

**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 (the Committee) convened in their bimonthly session at 10:00 AM on the 28th day of October via Microsoft Teams, and roll was called at 10:04 AM of the duly constituted acting members of the Committee, to-wit:

Daphne Lemelle	Harris County Community Services Department
Allison Hay	Houston Habitat for Humanity
Lance Gilliam	Precinct 1
Mike Moody	Greater Houston Builder's Association
Oudrey Hervey	United States Veterans Initiative
Starla Turnbo	Houston Apartment Association
Mary Green	Harris County Children and Adult Protective Services
Eric Heppen	Precinct 3
Horace Allison	Harris County Housing Authority
Mercedes Sanchez	Precinct 2
Assata Richards	Sankofa Research Institute
Lloyd Smith	County Engineering

Mike Nichols, Zoe Middleton, Chang Chiu, Quentin Wright, Dr. Umair Shah, Paul Shanklin, Jennifer Herring, Wayne Young, and Tom McCasland were not present. The attendees constituted a quorum. Leah Chambers sat in for Chang Chiu, Mary Itz sat in for Tom McCasland, and Staci Lofton and Aimee Shultze sat in for Dr. Umair Shah. The following persons also attended the meeting: Desi Canela, Jon García, Roberta Burroughs, Miguel Garcia, Kyle Shelton, Richelle Henderson, Rene Martinez, Robert Paterson, and Dr. Elizabeth Mueller.

Introduction

Ms. Lemelle began the meeting announcing to the group that, due to a lack of quorum at the previous meeting, minutes would have to be approved for the previous two meetings. At the time of this announcement, there was no quorum. Ms. Lemelle moved forward with the agenda until more members of the committee joined. Ms. Lemelle introduced Mr. Shelton and Mr. Paterson to give an update on Topic Brief #2 (TB2).

Housing Study Update

Presentation

Mr. Paterson began his overview of TB2 by explaining the hazards that were focused on during the development of TB2. Many members should have heard this basic information in previous work group meetings. Hazards included those identified in the Harris County mitigation plan, such as hurricane and flood damage risk; transportation emissions; Section 112(r) facilities, like

chemical storage; and land contamination sites, like superfund and brownfield sites. After combining the different layers of hazards using mapping software, Mr. Paterson explained that natural hazards were the dominant risk to housing in the county. Certain cities had high levels of risk from land contamination. Mr. Paterson warned members of the Committee that, although some hazards seemed to occupy a small portion of the county – for example, two percent – such a number actually represents approximately 14,000 housing footprints. A chart identifying how much of the county and certain jurisdictions within the county were affected by the various hazards.

The next thing Mr. Paterson discussed were examples of how hazards could be visualized through suitability mapping techniques. Preliminary maps will be shown to the Committee through the next series of work group meetings. Feedback will be solicited from the Committee during this preliminary stage. Mapping techniques consist of using a layered, rasterized, continuous approach and a categorical approach identifying differing levels of suitability. Maps will be helpful in identifying where housing should and should not be developed as well as mitigation of risk for housing in certain hazardous areas. These maps can also be used to formulate policy interventions to turn certain areas from being out of consideration for housing development to being considered for housing development with certain mitigation techniques.

Aside from hazards, attractors for housing were also discussed and can be included in the suitability mapping. Mr. Paterson introduced an idea for suitability mapping used in Minneapolis, where geographical clusters were identified using a cluster analysis method rather than cumulative opportunity index. Cluster analysis would allow for more holistic view of communities as opposed to the more discrete methods from a cumulative opportunity index. Ms. Mueller, in giving an example of cluster analysis, described the method in this fashion: “It shows how the desired features of places are found in different mixes in different areas. Some areas have good job access, good transportation networks, but poor schools, for example. Others may have good schools, and be less exposed to hazards, but poor access to jobs and services.” Ms. Mueller added that features that are desired would come from community engagement.

Discussion and Question and Answer

Mr. Paterson opened the floor for discussion and questions. Ms. Hay asked what Minneapolis has developed as a result of the cluster mapping. Ms. Mueller responded that she is currently reaching out to the authors of the cluster mapping report for answers to that question. Ms. Chambers asked why the 500 feet marker was used for transportation corridor buffers. Mr. Paterson said that this is a standard being used in the field. Ms. Hay asked if areas of certain risk level can be changed to a risk level that is less severe than what was identified in the study. Mr. Shelton said that, yes, there exists the possibility to change risk factors using policy interventions, resiliency tactics, and other methods. Mr. Smith mentioned that brownfield buffer zones are not appropriately captured using generic measurements; brownfield hazards are site-specific. Mr. Paterson responded that he was glad to have conversations on buffer zones and to receive any data providing more nuanced risks based on specific sites. Mr. Shelton committed to holding a meeting between Mr. Smith and the Kinder Institute team. Ms. Lofton commented that she liked cluster mapping – particularly for unincorporated parts of Harris County that are often under-resourced and isolated from amenities within cities.

Mr. Smith added that a policy intervention that Harris County employed to encourage cities to amend floodplain regulations was passed by Commissioner's Court and could affect what policy interventions are considered as the study continues. Ms. Lemelle alerted the group that a meeting is being set up between county departments to discuss buffer zones and further input. Ms. Hay noted that the county may have to incentivize developers to build more resilient lots in the wake of Atlas 14 updates. Mr. Paterson warned that Atlas 14 may even be conservative in its precipitation forecasting as precipitation levels are based on past events as opposed to growing threat caused by climate change. Mr. Smith brought up the issue of several jurisdictions within the county not having zoning regulations. Therefore, some of the proposals for building resilient housing may be hindered. Mr. Paterson offered that even in the absence of regulations, information can be good for future development. Ms. Lemelle added that incentives and public-private partnerships can use the information provided by the suitability mapping. Mr. Martinez commented that the Harris County Community Services Department (CSD) has its own property standards and site and neighborhood characteristics for making investments with federal funds that can be informed by the suitability mapping. Ms. Richards pointed out that suitability should be seen through lens of desirability rather than what can be built. Ms. Lemelle added that zoning is not the only way municipalities can influence development and is looking forward to Ms. Mueller presenting the results of the Minneapolis cluster analysis example. Mr. Paterson included that suitability mapping can be great for programs like land banks or community land trusts.

Mr. Paterson noted that meetings with Harris County departments and information from the suitability survey to Committee members will help inform the Kinder Institute's further work. Ms. Lemelle confirmed with Ms. Canela that the suitability survey mentioned before was sent out. A reminder would to complete the survey will be sent out, said Ms. Canela. Mr. Paterson concluded by inviting any Committee members to provide feedback in any way they deem fit.

Work Group Updates

Ms. Lemelle invited Ms. Burroughs to give a brief overview of the work done by the work groups in the previous meetings. Ms. Burroughs commented that three robust meetings were held by the work groups. Meeting minutes were compiled with a call-out box highlighting the main points of discussion throughout the meeting. Ms. Burroughs observed there was a lot of cross-correlation between the different groups in terms of discussion topics. A point to highlight was each group's discussion on infrastructure and the influence of infrastructure construction on development. Furthermore, there existed a consensus that comprehensive plans for new development should be considered. Ms. Turnbo reiterated the points made by Ms. Burroughs. Ms. Richards underscored the importance of school performance, as there is racial bias engrained in the education system. Ms. Richards commented that they must be an analysis included the identifies racial equity and inclusion – especially as more people are willing to be honest about the issue. Gentrification, she added, is also a racial justice issue. Ms. Lemelle agreed with Ms. Richards and responded that the cluster analysis completed by Minneapolis may provide some idea on how to include racial justice. Ms. Lemelle also asked for a clarification of Ms. Richards's point on the education and racial justice connection. Ms. Richards said that the group must think about how to address racial equity and how it permeates through education, housing, and racial segregation. A schooling measure can be a code for racial equity, Ms. Richards explained.

Legislative Priority Study Results

Ms. Lemelle mentioned that a list of housing priorities for next year's state legislative session is being finalized. A final list will be distributed to the Committee once it is complete. Ms. Canela presented the results of the legislative priority study distributed to Committee members. Ms. Lemelle then explained the process for turning the Committee's input into recommendations for the inclusion in the county's legislative priorities.

Approval of Minutes, Adjournment, and Next Meeting

Seeing as there was now a quorum present, Ms. Lemelle called for a motion to approve the June 2020 and August 2020 Committee meeting minutes. Ms. Turnbo moved to approve the minutes. Ms. Hay seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 AM. The next meeting will be held on December 30, 2020, at 10 AM.