

# CAN Community Council

Meeting Minutes of Monday, March 20, 2017

**Community Council Members in Attendance:** Sandra Castillo, Hunter Ellinger, Aimee Finney, Steven Fletcher, Nancy Gilliam, Laura Griebel, Monica Guzmán, Anne Harutunian, Kirsha Haverlah, Kent Herring, Ara Merjanian, Elizabeth Moore, Laura Poskochil, Eileen Schrandt, Gloria Souhami, Paulina Urbanowicz, Michael Willard

**Unable to attend:** Courtney Horm, Aletha Huston, Carmen Luevanos, Blythe Plunkett, Leslie Puckett, Beverly Reeves, Caroline Reynolds, Terry Wilt

**Guests in Attendance:** Justin Martinez, Erica Leak, Mandy De Mayo, Sylvia Blanco, Pilar Sánchez

**Staff in Attendance:** Raul Alvarez, Mary Dodd, Carlos Soto

**Call to order and Introductions:** Ara Merjanian called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Community Council members introduced themselves & shared announcements.

**Approval of minutes from 02/20/17:** Laura Griebel moved to approve the minutes as written, Michael Willard seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

**Chair's report:** Ara Merjanian said the CAN Executive Committee will meet on Friday, March 24<sup>th</sup> and the CAN board will meet on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Hunter Ellinger provided an update from the Dashboard Steering Committee (DSC). Ellinger is the Community Council's liaison to this group of data experts from across issues which reviews CAN Dashboard indicators and targets and makes recommendations to the CAN Board of Directions when changes are needed.

**CAN Executive Director Report:** Raul Alvarez discussed the recommendations the Dashboard Steering Committee will present to the Board of Directors at their Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Alvarez provided an overview of the specific reasons behind replacing certain indicators and a brief review of the types of changes being recommended. Another discussion item planned for the board meeting is a presentation by the Center for the Elimination of Disproportionalities and Disparities regarding the Center's model for institutional change to address disparate outcomes for people of color. Developing tools and strategies to address institutional racism and supporting the development of the Community Work Force Plan are focus areas for CAN for 2017. The CAN Language Access Work Group has a subcommittee scheduled to meet at Terrazas Library on Wednesday, March 22 at 1:00 p.m. to discuss developing a Language ID card or an "I Speak" card system so families and individuals seeking service can quickly share what language they need interpretation or translation services for. The next Language Access Work Group meeting will be on April 20<sup>th</sup>. Alvarez concluded his report by mentioning that there has also been discussion about holding deliberative dialogues centered on the topics of Safety and Justice, scheduled to take place during the month of September. He said staff is now assembling a planning team for the effort. Community Council members who would like to participate should let him know.

## **Topic: What housing options are available to families with children living in poverty?**

**A look at housing affordability Council District by Council District:** Mandy De Mayo, Executive Director, Housing Works Austin, discussed the history of HousingWorks Austin, which was created in 2006 to support the efforts to pass Austin's first Affordable Housing Bond. Since its formation, Housing Works has focused its resources on research, education, and advocacy around affordable housing. Austin voters have twice approved Affordable Housing General Obligation Bonds - \$55 million in 2006 and \$65 million in 2013. These funds help leverage other public and private funding to make affordable housing projects feasible. However, there continues to be a pressing need for affordable housing in Austin, a need that is shared by a

diverse group of residents, including families, workers, elderly, the disabled, and other vulnerable populations. De Mayo discussed the term “affordability,” which includes not only housing costs, but also utilities, transportation, childcare and other household costs. De Mayo said HousingWorks has created [District by District analyses](#) which highlight important housing and affordability statistics for each of the ten Austin City Council Districts. De Mayo concluded by discussing [Five Steps to keep Austin Affordable](#): 1) preserve affordable housing, 2) invest in affordable housing, 3) leverage housing dollars, 4) partnerships between public and private entities, and 5) include affordable housing in local policies.

**Austin Strategic Housing Plan:** Erica Leak, Housing Policy and Planning Manager for the City of Austin of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, shared a summary of the new Austin Strategic Housing Plan that would be shared with Austin City Council later that week. She said staff has been developing the Plan since 2015 with extensive community input and involvement. The hope is that the Plan will be adopted by the Austin City Council as an amendment to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. Leak said there is a gap of about 49,000 rental units that are affordable for people earning less than the median income. Leak said the gap between affordable housing demand and affordable housing supply is so large, there is no way that public funds alone can close it. This is why policies must be changed to provide incentive for private developers to create more affordable housing supply. The Plan sets a community housing goal of adding 135,000 housing units in 10 years, with 60,000 of them being affordable to people below 60% of the Median Family Income.

**The role of Public Housing in serving families with children in poverty:** Sylvia Blanco, Executive Vice President for the Housing Authority of the City of Austin, began by providing some background info on the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA). HACA is separate from the City of Austin and is a quasi-governmental organization supported primarily by federal funds, and has been designated a high performance agency for over 15 years. HACA manages 18 public housing developments, and over half the people housed by HACA are children below 18 years of age. HACA provides a number of holistic services aimed at providing tools and resources to residents to break the cycle of poverty. There is a continuum of services for a variety of ages – from early childhood education and academic support and enrichment for school aged children, to basic education and higher education training for adults, and services for older adults. The Youth Educational Success (Y.E.S.) program and other enrichment opportunities are provided to HACA resident children in partnership with Boys and Girls Clubs, the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts of America, Any Baby Can, and a number of other community organizations and nonprofit organizations. Workforce Development is also an integral part of the programs HACA provides. Jobs Plus is a grant-funded program to provide residents the tools they need to work their way to long-term employment and self-sufficiency. The Childcare Voucher Program and the Self-Arranged Childcare Reimbursement Program are available to help qualified residents with childcare costs. Blanco also discussed Rental Assistance Demonstration, a program to convert public housing to project based rental assistance protections, improvements & choice for residents. Residents continue to pay 30% of their monthly income in rent. Improvements include significant physical upgrades to properties. With this program HACA is improving resident lives through structural improvements, preserving deep housing subsidies for the next 40 years, and sustaining and expanding HACA resources. Currently, HACA has 26,000 applications on the waiting list for housing, and the wait lists have been closed to new applicants. As of April 20, Booker T Washington, Meadowbrook Apartments, and Lakeside Apartments will be the only waiting lists open for applicants. HACA currently administers around 6,000 voucher recipients.

#### **Q&A Discussion:**

***HACA also operates the Affordable Housing Corporation; how many additional units has this entity brought online?***  
One of the subsidiaries of HACA the Affordable Housing Corporation, which acts as HACA’s real estate arm. It has created over 4,000 affordable housing units over the years as a result of acquisition and new construction.

**Regarding the City's housing plan, there is not much land available to build affordable housing on. Can you talk about how the Community Land Trust can be used to complement the housing plan and ensure that there is affordable housing in all parts of Austin?** The CLT is an arrangement where either the city or a nonprofit owns the property, and an eligible family household owns the improvements to the property. It's especially beneficial because residents' property tax burden is reduced, since they own only the improvements. City of Austin, HACA, and other organizations such as Community Housing Development have operational and successful community land trusts.

**When affordable units mixed into new developments, does the affordable unit have a set price or is the price dependent on the income of the family going in?** Those affordable units have a price based on 60% of MFI. New developments are being allowed concessions in exchange for guaranteeing a specific number of affordable housing units in their developments, usually 10% of the total units. These arrangements will be monitored for compliance.

**Are there established programs with businesses or other organizations to help train individuals who live in HACA units obtain sustainable income?** Blanco said HACA's goal is to shorten their stay by arming residents with the skills, education, and knowledge they need to be able to enter the job market, obtain a living-wage job, sustain their own household in private sector housing, and open their formerly occupied unit for the next family in need. This is done through partnerships with groups such as Goodwill Industries, Skillpoint Alliance, Austin Area Urban League, and others. The Family Self Sufficiency Program is a 5-year program a family commits to with the ultimate goal to have full-time gainful employment. One of the important aspects of this program is an escrow account that captures any rent increases due to increased income that allows renters to save that money and eventually use it for a down payment on housing of their own.

Raul Alvarez concluded the meeting by highlighting some of the accomplishments HACA has made throughout the years and the role some of its members have played in Community Advancement Network, and presented Eileen Schrandt with an award recognizing her leadership as Chair of the CAN Community Council in 2016.

**Adjournment:** Kirsha Haverlagh moved to adjourn the meeting, Michael Willard seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.