Harris County Fair Housing Narrative Statement

Introduction

The purpose of this statement is to establish a system to track performance activities related to strategies to address impediments to Fair Housing and barriers to Affordable Housing Development discussed in the Harris County Community Services Department's Fair Housing Plan, which is a part of the PY2013-2017 Consolidated Plan. The Consolidated Plan lists six impediments to Fair Housing: 1) need to combat overt discrimination and lack of Fair Housing Knowledge; 2) Lack of affordable housing development; 3) The need to reduce areas of concentration; 4) The need to improve lack of quality community amenities; 5) Presence of community opposition towards affordable housing (NIMBYism); and 6) Barriers created by credit and financial institutions. The following discusses accomplishments toward activities by the Harris County Community Services Department (HCCSD) to implement their strategies to address impediments to Fair Housing and barriers to Affordable Housing Development during a single program year. Included with this statement is a matrix reporting activities performed to address Fair Housing and housing barriers.

Persons with a Disability

According to the 2010 Census Bureau, there are 356,445 persons residing in Harris County with at least one disability or 8.7 percent of the population. Many persons with disabilities need services to increase or maintain their quality of life. Services needed include counseling, housing placement, food and clothing distribution, transportation services, enrichment classes, exercise and recreation programs, job training and placement and independent living skills training.

Large Family Households

Large, related households of five or more persons face a number of housing challenges, most notably, finding an affordable residence large enough to accommodate all family members. In Harris County, 34.5 percent of the population is considered to have a large family household. According to the 2009 CHAS data, this household type accounts for 18.4 percent of all low- and moderate-income households in the CSD service area. Large related households earning less than 30 percent of the Median Family Income (MFI) face major housing affordability deficits, and based on estimated housing cost deficits, low- to moderate-income, large households are identified as having a high housing cost burden.

Female Head of Household

Female head households accounted for 34.6 percent in Harris County and were more than double that of all families living in the county which accounted for 16.2 percent. In addition, 43.2 percent or 1 out of every 2 female-headed households with children in Harris County were living below the poverty line. Living below the poverty line may be may be attributed to lower earnings for female head of household families, declining value and availability of public assistance, and the lack of affordable housing.

Section One: Citizen Participation and LEP

Harris County has always considered citizen participation to be vital to the development of successful planning and community revitalization efforts for low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities. HCCSD has developed an extensive Citizen Participation Plan which can be found in the PY2013-2017 Consolidated Plan, the PY2014 Annual Action Plan and highlights of

the plan can be found in the PY2012 CAPER.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

During the Citizen Participation process, notice of community meetings and comment period were made to the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population in Spanish and Vietnamese. Notices were published in the Houston Chronicle and Spanish newspaper La Voz and posted to the HCCSD website. HCCSD also sent the public notices to over 500 interested parties via email blast which includes but not limited to individuals, county departments, local cities, non-profits, businesses, housing developers/providers, utility districts and healthcare organizations for distribution and information. Many of these interested parties are non-profits who advocate and serve persons in protected classes.. In addition, public hearings and community meetings conducted by HCCSD have Spanish and Vietnamese interpreters available. HCCSD staff who speak Spanish and Vietnamese are also available to consult with LEP populations in person, by phone or email.

Other Efforts

In addition to a broad based citizen participation effort, HCCSD annually conducts extensive public outreach efforts in the Request for Proposal (RFP) Process that is used to determine the projects to be funded with CDBG, HOME and ESG funds. This action further ensures that the RFP process is a fair, open, and competitive process in which participation by organizations throughout the community is essential. The RFP process includes a number of opportunities for public interaction, including a proposal information workshop in which potential applicants are informed of the guidelines for the application and review process. The PY2014 Notice of Funding Availability was distributed to interested persons (maintained on a mailing list) on May 13th and Public notices for the PY2014 RFP were issued on May 17th and applicant conferences were held on May 22nd and 23rd. Public notices were also issued on October 14th to inform the public of the availability of the PY2014 AAP, the projects recommended for funding during PY2014, the period for public comment, and the Public Hearing being held on November 19th.

During the year, technical assistance is provided to sub-recipients, including instances where projects or programs are experiencing difficulties. When clients, sub-recipients, or HCCSD discovers problems such as program glitches and budget discrepancies, they are addressed and resolved in coordination with HCCSD. Additional questions are addressed from individuals and organizations wanting information, such as how to establish a non-profit organization or apply for federal grant funds. Technical assistance for the PY2014 RFP was held with providers by appointment during the week of June 3rd – June 7th.

As part of the HCCSD's funding process, public areas in construction projects are being made accessible to persons with disabilities. HCCSD requires that within its *Affordable Housing Standards* that all common areas and facilities, as well as mail areas and spaces be designed to be handicapped accessible with particular attention given to the needs of the elderly and other special needs individuals. HCCSD also requires that all eligible housing developments funded by the department be Section 504 compliant. Additionally, all contractual agreements between CSD and project sponsors contain language that ensures construction projects adhere to all federal, state, and local laws regarding accessibility of all newly constructed facilities to persons with disabilities. To ensure that these regulations are being followed, CSD has in place regular monitoring and compliance activities.

HCCSD also continued to support with local funds and maintain the Housing Resource Center

(HRC), which is a clearinghouse of housing related information and links in Harris County. The center's website has an interactive database of potential housing units, particularly for low- to moderate-income families. In PY12, there were over 5.1 million visitors to the website. Many sought housing assistance and referrals. The center reaches out to all cultures and life situations including but not limited to the elderly, disabled, low-income families, and female-head of households. The resource center's staff has expanded to include Resource Navigators, who are available to assist clients who encounter barriers to finding housing and related resources. The resource center's staff also actively works with individuals, who believe they have been a victim of housing discrimination. The county also collaborates with other local Fair Housing agencies, such as the Greater Houston Fair Housing Center and HAUL on Fair Housing issues and education.

On January 15, 2013, HCCSD submitted its new Fair Housing Plan and Analysis of Impediments along with its PY2013-2018 Consolidated Plan to HUD. During the year proceeding submission (PY2012), the county conducted a series of meetings, focus groups, interviews and public hearings throughout the county seeking input from citizens, advocate groups, homeless and public service providers, CDC's, CHDO's and other interested groups regarding housing issues and barriers to housing choice. Staff also solicited information about community resources and problems through a community survey and needs/data assessment. The findings from the consultation, survey and needs/data assessment assisted the county to develop the Fair Housing Plan and Analysis of Impediments and to develop goals for the Consolidated Plan.

Section 2: Accomplishments

PY2014

Projected Housing Accomplishments According to Race/Ethnicity

Housing by Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic		33
Non-Hispanic		86
White	*36*	
Black	*47*	
Asian	*1*	
Other	*1*	
Multi-race	*1*	
Total		119

PY2012

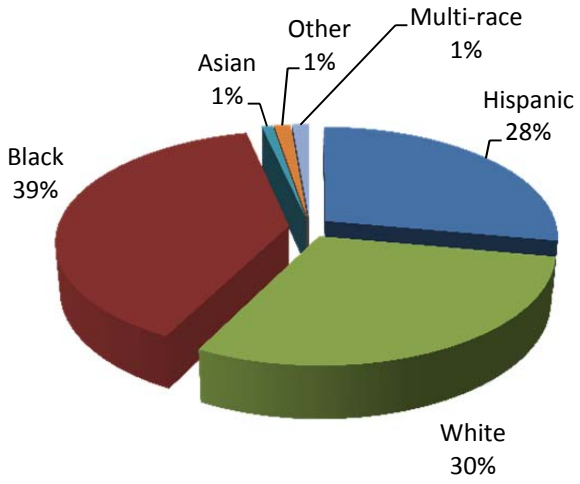
HCCSD's grant programs furthers fair housing through the allocation of dollars to support the construction of affordable housing units, by assisting low-income homebuyers with

downpayment costs, and through the rehabilitation of owner and renter-occupied low-income housing units. The support of such projects not only serves to encourage access to affordable housing, but also furthers fair housing by increasing housing options across the county's service area and improves low opportunity areas.

Affordable Housing

Furthering affordable housing encompasses one of the primary purposes of HUD and is therefore a major component in reporting and evaluating performance. This section summarizes Harris County's efforts to further affordable housing during PY12. These achievements utilized CDBG and HOME funds to promote the availability of affordable housing and increase the amount of decent, safe housing stock. The following tables and charts identify the number of persons by ethnicity.

Chart 1: PY2012 Affordable Housing Accomplishments: Persons Assisted According to Race/Ethnicity



According to Chart 1: Affordable Housing Accomplishments for Persons Assisted According to Race/Ethnicity, the PY12 CAPER reports 39 percent of Blacks, 30 percent of Whites, 28 percent of Hispanics, and 1 percent of Asians, Other and Multi-race were provided with direct homeownership, new construction of housing, housing rehabilitation or lead-based paint abatement.

Table 1: PY 2012 Housing Accomplishments According to Income

Priority Need Category	Units
Owners : (153) households)	
Extremely Low (0-30% MFI)	22
Very Low (30-60% MFI)	32
Low (60-80% MFI)	99
Renters: (10) households)	
Extremely Low (0-30% MFI)	4
Very Low (30-60% MFI)	5
Low (60-80% MFI)	1
Total	**163**

Note: MFI: Median Family Income based on a family of four

According to Table 1: PY 2012 Housing Accomplishments According to Income, of the 163 households that received housing assistance, 153 households are owners and 10 are renters. Of the 153 that are owners, 22 are extremely low income (0-30% MFI), 32 are very low income (30-60% MFI), 99 are low income (60-80% MFI). Of the renters, 4 are extremely low income (0-30% MFI), 5 are very low income (30-60% MFI), and 1 is low income (60-80% MFI).

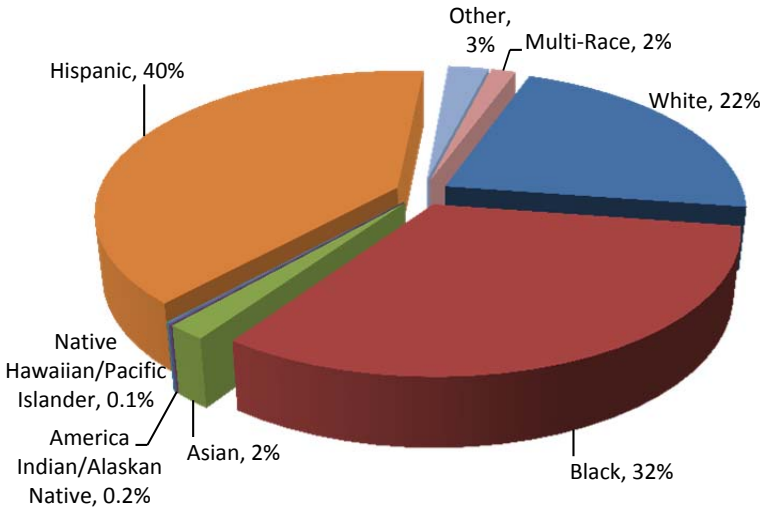
As part of the direct homeownership program funded by county HOME funds, the program educated homebuyers, lenders, real estate agents, and housing developers on Fair Housing issues. Through the policies of the program, the county sought to protect homebuyers from predatory lending practices. Homebuyers also received homebuyer counseling that included their rights under the law. Harris County also expended $179,368.12 in PY12 CDBG funding for home repair services to serve low-income homeowners predominately in e low-income, minority concentrated neighborhoods. These

Public Services

This section of the statement is dedicated to summarizing program accomplishments in eight non-housing community development areas of eligible activities: public service, public facilities, infrastructure, crime awareness, special needs groups, workforce development, and area benefit projects. CDBG public service projects primarily benefited low-income limited clientele and seek to improve the quality of life of individuals and families. Special needs programs primarily benefited those persons, who are elderly, disabled, are infected with HIV/AIDS, and/or have a substance abuse problem.

Referenced in Chart 2: Public Services Activities Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity, out of the 4,308 total persons served through public services activities, 40 percent are Hispanic, 32 percent are Black, 22 percent are White, 3 percent are Other Race, 2 percent are Asian and Multi-Race, 0.2 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 0.1 percent are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

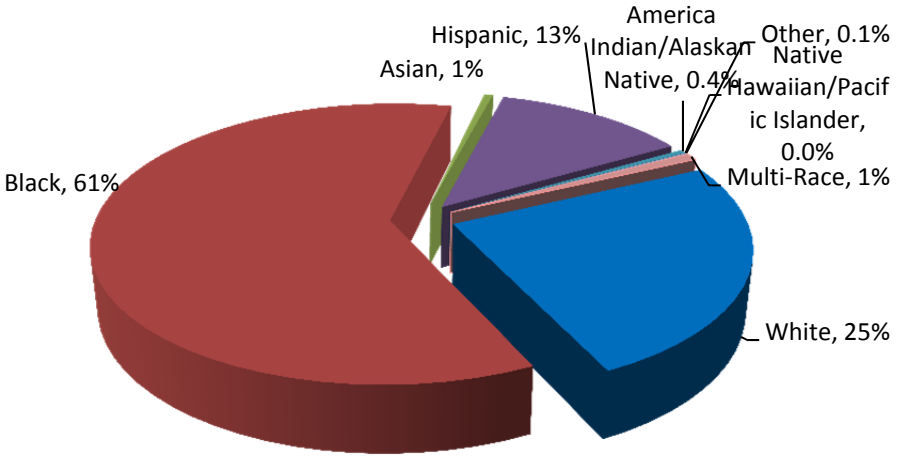
Chart 2: Public Services Activities Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity



Homelessness

Under the Homeless category, the county expended CDBG and ESG funds and assisted 12,753 homeless person with shelter and supportive services. Under the CDBG category, funds utilized in PY2012 served 1,604 homeless persons. As seen in Chart 3: Homeless Activities for Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity, of the persons that received homeless services, 61 percent are Black, 25 percent are White, 13 percent are Hispanic, 1 percent are Asian and Multi-Race, and 0.1 percent are Other Race.

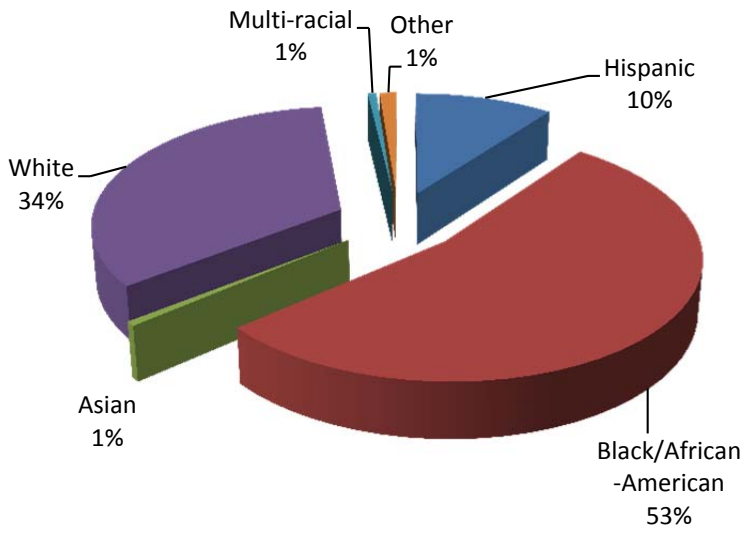
Chart 3: CDBG Homeless Activities Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity



During PY12, Harris County expended ESG dollars in assisting 11,149 homeless persons with shelter and supportive services. Of those homeless persons, 53 percent were Black, 34 percent

White, 10 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent was Asian, Multi-Race or Other Race respectively (see Chart 4).

Chart 4: ESG Activities Persons Served by Race/Ethnicity



Public Facilities/Infrastructure

HCCSD sought to improve low- to moderate-income neighborhoods, particularly areas with high poverty and minority concentration who suffer inadequate infrastructure and facilities. This section of the statement is dedicated to summarizing program accomplishments nine completed infrastructure and facilities projects funded by HCCSD with CDBG funding. Projects included water and sewer improvements, street improvements, and installation of a new park in HCCSD target areas. These areas are established neighborhoods seeking to improve the conditions in their local community.

Section 3 Activities

Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 contains provisions to ensure that employment and other economic opportunities generated by certain HUD financial assistance shall, to the greatest extent feasible, be directed to low- to very low-income persons, particularly those who are recipients of government assistance for housing, and to business concerns that provide economic opportunities to these populations. HCCSD participates in Section 3 and promotes and encourages contractors to hire Section 3 residents and Section 3 businesses through pre-bid and pre-construction meetings. To fulfill the responsibility of the Section 3 Plan, Harris County has appointed a Section 3 Coordinator to provide implementation and compliance monitoring of all Section 3 activities for CDBG Disaster Recovery Program funded projects. Additionally, an Advisory Board has been assembled to provide assistance in the development of the Section 3 program. In late PY2012, HCCSD developed partnerships with local employment organizations serving low- to moderate-income populations, local housing authorities, and local non-profits who provide housing and or support services to low-income and homeless persons. The PY2012 CAPER contains Harris County's Section 3 report under Appendix H.