



Harris County Affordable Housing Standards: *Project Standards, Design Criteria and Underwriting Guidelines*

Harris County Community
Services Department

Revised October 2015



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6.1	Affordable Multi-unit Family and Senior Housing Concentration Policy	
6.2	Request for Proposal Process Policy	

Guide to Changes to the Harris County Affordable Housing Standards

Project Standards, Design Criteria and Underwriting Guidelines

The following is a list of changes by Tab section and page number, made to the Harris County Affordable Housing Standards. The version affected by these changes is effective as of October 23, 2015.

References

- **Pg. 4** Updated References with new or updated regulations and requirements

Tab 1: General Guiding Principles and Project Requirements

- **Pg. 7** 1.1 – Site Control
Replaced the word “application” with “award” in the second sentence.
- **Pg. 10** 1.11 – Conflict of Interest
Replaced the regulation for OMB Circular 110 with new regulation Section 2 CFR Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards or “Super Circular”.
- **Pg. 13** 1.18 - Energy Star Certification Required
Changed header to “Green Building Standards” and updated IRC year to 2015.
- **Pg. 14** 1.20 – ADA Standards for Accessible Design and Section 504
Updated section to refer to “2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design” and removed refer to “Uniform Federal Accessibility”.

Tab 3: Housing Design Criteria

- **Pg. 27** 3.3 -Interior Design and Livability

Multifamily Housing: Table for Minimum Unit Size- Minimum Square Footage for SRO and Efficiency have been reduced by 50 square feet.

Tab 4: Harris County Minimum Property Standards

Section VI: Minimum Acceptable Standards –New Construction

- **Pg. 77** a: Single Family New Construction
 - 2** a. Exterior Features—Bullet regarding Landscaping package, sodded is required for front and side yards and recommended for back yards. This is also discussed on pg. 80 (section g-Landscaping, Lawn Areas and Trees) and has been changed to reflect above statement.

c. Interior Features – Bullet regarding Ceiling fans—Ceiling fans with light kits are required only in living room. This is also discussed on pg. 91 (section I-Ceiling Fans) and has been changed to reflect above statement.

Tab 5: Underwriting Guidelines

- **Pg. 33** 5.2 Loan Terms
 - B) Application And Origination Fees
 - 1st Bullet has been revised to remove Origination Fee and add language regarding the Application Fee. Origination was also removed for header name.
- **Pg. 36** 5.3 Underwriting and Review Committee
 - A) Finance Underwriting Team:
 - Language added regarding monitoring fee.
- **Pg. 37** 5.5 Minimum and Maximum Per Unit Subsidy
 - Section revised to remove reference to Section 221 (d)(3)(ii) and replaced with HUD language regarding acquiring maximum per unit subsidy from Local HUD field office.
- **Pg. 37** 5.6 Match and Leveraging Requirements
 - In the 5th sentence changed leveraging requirement from 10% to 20%.



Harris County

Community Services Department

Affordable Housing Design Standards

References

24 CFR 42	Displacement Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition for HUD and HUD-Assisted Programs
24 CFR 58	Environmental Review Procedures for Entities Assuming HUD Environmental Responsibilities
24 CFR 85	Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State, Local and Federally Recognized Indian Tribal Governments
24 CFR 92	HOME Investment Partnerships Program – Final Rule
24 CFR 570	Community Development Block Grant Program
24 CFR 983.6(b)	New construction site and neighborhood standards
28 CFR 36	Americans with Disabilities Act
49 CFR 24	Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA)
Section 3	Economic Opportunities
Section 504	The Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Section 2 CFR Pt 200	Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards or “Super Circular”
	2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design HUD interim policy using the Section 234-Condominium Housing basic mortgage limits, for elevator-type projects and issued the HUD local Field Office
	David Bacon and Related Acts
	2015 International Building Code

Introduction

Harris County, as a recipient of federal funding, must administer its HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) and Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) in a manner that provides housing that is suitable from the standpoint of promoting greater choice of housing opportunities and facilitating and furthering full compliance with regulations established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the aforementioned programs.

The purpose of this document is to describe the Harris County Community Services Department’s (HCCSD), the Harris County administrator of HUD entitlement funding, housing policy objectives, the range of activities available to advance these objectives, and the manner in which those activities will be designed, evaluated, and selected for funding. The overall goal



to these guidelines and standards is to ensure the development of quality affordable housing and achieve compliance with applicable Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and policy objectives.

Intent

This document is intended to provide policies that establish the minimum standard for the use of HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) and Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) funds in the creation of affordable multi-family and single family housing developments for eligible residents of Harris County. HCCSD is responsible for ensuring appropriate utilization of the HUD entitlement funds allocated for housing and community development activities.

Harris County, in order to ensure compliance with federal guidelines, has created the **Affordable Housing Standards: Project Standards, Design Criteria and Underwriting Guidelines** ("Affordable Housing Standards") to address neighborhood compatibility, site design, rental rates, compliance period, site and neighborhood standards, as well as local and state development standards, including but not limited to unit specification, public notice, and building code requirements. The Affordable Housing Standards set the standard for all affordable housing projects, regardless of funding source, funded by HCCSD.

It is the responsibility of the HCCSD to review each project proposed and monitor those funded to ensure conformity with the Affordable Housing Standards. Developers and architects should review this document and schedule a meeting with HCCSD staff early in the conceptual design phase of the proposed project. This initial meeting will provide an opportunity to review the housing need being served, the programmatic goals, the siting of the development, sustainable design strategies, among other issues. If funded, HCCSD staff will provide ongoing monitoring and technical assistance to ensure the project is built to conformance with these standards and remains in compliance following construction.

It is the intent of these standards and design criteria to assist projects to best serve the needs of its residents with as much quality, safety, energy efficiency, durability, comfort, and environmental sustainability as the marketplace, resources, and need will permit. The criteria in this document are in addition to all applicable federal, state, and local codes, laws, and regulations. These criteria are not intended to reduce or circumvent the requirements of law and current applicable building codes.

Waiver Requests

HCCSD acknowledges that each project may face unique site, design, financing, population, or market constraints for which full compliance may be difficult or impossible. It is intended that such unique constraints are identified during the design process, and that the applicant may request a modification or waiver to specific standards and requirements, which will be



reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether specific standards should be modified or waived for reasons and purposes acceptable to the County. Requests for modification or waiver to specific standards must be in writing and document the applicant's need and unique situation. When such modifications or waivers are granted, additional requirements may be imposed by HCCSD.

Please Take Notice

These Affordable Housing Standards may be amended from time to time due to changes in market conditions and/or changes in the HCCSD policies or objectives. Such amendments may occur without notice and are applicable to all pending and future applications. Applicants of HCCSD housing funding are responsible for contacting HCCSD to ascertain whether or not there have been any changes since the date of these guidelines and for complying with such changes.