritized for desirability or

to avoid. Paterson explained there is no rule-of-thumb for weighting different factors but that a comfortable balance must be determined using both public and technical input.

Turnbo asked later in the meeting in the chat whether proximity to jobs was captured in the attractor suitability map. Shelton answered that commute time was included in suitability.

Memoranda Update

Burroughs reminded the group of the four technical memoranda that the facilitation team intended to complete throughout the study process. This would allow for and describe the triangulation between HPAC, the Harris County Community Services Department, and the Kinder Institute. Information in the memoranda came from working group meeting conversations and survey results. The information provided is not intended to be final goals from HPAC but rather imputed goals stemming from the discussions held over the past year. Goals were divided into primary and secondary goals. A document with these goals was distributed to HPAC members. Burroughs reviewed the different goals and themes uncovered through the work group meetings, such as the desire for inclusion, infrastructure development, funding of affordable housing, and other items. Burroughs said that housing designs and the “Housing Plus” model were also priorities that will be concentrated on in future memoranda. Burroughs welcomed any comments on the memoranda from HPAC and others. Lemelle thanked the facilitation team for their work on this effort, believed that the memorandum provided was accurate of the discussions held at the work group meetings, and suggested that the memo be discussed further at future work group meetings.

Updates from Working Groups

Chairs of the different work groups presented to the full HPAC membership different topics discussed at their last meetings.

Land Use/Design and Resiliency Work Group

Allison Hay presented for this group. Hay reviewed the presentation provided by Loyd Smith of the Harris County Engineering Department regarding Atlas 14 and other information given to the work group members regarding flooding and housing development. Topics Hay discussed ranged from Harris County’s advocacy for jurisdictional changes to flooding regulations to the necessity of public education in the ways that new regulations can avoid flooding while increasing the supply of housing. Hay admitted that the new regulations did increase construction costs for housing but that the new housing is now more resilient. Hay ended by thanking the Engineering Department for providing an easily-digestible presentation for the work group members.

Funding and Finance Work Group

Mike Nichols presented for this group. Nichols recounted that Marni Holloway, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, and Patti Joiner, Knudson LP, joined the group for a discussion on issues in affordable housing funding and financing. Nichols stated that the work group would use the information provided from this talk to make recommendations to Harris County on how to creatively use existing programs for increasing the amount of affordable housing in the area. Nichols noted that guidelines for the low income housing tax credit allocation seem to disadvantage urban areas. Nichols hoped that the public would understand that state government plays a large role in distribution of dollars for various programs, including in the affordable housing space. The need to take action on infrastructure and land costs is paramount, Nichols

stated. Nichols advocated that pressure be placed on the United States Congress for increasing affordable housing funding in upcoming disaster relief and infrastructure programs, as well as pressuring state government officials to prioritize affordable housing. Municipal utility district debt should be concerning for Harris County, Nichols added. Nichols underscored the need for education of elected officials and affordable housing developers on different program requirements while recognizing that “NIMBYism” is strong. Nichols ended by hoping that the effort in this work group continues within Harris County and throughout the metropolitan area, such as through Fort Bend’s County Judge KP George who has signaled support for increasing affordable housing in that area. Lemelle responded to Nichols’ presentation by saying change does take time but some good news from Harris County includes new investment into affordable housing through Harris County’s Community Improvement Plan and the Harris County Redevelopment Authority. Lemelle also stated that advocacy efforts are underway to make housing a part of infrastructure spending federally. Nichols complimented the new path Harris County leaders are taking on housing issues.

Opportunity and Accessibility

Turnbo presented for this work group. Turnbo noted that the survey outreach team is attempting to reach the 45,000 responses goal that was established at the onset of the effort. Although, COVID-19 has limited some of Ford Momentum’s face-to-face plans for outreach. Digital outreach, therefore, has been very important for public responses. Turnbo reiterated the outreach team’s emphasis on countywide endorsements increasing response rates. Turnbo mentioned that young people were lagging behind other groups in terms of responses for the survey but that hopefully the gaming application addressed earlier will change this trend. Turnbo reported that there has been a strong response from Spanish-speakers. Lastly, Turnbo said that Topic Brief #3 is intending to target the Greenspoint and Aldine community revitalization areas in Harris County with the brief aiming to be completed by March 2021. Turnbo quickly mentioned that technical memoranda that was discussed earlier in the meeting. Lemelle noted that while the other two work groups’ material can be very technical, this work group’s material will allow for the affordable housing study to align with the public’s interests.

HPAC Policy Agenda

Lemelle presented recent changes made to HPAC’s proposed policy agenda. These changes included: adding federal level recommendations, adding certain provisions for increasing the amount of funding for affordable housing, adding reforms to disaster recovery implementation, adding recommendations for the low-income housing tax credit program, adding housing as infrastructure guidelines on the federal level, incorporating feedback on income discrimination ban discussed at HPAC’s previous meeting, and adding students and veterans to the special populations needing protection topic. Lemelle told the committee that, in developing the agenda, the interests of landlords and property owners were considered when advocating for the needs of renters. One of the documents sent to HPAC for this meeting was Harris County’s legislative agenda and the legislative agenda of the Harris County Community Services Department. Two added agenda items not seen on the HPAC agenda were (1) homeowner property tax relief and (2) increased flexibility for the collection of delinquent property taxes from homeowners.

Adjournment and Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m. The Committee's next meeting will be held April 28, 2021.