



July 9, 2018

Office of Community Development  
City of New Orleans  
1340 Poydras Street – 10th Floor  
New Orleans, LA 70112

Dear Donna Pearson,

The Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance (GNOHA) applauds OCD’s allocation of funding for homeownership rehabilitation, its mortgage programs, and tenant based rental assistance. However, New Orleans is currently deep into an affordable housing crisis, and HousingNOLA’s 2018 Semi-Annual Report shows how much support is still needed. 61% of our renters are cost-burdened and vouchers as well as new unit productions are down. GNOHA encourages the OCD to refocus and continue its commitment to improve processes that increase production efficiency and organizational capacity among government partners, non-profit organizations, and the Office of Community Development itself.

The following are recommendations for areas that OCD should direct its operations towards:

**The City should aim to coordinate more effectively with the Louisiana Housing Corporation**

The Louisiana Housing Corporation has released the Qualified Action Plan on a consistent basis for the past few years. The City should better coordinate the release of its NOFA’s so the process can be more streamlined and efficient for developers. The City should monitor affordability periods from the LHC and work with them to extend the affordability period for developments that are expiring soon. If unable to extend, the city should advocate for the LHC to sell to developers willing to extend or for its own purchase with the intent to extend. While affordability periods are ending, we have to put housing first for residents as the need has not changed.

**The City should create two NOFA’s**

The City should create two NOFA’s because developers usually have to wait until the LHC releases the QAP for New Orleans to announce their NOFA’s. We understand the reasoning behind this, but every developer doesn’t have a development that’s tied into tax credits. The City should create a NOFA that’s tied to the QAP for developers involved in tax credit deals, and another NOFA for developers that aren’t. This allows for more development and opportunities for the city to invest more proactively in developments.

**The City should provide funding for homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income individuals**

- A Shared Initiative, Inc.
- Alembic Community Development
- Alliance for Affordable Energy
- Asakura Robinson Company
- Broadmoor Improvement Association
- Capital One
- Committee for a Better New Orleans
- Crescent City Community Land Trust
- Desire Community Housing Corporation
- Dillard University
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Family Resources of New Orleans
- Finance Authority of New Orleans
- First NBC Bank
- Foundation for Louisiana
- GCR Inc.
- Global Green USA
- Greater New Orleans Foundation
- Green Coast Enterprises
- GNO Fair Housing Action Center
- Greater New Orleans, Inc.
- Gulf Coast Housing Partnership
- Harmony Neighborhood Development
- Home by Hand, Inc.
- Housing Authority of New Orleans
- Iberia Bank
- Iris Development
- Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative
- Jefferson Community Action Programs
- Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative
- Jerusalem Economic Development Corp.
- JPMorgan Chase Bank
- LA Association of Affordable Housing Providers
- Louisiana Appleseed
- Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Orgs.
- Louisiana Homebuyer Education Collaborative
- Louisiana Housing Alliance
- Louisiana Housing Corporation
- Lower 9th Ward Homeownership Association
- McCormack Baron Salazar
- Neighborhood Development Foundation
- Neighborhood Housing Services
- New Day Homeowner Services
- New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity
- New Orleans Redevelopment Authority
- Northshore Housing Initiative
- Office of Housing Policy & Community Development
- Perez, APC
- Preservation Resource Center
- Project Homecoming
- Providence Community Housing
- Puentes New Orleans
- Rebuilding Together New Orleans
- Redmellon
- Renaissance Neighborhood Development Corporation
- Renaissance Property Group
- SBP
- Service Providers and Professionals Assoc.
- Spottswood CDC
- St. John the Baptist Housing Authority
- St. Roch Community Development Corporation
- Tulane/Canal Neighborhood Development Corporation
- Tulane City Center
- United Way of Southeast Louisiana
- University of New Orleans
- Urban Focus
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Volunteers of America
- Wells Fargo
- Whitney Bank

The City should fund homeowner assistance programs that can be leveraged with existing homeownership programs. The city should seek a dedicated source of revenue for the soft-second mortgage program. The city should go back to its pre-Katrina budget of \$2M for soft-seconds. The City could use \$1M from CDBG and another \$1M from NHIF. Soft Seconds could be paired with funding for development projects built for low- to moderate-income residents. It could also be staggered to a point where the city makes the commitment to pay once the units are online instead during the pre-development phase.

#### **The City should secure more funding for homebuyer education**

The City should apply for grants to support Homebuyer's Education in New Orleans. It is important that the City continue to provide funding to sustain and build local homeownership programs that will educate and prepare residents for potential homeownership. Homebuyer education is key to helping potential homebuyers better understand the costs, complexities and responsibility of homeownership that will make them successful, long-term owners.

#### **The City should work with developers on green infrastructure implementation**

We are thankful that the City is working on its relationship with water and becoming a more resilient city. However, construction costs are up and subsidies as well as additional funding are down, particularly for smaller developers. New Orleans is facing an affordability crisis, so developers who plan to build affordable housing should be better supported in their green infrastructure and energy efficiency implementation. The City should advocate for appraisers to take a proactive approach when valuing homes that have green infrastructure and energy efficiency built in. The City should also work with developers to increase storm water management features. The OCD should work with the Office of Resilience and Sustainability to provide investments and/or allowances for smaller developers to build with resiliency and sustainability in mind.

#### **The City should assess its language access plan**

The City should do an assessment of its current language access plan and gauge how much more work is needed to better support our limited English proficiency residents. New Orleans has a high population of LEP individuals, particularly for Spanish, Vietnamese, and its growing population of Arabic speakers. The city should create goals for translating and transcribing important text that will help all residents navigate New Orleans' affordable housing crisis.

#### **City should use more of its revenue to fund the creation of more affordable housing opportunities**

The City should consider redirecting its allocation of CDBG funding from Code Enforcement towards the production of more affordable housing. The City could also use taxes from STR's and Hotel/Motel tax to support more affordable housing opportunities. The City should also reauthorize the NHIF to ensure continued funding.

#### **The City should advocate for more state and federal funding**

The City should advocate for a state dedicated revenue source for the Louisiana Housing Trust Fund (LHTF), and also continue to advocate for Community Development Block Grant and HOME funding, which have been essential funding sources for affordable homeownership and rental opportunities in New Orleans. 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. New Orleans doesn't receive much state funding, but with 47% cost-burdened for renters and homeowner's, New Orleans ranks second for cost-burdened parishes. The City needs to continue to seek state and federal funding for affordable housing opportunities.

**The City should allocate some of the Neighborhood Housing Improvement Fund to support the Smart Housing Mix feasibility analysis.**

A feasibility analysis is necessary to create the text amendment to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and with the Governor's veto letter, there is a short window to implement the Smart Housing Mix. The feasibility analysis is in need of additional funding and using the NHIF could help us get it done in our time frame. Adopting and implementing the Smart Housing Mix Ordinance would provide for the mandatory and voluntary inclusion of affordable housing by private developers.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact me at 504.224.8301 or [amorris@gnoha.org](mailto:amorris@gnoha.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andreanecia H. Morris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A'.

Andreanecia Morris  
President/Chair, Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance

cc: Ellen Lee, Director of Community and Economic Development