

## Summary of Stakeholder Meetings

**January 13, 2009**

### **Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Meeting**

Barriers for success of programs:

- Increased need for short-term transitional housing (SRO)
- Lack of affordable rental for those below 30% MFI and those on a fixed income.
- Issues of long waiting lists for clients to get into public housing or a Section 8 voucher. Comments among attendees indicated a waiting list of 2 years or more. Suggestion was made to work with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin to educate case workers and public regarding this barrier.
- Issue of outstanding utility bills with Austin Energy is often a barrier to getting clients into rental units.
- Inability to pay deposits makes it difficult to place clients in affordable housing.
- Hotels and motels that programs utilize for short term housing are getting more expensive
- Undocumented clients have a more difficult time access services.
- The program can take 2-4 years for a client to successfully become self-sufficient
- Large families are hard to place in housing. Discussion among attendees as to resources available to address this issue.

Needs:

- Additional affordable rental housing for very low income.
- Additional rental housing, especially for those on SSI.
- Programs that are more flexible with clients who are negatively impacted by: credit, criminal backgrounds, and sobriety

**January 16, 2009**

### **Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) Meeting**

Needs:

- Utility assistance for all households – even if they owe past utility bills
- More privately funded programs
- Consider funding more emergency shelter operations with ESG
- More emergency shelter – ARCH is at capacity and turns people away on 30% of the nights
- More emergency shelter needed for women and couples
- TBRA has been successful since 1998, but expensive because the Passages program provides wrap around services. Passages is willing to expand their program to serve population other than homeless, but those groups need to bring in funds for case management, since those funds are very limited.
- There is a need for more permanent, supportive housing that are both single site and scattered site housing
- There is a need for job training activities.

#### Other Items:

- Stakeholder representatives stated a desire to have more advocacy at the federal level for more ESG funds based on homeless count.
- TBRA can have a difficult time meeting goals because of lack of funding for case management.
- Would like to see some of the GO Bond homebuyer money be reallocated to rental

#### **January 26, 2009**

##### **Child Care Providers Meeting**

- The current economic downturn makes it increasingly important to measure program performance that will ensure accountability.
- No local private donor can match the funding that child care programs get from the City if agencies were to lose public funds. It is very important during these difficult economic times to make local needs for child care known.

#### **January 30, 2009**

##### **Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Monitoring Committee**

- Funding should increase for the youth services programs, specifically, the Youth and Family Assessment Center (YFAC).
- The criminal justice re-entry population needs to be addressed because there is not enough affordable housing for them after they are discharged. This population also needs more housing with supportive services.
- Affordable Housing for Veterans with criminal backgrounds is difficult to access.
- In addition to more wrap-around services for youth, adults need wrap-around services as well.
- All local planning efforts, including the Consolidated Plan, need multi-jurisdiction coordination. The City could coordinate with Travis County's planning around CDBG.
- The community should consider supporting "sober homes" that provide an alternative for individuals in recovery who would have difficulty accessing housing.
- Populations with mental illness should be prioritized in other areas (e.g. housing, supportive services)

#### **February 9, 2009**

##### **Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities**

- Housing is an essential service; and the Federal definition of affordable housing may not be adequate for those households on SSI or very-low income. People with disabilities have a difficult time accessing accessible and affordable rental housing. Older rental housing, that tends to be more affordable, is less likely to be accessible.
- The Architectural Barrier Removal Program provides a vital service. The City should provide referral resources to households that are over income for the services.
- Visitability standards in the residential code are important. The City's residential code should include all 5 proposed core visitable standards.

- Accessibility and visitability should be expanded beyond S.M.A.R.T. Housing™ and encourage all private developers to build to those standards.
- Transportation continues to be a struggle for persons with disabilities. The City should coordinate with Capital Metro to ensure that housing is accessible to transit. Capital Metro currently has requirements that households live within a certain distance of transit service to be eligible for door-to-door service.
- The City's small business programs should assess job creation for a certain number of jobs for people with disabilities.
- The Austin Tenants' Council provides important services for persons with disabilities and should continue to receive City support.

**February 19, 2009**

**Austin Area Human Services Association**

- Staff gave a general overview of the Consolidated Plan, the Public Input Process, current Priorities for funding, and eligible uses of CDBG public service funds.
- Questions and comments were not received during the meeting due to time constraints, but feedback has been received in the form of written comments. See written comments for more information.

**March 10, 2009**

**Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)**

- The City currently provides rental assistance funds to eligible clients of the Passages Collaboration. The Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) administers the housing side of the Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program. This includes client screening, review of leases, inspection of units to see that they meet the federal Housing Quality Standards, and monthly payments to landlords.
- Most current TBRA clients come out of emergency shelter.
- A number of clients needing housing through TBRA are automatically ineligible due to felony criminal backgrounds, arrest warrants, or utility debt.
- HACA uses the same screening criteria for TBRA as it does for the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program.
- Many service providers thought the screening criteria are too strict since many of the clients that could use TBRA have felonies (mostly drug-related). Some agencies felt that HACA should trust them to determine if the applicant was trustworthy. Another participant did a study of their transitional housing program and the success rate of their clients. They found little correlation between criminal backgrounds and housing success.
- Potential TBRA clients that have a felony criminal background, and who have been denied TBRA are eligible to file an appeal with HACA. Many of the appeals are successful, allowing the client to receive TBRA.
- TBRA is one tool to address the rental gap identified in the recent Housing Market Study. However, assistance is limited to 24 months.
- The City should spend all of the current budgeted HOME dollars on TBRA and consider opening the program up to additional agencies this fiscal year.

- The City should consider creating a Bridge subsidy program for households on the Section 8 waiting list. TBRA could provide rental assistance until the household receives housing through Section 8.
- Austin/Travis County MHMR has 100 people they serve on the Section 8 waiting list. They would like to access \$100,000 a year to serve these clients on TBRA as they wait for their voucher.
- TBRA should expand its focus to include prevention of homelessness in addition to currently homeless households.
- The City could put some households that do not need case management directly into housing with TBRA funds.
- The City has many small groups providing housing assistance, including churches. The City could provide TBRA to these groups as well.

**March 11, 2009**

**Regional Stakeholder Meeting**

- Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) is currently updating their economic development strategic plan. Housing is a component of this plan to ensure that communities remain competitive. They see how Austin's housing market study will be particularly helpful with this plan, but noted the need for regional housing data.
- Envision Central Texas will soon hold a series of forums around regional infrastructure needs and will focus partially on education about infrastructure savings with dense development patterns. They see opportunities for cooperation with the City.
- The Housing Authority of Travis County finds it is difficult to make development of rental units for less than 30 percent of median family income economically viable. HUD is no longer funding public housing. Their biggest obstacles include lack of available land in Austin and NIMBYism. Many of their rental voucher clients have a difficult time finding rental housing to accept their voucher, due to the increasing lack of rental stock in Austin, particularly due to condo conversions. Their rental voucher waiting list was last open in 2005. It takes approximately 5 years, once on the list to get a voucher and a household can wait an addition 5 years for the list to even open.

**March 12, 2009**

**Lead Consultation**

- The City currently provides Lead Abatement Services through the Lead Hazard Control Grant (LHCG) received from HUD.
- The LHGC is administered through a collaboration of facilities and staff between NHCD and HHS, which has proven to be an effective strategy for success of the program.
- The removal of the City of Austin as a recipient of the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Grant (CLIPP) has hindered the effectiveness of the LHCG staff's ability to reach potential clients. Suggested that the City should form a relationship with the

State Agency administering the CLIPP grant so that LHCG can have access to the information of children living in Austin with elevated blood lead levels.

- Due to the restrictions of the LHCG guidelines, a need not being addressed is commercial properties such as daycares and schools that may have lead present.
- LHGC staff recommended that the service area be extended outside of the city limits to include communities in the counties surrounding the Austin metropolitan area.