

AFFH is Sound Policy

Soundness of the AFFH. Place matters - For years, recipients of HUD funding have worked tirelessly to ensure that all members of the communities they serve have housing choices in healthy, vibrant environments. Many of these community leaders have struggled to meet the desired outcomes for residents in their communities. Between 2000 and 2013, the number of people living in high-poverty areas nearly doubled, rising from 7.2 million to 13.8 million¹. Today, over 14 million people – including over 4 million children – live in communities of concentrated poverty. There are over 4000 of these neighborhoods².

The Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing AFFH rule (AFFH), provides an opportunity to change the trajectory of growing poverty and inequality. The AFFH helps HUD grantees weave together: housing, health, transportation, education, environmental and economic development approaches that support the transformation of areas of concentrated poverty into thriving, communities. Furthermore, the AFFH fosters design approaches that promote access to affordable housing in communities with high performing schools, clean air, and reliable transportation choices and access to workforce opportunities and good jobs. The AFFH supports local leaders' success in meeting their long standing/existing requirement to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing set forth in the Fair Housing Act of 1968 by providing them with resources in the form of guidance, a data and mapping tool and technical assistance to support their planning success. The locally-driven planning process called the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) helps communities overcome persistent and growing challenges related to disparities in opportunity, fair housing choice and racially concentrated poverty.

What it Means to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing. The AFFH provides needed clarification of the existing definition included in the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and provides support to HUD grantees that better equips them to promote fair housing choice and increase opportunity for all residents through data driven decision making. The AFFH:

- Equips local communities with the data and information necessary to identify barriers to opportunity - quality k-12 education, transportation that connects to job centers, exposure to toxic substances health (e.g., lead, air quality hazards.) etc.
- Fosters rich community participation, ensuring that the experiences and perspectives of community members inform the assessment process
- Guides jurisdictions on how to better align federal funding—Community Development Block Grants, HOME funds, public housing financing, and other HUD funds—to address the housing and economic inclusion challenges identified in the assessments of fair housing.
- Promotes a more effective relationship between federal investments and housing choice and access to opportunity needs, by incorporating the strategies developed during the AFH process into the Consolidated or Public Housing Authority plans.

Local Design - Local governments develop solutions to fair housing choice and barriers to opportunity through an integrated planning approach that helps HUD grantees leverage expertise and resources through collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders e.g. developers, banks, universities, advocacy groups, nonprofits and health providers, and other units of government.

¹ <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/08/more-americans-are-living-in-slums/400832/>

² ACS 2010-2013, HUD PD&R data analysis, conveyed from 2009 to 2013

Tools Support Local Decision-Making Data-informed decision-making is advanced by providing local officials with mapping and other analytical tools informed by data from the Census Bureau and other federal agencies. This data equips HUD grantees to better analyze patterns, trends and conditions. Gathering of additional local data is encouraged to ensure that the full local context and conditions inform the data analysis.

Promotes Jobs and Workforce Development –The AFFH helps jurisdictions plan affordable housing that is located near transit that connects to jobs centers, in opportunity rich communities; and that focuses vitalization efforts in distressed communities in a manner that co-locates affordable housing with community and economic development, workforce development and job placement services.

Shaped through Extensive Piloting - AFFH was piloted by 74 HUD grantees through the Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA.) To test the effectiveness, the FHEA modeled many components of the AFFH including: guidance, data, mapping stakeholder collaboration and consultation and rich community participation

Learnings from 2016 Implementation - Interviews with 2016 AFH implementers and community stakeholders that participated in the 2016 AFH process revealed the following observations of the AFH process:

- Engages multiple stakeholders from diverse sectors
- Clarifies requirements and accountability factors
- Creates a local community-driven standard for taking meaningful action to address barriers to fair housing choice and access to opportunity
- Members of the public more involved and engaged than in previous processes
- Residents discussing and reflecting on real issues and real needs
- Realization that an AFH is more than just a planning document; it is an action plan that authentically reflects the needs of community members

Examples of Early Success:

Connecting to Regional Resources and Opportunity: Kansas City, MO - partnered with four surrounding jurisdictions and the regional planning authority to produce a regional assessment. The regional collaboration has helped to more thoughtfully align the use of federal and local dollars to foster fair housing choice and access to opportunity utilizing a greater breadth of regional resources to accomplish goals.

Leveraging Resources and Expertise: New Orleans, LA – Worked in partnership with the local fair housing organization and key leaders to review the results of the AFH and to prioritize the issues they will address first, with the commitment from these stakeholder groups to share responsibility with the HUD Grantee for implementation.

What Congress Can Do:

Support the continuity of, and further funding for, the implementation of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule as part of the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations process.

Questions? Please reach out to Sarita Turner at PolicyLink at sarita@policylink.org