



HOUSING COMMISSION OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

OFFICIAL STATEMENT TO

AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHER FAIR HOUSING

The Housing Commission of Anne Arundel County (HCAAC) has and will continue to implement policy and procedures considering the following goals and measures:

- **Taking proactive steps beyond simply combating discrimination to foster more inclusive communities, support and promote integrated communities, and overcome segregated living patterns.**
 1. The agency supports all local, state and federal legislation that enhances and sustains affordable housing development in the county; especially in opportunity areas*. This includes efforts to reduce discrimination against low income families, inclusionary zoning that enhances opportunities for development, and additional financial resources that positively impact protected classes and low income families.
 2. The agency seeks to partner and assist in any way possible to provide new affordable housing in the county and will provide any resources available for successful outcome; including ownership, management, providing letters of support and marketing all new developments to our voucher clients.
 3. Arundel Community Development Services, Inc. (ACDS) is extremely inclusive with the consolidated plan process; HCAAC input is given strong consideration and credibility. Stakeholders and the public have active roles in establishing the plan, which has an intensive focus on Fair Housing and the related components. ACDS has purview over the county plans.
 4. Staff attends all planning, task force and public hearings for the Consolidated Plan. The agency provides updated data and information, as well as revised plans and goals, and consults with the developers of the Consolidated Plan.

5. The Agency Board and Staff endorse and support the ongoing efforts of the Home Act in the Maryland Legislature. Staff members have participated in planning and testimony, and submitting information to legislators regarding the importance of this legislation and its role as an impediment to fair housing.
6. In the Summer of 2015 – HCAAC and ACDS will meet with the County Office of Planning/Zoning to see if they can provide a list of owners in opportunity areas who have dwelling licenses – and we can send marketing materials and invite them to a promotional event in 2015.
7. HCAAC has been working with several new affordable communities in these areas to lease new families, including Oakwood Family Homes, Victoria Park (south of Annapolis) and HCAAC is hoping to build a 100 unit (that will accept vouchers) at the new Odenton Town Center TOD area. This is proposed, but on hold due to wetland and other county related issues.
8. The agency has experienced some new leasing in opportunity areas of the county, but many of these areas are purely residential with very little or no multi-family communities – so a major shift is not likely to happen quickly. Owners who wish to participate in the program in these opportunity areas have expressed excitement with the new payment standards
9. After consult with Baltimore HUD and Arundel Community Development Services, Inc, we agreed that the most critical component to increase leasing in these areas was to complete a market study of rents throughout the county and apply for exception rents in these areas. The market study yielded that exception rent levels of 120% were needed in the opportunity areas of the county. In 2013 -2015, the agency requested exception rents and they were granted. The exception rents open possible leasing in areas of the county that are less concentrated by poverty and racial characteristics. This is the single most important component of eliminating impediments to living in areas of opportunity. The agency is considering the adoption of Small Area FMRs to provide greater access to opportunity areas for all families.
10. HCAAC annually reviews the patterns of leasing and residency of very low income voucher holders. The largest concentration of very low income voucher households is in the northern half of the county (largely north of Rt. 50)



**- Defined in the Anne Arundel County Consolidated Plan by map on Page 135, See last page of statement for map.*

- **Promote fair housing choice for all persons by providing access to community assets for all persons protected by the Fair Housing Act and addressing significant disparities in access to community assets.**
 1. The Housing Commission has consistently strived to provide quality and comfortable housing resources for county citizens. The public housing portfolio has continuously been affected by reduced subsidies and reduced modernization funds; forcing the agency to consider other potential options to sustain the communities.
 2. The agency participates in the Anne Arundel County Affordable Housing Coalition, the Maryland Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials and other likeminded organizations that establish development oriented relationships.
 3. Housing Commission staff has been trained and will continue to receive training in Fair Housing policy, regulations and criticality by NAHRO and other providers. The agency has hosted training programs in 2014 and 2015.
 4. HCAAC has recently completed installation of a new website that has been through several upgrades. There is an area for owners/landlords that provide news updates and basic program assistance – and there is a direct request for participation by owners in opportunity areas and those areas are clearly identified. This is having some impact; we just met with a potential new owner who is interested in the Odenton/Severn/Gambrills area.
 5. In December 2012, the agency did an outreach seminar and training for owners/managers in conjunction with Maryland Multi-Family Housing Association to market the program to communities/managers/owners who did not participate and provide training on many components of the program including rent calculation, payment standards, inspections, forms, etc. This was well attended (approximately 40 agents) and was held in the Odenton/Gambrills area to attract more west county (areas of opportunity) owners to the program. It is hoped that the next training could be expanded to other stakeholders who have an impact on leasing, such as Realtors and county service providers. HCAAC has a standing invitation with Maryland Multi-Family Housing Association to revisit and retrain county owners and landlords to enhance opportunities and reach out new potential owners.
 6. The agency has tried to be very creative to provide a variety of service and subsidy options for persons with disabilities; including 100 Mainstream Vouchers, 2 Supported Housing Programs for Persons with Disabilities, a HOPWA program, and will once again participate in the State Bridge Subsidy Program.
 7. Due to the large number of clients we assist with disabilities, the agency decided to complete re-certifications by mail due to many impediments in visiting our office. Even though we moved to a fully accessible location in the town center and at a store front, public transportation and parking is difficult. Also, transportation service for those with mobility issues is deficient in the county.

8. The agency has very strong relationships with many of the disability service providers in the county, including the ARC of Central Chesapeake, Omni Behavioral Health, Supportive Housing Developers, People Encouraging People, AAC Mental Health Services, the Centers for Independent Living, and the Core Services Agency (Office on Aging and Disability Services). The agency hosts monthly meeting of service providers and either the CHO or CEO attend. Due to funding cuts with our staff, we must have strong relationships with these agencies so that we can make immediate referrals and insure that clients with impediments find the right resources quickly.
9. HCAAC has interpreters on call for assistance for clients who are hearing impaired and we will provide the required service for any visually impaired consumer.
10. The agency implemented a more user-friendly Reasonable Accommodation program for clients. The new forms explain what the process is, types of accommodations and include easy forms to issue staff so that we can resolve them more effectively.
11. The Agency has conducted the Four Factor Analysis as a result of the request provided in the Assessment of Impediments to Fair Housing. The agency agreed that the analysis was needed.
12. A Limited English Proficiency analysis has been completed by HCAAC. The analysis was completed July 1, 2012 by an independent contractor. Spanish was the most prevalent language identified in our county with less than 2% of the citizens speaking the language. It is anticipated that review of the analysis and determination for need for update will be completed again in 2016.
13. HCAAC has translated many forms into Spanish and Korean and added new software to our website to translate into different languages.



- **Ensuring compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws and work to end racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty and foster compliance with the non-discrimination provisions of the Fair Housing Act.**

1. The Housing Commission has policies on admissions and eligibility that are sensitive to critical needs and contains no bias or targeting based upon race or ethnicity. As a result, the public housing program is comprised of 40% Caucasian, 56% African American and 4% Latino and other ethnicities. The Housing Choice Voucher program is comprised of 35% Caucasian, 62% African American and 3% Latino and other ethnicities.

2. After consult with Baltimore HUD and ACDS, we agreed that the most critical component to increase leasing in these areas was to complete a market study of rents throughout the county and apply for exception rents in these areas. The market study yielded that exception rent levels of 120% were needed in the opportunity areas of the county. In 2013 -2015, the agency requested exception rents and they were granted. The exception rents open possible leasing in areas of the county that are less concentrated by poverty and racial characteristics. This is the single most important component of eliminating impediments to living in areas of opportunity.
3. The agency fluctuates between 69-75% of our participants living in low poverty census tracts, which are under 10% of overall poverty rate. There are very few census tracts below the 4.3% poverty rate in the county.
4. HCAAC has identified in the previous Assessment of Impediments to Fair Housing that one of the goals for the county was to increase leasing in specific opportunity areas. We identified those areas as Odenton, Gambrills, Crofton, Laurel, Millersville, Pasadena, Arnold, Severna Park and South County (which is extremely rural).
5. The agency has actively worked on committees and task forces with the Opportunity Collaborative of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council to add input and help construct the "Strong Communities, Strong Region: The Baltimore Regional Housing Plan and Fair Housing Equity Assessment." This plan addresses some of the most important and difficult impediments to fair housing choice in the metropolitan area and encourages regional efforts and collaboration to solve many of the challenges.
6. The Agency is fully prepared to terminate the business relationship with any owner or landlord who willfully engages in substantiated discriminatory practices with families who are searching for housing and will report them to the Office of Fair Housing.
7. The agency also has seen an increase in ongoing issues with existing contracts and owners who are not abiding by program regulations, especially with condition of units and rental payments. In 2014 the agency took action several times with owners.
8. Through meetings with voucher holders and their advocates, the agency will be creating a more detailed and substantial owner/landlord compliance policy to hold owners and landlords more accountable. This policy is expected to be presented in the next Agency Plan submission in April 2016. The owner/landlord webpages will be expanded to include information on discrimination in applying for, screening and leasing to protected classes and low income families.
9. The agency strongly embraces education and training regarding Fair Housing and mandated that all program staff attend a two day official Fair Housing Training provided by NAHRO in April of 2014. We felt this was essential to providing our staff with the necessary information on Fair Housing regulations. The agency is hosting the Fair Housing Training course in 2015 and will send additional staff.

10. HCAAC will address the process for filing Fair Housing and Discrimination Complaints on the HCAAC website and provide links and access to the HUD site for convenience to consumers.
11. The agency will continue to be a stakeholder and participate in Fair Housing events in Anne Arundel County, including Homeless Resource Day to provide outreach and education to families at highest risk in the county.
12. The Housing Commission will actively continue to support the Consider the Person Campaign to end discrimination against housing choice voucher families in the metropolitan area. The agency has actively participated in the concept and creation of the campaign and provided blogs, content and videos to highlight the campaign.



- **Promote and provide housing that is structurally accessible to, and usable by, all persons, and provide opportunities for inclusive patterns of housing occupancy to protected classes.**
 1. The agency will continue to review application and eligibility processes and resources to eliminate barriers to any consumers and ensure that avenues to information and application do not impede specific population.
 2. The Housing Commission has opened a storefront resource center in the Glen Burnie Town Center (near many of the other county service vendors) to provide easily accessible and available opportunities to apply for housing programs and services in the county.
 3. Staff in the resource center is available Monday –Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Applications can be obtained at the center, online and via phone (mailed to the customer). All citizens are eligible to apply.
 4. The agency is sensitive to the socioeconomic issues affecting low income families and now allows families to turn down one offer for a unit without cause and remain on the waiting list for the next available unit that meets their occupancy requirements. Denial of offers with reasonable cause is permitted.
 5. The Housing Commission continues to apply for new programs and add services where feasible to serve broader populations. The agency currently administers the public housing, housing choice voucher, mainstream housing, supportive housing, housing opportunities for person with AIDS, rental allowance, project based voucher, partnership rental housing and low income housing tax credit programs. The agency is commencing the veterans’ affairs supportive housing (VASH) program in 2015/2016.

6. We have been working with several new affordable communities in these areas to lease new families, including Oakwood Family Homes, Victoria Park (south of Annapolis) and HCAAC is hoping to build a 100 unit (that will accept vouchers) at the new Odenton Town Center TOD area. This is proposed, but on hold due to wetland and other county related issues
7. After completion of the Limited English Proficiency assessment, the agency adopted a Language Access Plan and added documents and applications in Spanish and Korean.
8. The agency also added a language translator to the website www.hcaac.org.
9. The agency provides on-site management to ensure that resident's needs are addressed as quickly as possible and that community maintenance and safety are highest priority.
10. Residents are surveyed once annually to provide feedback on services, management, maintenance, risk, modernization and unit conditions. These surveys are compiled quarterly and reviewed by staff to determine customers service needs, budget priorities, modernization needs and underlying concerns and problems.
11. Annual inspections are conducted by an independent third party using Uniform Physical Condition Standards to ensure all units are in compliance with federal program condition, health, safety, and risk standards. 100% of the portfolio, common areas, systems and units are inspected.
12. The Housing Commission has a proven track record of using all of the federal modernization funds timely to consistently improve and enhance the public housing portfolio.
13. The agency has a transfer policy that allows residents who have changes in need that affect accessibility, financial improvement, and other personal/family issues to request to transfer to another unit within the portfolio.
14. The agency has an approved grievance procedure that allows residents of public housing to appeal any adverse action taken by the agency against a resident. The formal grievance is presided over by an independent third party officer to insure federal compliance and all items of fair housing elements are met.
15. The Housing Commission administers the Family Self-Sufficiency Program which is designed to assist families interested and willing to reduce or eliminate dependence on federal/state financial subsidy programs; and improve their education, employment, financial and homeownership opportunities. The agency seeks to expand and enhance this program in 2015 and beyond.
16. The agency remains open to partnerships with owners and developers (especially in Opportunity Areas) to acquire and build affordable housing resources, including the potential use of Project Based Vouchers if available.
17. Due to funding reductions, we have requested that staff bring any challenging or difficult impairment or reasonable accommodation issues to the CHO or CEO so that we can work with all of our partners to resolve and provide resources in a timely and satisfactory manner.

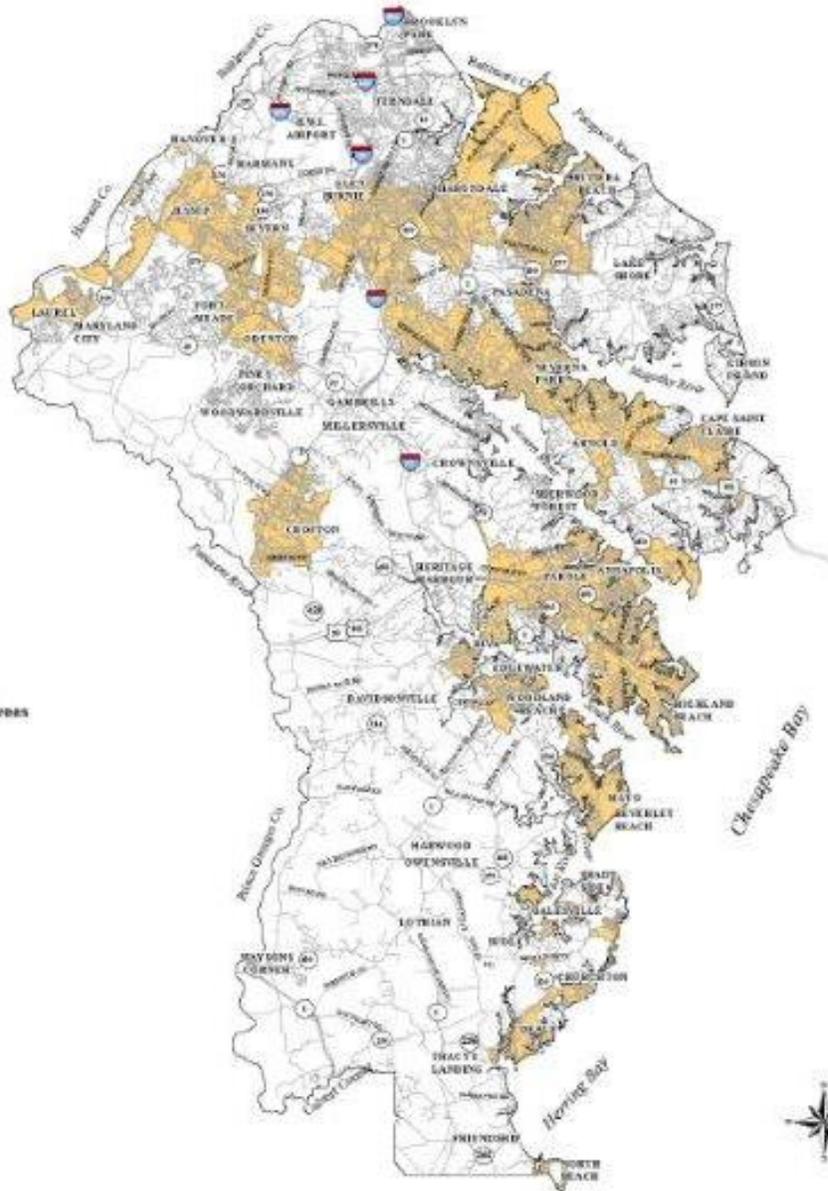
18. The agency has strong working and leasing relationships with the ARC, Omni, and SHD to provide group style living situations for persons with impairments. Currently there are over 120 consumers assisted through these contracts. The Housing Commission is seeking to provide greater continuity and consumer protection by changing these leasing situations to project based vouchers or single room occupancy contracts. In 2015, the agency has developed a new relationship with VESTA, Inc. in the western portion of the county, which is an area of opportunity.
19. The HOPWA and SHP programs require more intense service provision, and HCAAC has contracted with Community Residences to provide case management service to those clients. Also, we have negotiated with the company to move into our headquarter building to make access very easy for clients who come to visit.
20. HCAAC is currently planning to complete demolition of the second phase of Burwood Gardens and the new plan includes a proposed 50 unit Project Based Voucher contract for fully accessible units for persons with disabilities in Glen Burnie.
21. The agency has partnered with four communities to provide Project Based Vouchers and has committed 257 subsidies to these developments to enhance and sustain the affordability. The agency remains open and accessible to other developers and planners who have similar interests, especially in targeted low poverty and opportunity areas.
22. The agency remains interested in the potential ownership of new communities, and ownership partnerships with other stakeholders; similar to past endeavors such as Oakleaf Villas, Pumphrey House and College Parkway Place.
23. The Housing Commission and Arundel Community Services, Inc. are in strategic discussions to possibly create a tenant based rental assistance program (utilizing HOME funds) that is focused upon low income families with young children, which is an “at risk” population in the county. Advocates have supported this concept and discussions within all supportive segments of the county have been consulted on the proposed creation of the program. The Housing Commission has expressed interest in administering this program and marketing current waiting lists to identify families in need.



NOTE: This document is subject to review by additional stakeholders and is expected to be reviewed at the June 2015 board meeting and approved by the Board of Commissioners on or before the August 2015 regular board meeting.

Anne Arundel County

Anne Arundel County Opportunity Areas



Legend

- Streets
- DHCD & PF Opportunity Areas



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