



June 25, 2018

Division of Administration
Office of Community Development
P.O. Box 94095
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9095

Dear Traci Watts,

Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance (GNOHA) is a collaborative of non-profit housing builders and community development corporations working to address housing availability and affordability issues in the city of New Orleans. The collaborative advocates for the preservation and production of affordable housing for people within the Greater New Orleans metropolitan region and places a special emphasis on the needs of the most vulnerable in society—seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, low-wage workers and low-income families.

Facilitated by GNOHA, *the HousingNOLA 10 Year Strategy and Implementation Plan* offers a road map to maximize the effectiveness of scarce government resources, increasing non-traditional resources, and assisting private sector investors in making strategic choices. *HousingNOLA* also offers a data framework to inform future housing policy, as well as shared leadership and engagement towards more thoughtful and scalable housing developments that are affordable for all income levels.

Below you will find GNOHA's comments on the Office of Community Development's proposed FY 2018 Annual Action Plan.

1. GNOHA is concerned about the prioritization of funding rural housing over urban housing taking place at the state level. As the data implies, in the aftermath of the great recession, neither incomes nor housing construction have kept pace with the housing needs of residents across Louisiana, in rural areas and cities alike. The picture is particularly troubling in New Orleans.

The [*HousingNOLA Strategy and Implementation Plan*](#) indicates the need for 33,000 additional affordable units in the city by 2025. Further, the data clearly shows that wages have not come close to mirroring the dramatic rise in housing costs. Since 2000, New Orleans home values and rents have both more than doubled. 61% of renters in New Orleans are now "cost-burdened," spending more than a third of their income on housing costs. In Louisiana, renters would have to make \$16.63/hour to live affordably, according to a study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition; while in New Orleans, they would have to make \$19.15/hr. Both numbers are well above our state's minimum wage but clearly shows where there is higher need.

Currently, New Orleans does not have the resources to meet the demand for affordable housing for its service workers, musicians, culture bearers, and vulnerable populations that work day in and day out as the driving forces behind the city's economy. It goes without saying that in turn, the New Orleans economy is vital for Louisiana's economic health. With disaster recovery funds running out, funding at the federal level declining, increased sequestration at the federal level, and few resources at the state level, affordable housing

A Shared Initiative, Inc.
Alembic Community Development
Alliance for Affordable Energy
Asakura Robinson Company
Associated Neighborhood Development
Broadmoor Improvement Association
Capital One
Center for Planning Excellence
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
Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center
Greater New Orleans, Inc.
Gulf Coast Housing Partnership
Harmony Neighborhood Development
Healthy Start New Orleans
Home by Hand, Inc.
Housing Authority of New Orleans
HRI Property Management
Iberia Bank
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 Organizations
Louisiana Homebuyer Education Collaborative
Louisiana Housing Alliance
Louisiana Housing Corporation
Lowermine.org
Lower 9th Ward Homeownership Association
Lower 9th Ward NENA
Make It Right
Neighborhood Development Foundation
Neighborhood Housing Services
NEWCITY
New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity
New Orleans Redevelopment Authority
NO/AIDS Task Force
Northshore Housing Initiative
Office of Housing Policy & Community Development
Operation Comeback
Perez, APC
Pontchartrain Park CDC
Practitioners Leveraging Assets for Community Engagement
Preservation Resource Center
Project Homecoming
Providence Community Housing
Puentes New Orleans
Rebuilding Together New Orleans
Redmellon
Renaissance Neighborhood Development Corp.
Renaissance Property Group
Service Providers and Professionals Association
Southern United Neighborhoods
St. Bernard Project
St. Roch Community Development Corporation
Sulli Educational Services, Inc.
Tulane/Canal Neighborhood Development Corp.
Tulane City Center
University of New Orleans
Urban Focus
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Volunteers of America
Wells Fargo
Whitney Bank
Westwego Housing Authority
Whodata.org

developers have to do more with less. Because resources for housing programs are in decline at all levels, *HousingNOLA* supports a state budget that does not create an either/or choice for housing programs in Louisiana's rural and urban areas.

2. The State of Louisiana does not use any of its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for housing programs. The *HousingNOLA* plan suggests that the Office of Community Development should invest at least 20% of its allocation of CDBG funds for affordable housing development.

Further, OCD should return to the practice of awarding a portion of LCDBG funds to rural housing. This way, rural parishes will benefit from augmented housing funding, and a share of vital Louisiana Housing Trust Fund and HOME dollars could thereby be freed up for developments in urban areas.

In 2011, the last year in which Community Development Block Grant funds were directed to housing, \$2,369,000 of the allocated \$17,864,379 was awarded to Berwick, Lecompte, Opelousas, and St. Gabriel. Considering the increased need for affordable housing throughout the parishes, a ratio of housing funding similar to the years pre-2011 would have tremendous impacts across the board.

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

Sincerely,

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

Andreanecia Morris
Chair/President, Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance