



## **HousingNOLA Talking Points**

### **2017-2021 Consolidated Plan and the 2017 Annual Action Plan**

#### **The City Should Implement a Smart Housing Mix Ordinance**

New Orleans is facing an affordable housing crisis – housing costs are rising, yet wages have remained stagnant. New Orleans needs a Smart Housing Mix Ordinance to address economic segregation and fix the mix in our neighborhoods. This policy would leverage market growth to either require or incentivize the inclusion of long-term lower-priced homes within otherwise market rate developments.

Recognizing this need, HousingNOLA engaged Grounded Solutions Network to research and facilitate a discussion on whether an inclusionary housing policy could work in New Orleans and, if so, how to tailor such a policy to fit the city’s unique needs and housing market. We encourage you to implement the recommendations from this study.

#### **The City Should Implement a Healthy Home Ordinance**

In 2015, an alarming 56% of New Orleans renters paid more than 30% of their income in housing costs and 33% paid more than 50%. The immense pressure means these renters live in units that are more likely to have issues of deferred maintenance and health and safety violations. Many tenants fear eviction if they file a complaint. New Orleans renters deserve better than this – they deserve a safe and healthy home.

#### **The City Should Support Securing a Dedicated Funding Source for the Louisiana Housing Trust Fund**

The Louisiana Housing Trust Fund (LHTF) is an existing state program with a proven track record of meeting Louisiana’s housing needs. Passed by the legislature in 2003, the LHTF received a one-time \$22 million allocation, but has not been funded since.

The Louisiana Housing Trust Fund Initiative (LHTFI) was formed in 2014 as a broad-based statewide coalition of housing developers, advocates, local and state banks, small business owners, and a regional economic alliance. Now the LHTFI’s primary goal is to establish a dedicated source of revenue for the LHTF. The LHTF would help communities meet the growing demand for affordable and accessible housing which would benefit many of Louisiana’s hardworking families, seniors, disabled persons, returning veterans and others.



## **The City Should Implement Transit-Oriented Development**

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is compact development located near frequent transit service that is designed to make neighborhoods more accessible by transit, walking and bicycling. TOD can increase the supply of housing units in smart ways to relieve pressure on the housing market; encourage use of alternative transportation and take cars off the road; and make jobs and services more accessible to more workers and shoppers. One means of achieving equitable TOD is through the implementation of a Smart Housing Mix ordinance that will fix the mix in New Orleans' neighborhoods.

## **The City Should Develop a Process to Reserve Land for the Development of Affordable Housing on Properties Eligible for Disposition**

New Orleans is facing an affordable housing crisis with rising housing costs and stagnant wages. Everyone deserves an affordable place to call home. Given this, the City must work to increase the housing supply, along with other policy initiatives. The development of affordable housing on properties eligible for disposition must be a priority moving forward. This process should be developed for land owned by public agencies, the City of New Orleans, Orleans Parish School District and Recovery School District.

## **The City Should Study Current Zoning Regulations Prohibiting the Production of Affordable Housing**

Producing more affordable housing needs to be a priority in New Orleans as we face an affordable housing crisis where 44% of all households were found to be cost burdened in 2015. Among other strategies, we need to ensure that current zoning regulations are not prohibiting this goal. The City should study the current regulations with the aim of making proposals to amend the CZO.

## **The City Should Explore Additional Property Tax Relief Measures**

In order to face our affordable crisis head on the City needs to ensure long-term homeowners are not displaced and are able to remain in their homes. The City should explore and explore and draft a proposal for additional property tax relief for low- income homeowners facing increases in property assessments based on how long they have lived in their home and their income. Furthermore, the City should investigate other tax relief measures for investor owners who would agree to preserve and create affordable rental units for their renters.



## **The City Should Work With Community-Based Organizations on Implementing the Community Reinvestment Act**

The City and HANO should work with community based organizations to assess bank lending and performance practices in accordance with CRA metrics to ensure that private investments are expanded in low- and moderate-income areas and other underserved areas. This effort will ensure equitable development across our city and not concentrate investment in only a handful of neighborhoods. It is one tool in ensure our residents have access to opportunities – including, but not limited to, healthcare, education, transit, and affordable housing.

## **The City should Increase Accessibility for Special Needs Residents**

New Orleans has long struggled to provide services to its most vulnerable residents. Disaster hits the most vulnerable the hardest, and Hurricane Katrina was no exception. As many of New Orleans' most vulnerable populations were not able to evacuate the city, the devastation left thousands homeless, led to an increase in physical and mental disabilities, and exacerbated existing health problems. Individuals with special needs face many of the same issues as low-income New Orleanians: paying too much in rent or on a mortgage and living in neighborhoods with limited access to services. However, individuals with special needs also face additional barriers and require additional supportive services in order to thrive. Further, these population are more at risk of not having safe and affordable housing options.

Among other policies, the City should work with the Advocacy Center to pursue additional funds to pay for home modifications to increase accessibility for renters and homeowners with special needs. Additionally, the City should work to produce materials on housing programs and services in Spanish and Vietnamese, and should have a language access plan in place.

## **The City Should Implement Strategies for Blight and Vacancy Reduction**

The City should work to expand its current blight and vacancy reduction strategies in order to provide more housing opportunities and neighborhood assets. Firstly, the City should work with community-based organizations to track conditions in their neighborhoods. Through this data collection and tracking process the City can make more informed plans with community buy-in. Furthermore, the City should explore programs to put blighted and vacant properties into the hands of private owners and to promote alternative land use in underserved communities by creating new neighborhood amenities such as community gardens, playgrounds and pocket parks.



### **The City Should Continue to Work Closely Partners**

In order to work more effectively, the City should continue to improve processes to increase production efficiency and organizational capacity among government partners (Finance Authority of New Orleans, HANO, NORA, City of New Orleans and Louisiana Housing Corporation), non-profits (housing counseling agencies and advocates), and developers. The City should work to expand its partnership to work with the Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC). This effort will enable more units to be built quicker, a goal that should be a priority given the urgency of the affordable housing crisis we are facing.

### **The City Should Revise its Funding Schedule**

In order to allow for the most effective use and planning, the City should clearly post its funding schedule. Furthermore the allocation of the Notice of Federal Availability (NOFA) should roll out on a predictable schedule that is coordinated with other funding sources.

### **The City Should Move Forward with its Assessment of Fair Housing Plan**

The City should move forward with the implementation of its Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) plan. Regardless of the decisions that are made at the Federal level, this city has decided to eliminate disparities on how it allocates Federal resources. The City, NORA and HANO should follow through with the recommendations to eliminate segregation and concentration of poverty.