



City of Conroe Fair Housing Plan

Policy Statement

It shall be the policy and commitment of the City of Conroe, Texas to ensure that equal and fair housing opportunities are granted to all persons, in all housing opportunities and development activities funded by the City, regardless of color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, lawful source of income, national origin, age, familial status, ancestry or mental or physical disability. This shall be done through the Fair Housing Officer by providing a program of education, utilizing Conroe's Analysis of Impediments, development and adherence of a procedure for complaints of discrimination. This plan will incorporate the directives for state and federal laws and executive orders, which include but are not limited to:

- a. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- b. The Fair Housing Act-Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended
- c. Executive Order 11063, as amended by Executive Order 12259
- d. Section 104(b) of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended
- e. Section 109 of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended
- f. Section 3 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1968, as amended
- g. Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
- h. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973, as amended
- i. The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended
- j. Executive Order 11246, as amended (Executive Orders 12375 and 12086) Equal Opportunity under HUD contracts and HUD assisted construction contracts
- k. Executive Order 12892, Leadership and Coordination of Fair Housing
- l. Texas Fair Housing Act
- m. Texas Property Code, Chapter 301, Title 15-Fair Housing Practices

The City of Conroe commits to providing and promoting racial and economic integration in any housing development supported with federal funding and will take affirmative steps to reach beneficiaries from all ethnic and racial groups as well as the mentally or physically handicapped and families with children and to reach a broad range of income eligible beneficiaries for appropriate and applicable housing opportunities.

Selection of Fair Housing Liaison

In accordance with the Title VIII, Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended, the Fair Housing Liaison below has been designated to handle fair housing complaints and activities in Conroe, Texas;

Nancy S. Mikeska,
Director Community Development
Fair Housing Liaison
300 W. Davis, Suite 535
Conroe, Texas 77301
Office 936 522-3060
Fax 936 522-3064

The Fair Housing Liaison is responsible for the intake and processing of all housing complaints as well as implementation of the Fair Housing Plan activities and actions. While not expected to be an “expert” in Fair Housing Laws, at a minimum, the liaison will be familiar with the complaint process and federal and state laws which address Fair Housing. Records which show the date, time, nature of complaint, referrals and recommendations made in the complaint process will be fully documented. A separate file will maintain a record of all housing discrimination complaints and follow up actions.

Complaint Process

Housing discrimination complaint forms such as forms HUD 903 (English) and HUD 903A (Spanish) can be found on the HUD website, at HUD.gov and typing *Fair Housing Complaint Form*. When you click on Housing Discrimination Complaint form you will be shown information on actions which constitute Fair Housing Discrimination and instructions for completing the forms to report your complaint online in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese or a number of other languages. Forms and instructions on filing a complaint are also available at Conroe City Hall in the office of the Director of Community Development, Fair Housing Liaison, 300 W. Davis Suite 530, Conroe, Texas 77301.

Forms will periodically be distributed to lenders, realtors, the Housing Authority and at other public places such as local libraries and community centers.

The Fair Housing Liaison will reasonably assist the complainant in submitting the complaint to the appropriate body by providing assistance in explaining the forms and/or contacting the appropriate office and allowing the use of public phones for communication.

The individual(s) filing the complaint will then be advised of the option of filing directly with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, (HUD) either by phone and /or by mail, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or the Workforce Commission or with all agencies simultaneously. The Fair Housing Liaison will do due diligence to keep a record of the progress of the number of complaints filed, actions take, and the status of each complaint.

Goals and Objectives

- 1) The City will host a Fair Housing month and display materials related to Fair Housing at City Hall.
- 2) The City will place a minimum of 1 notice regarding Fair Housing in the local newspaper.
- 3) The City will provide an educational session on Fair Housing, in a Public Meeting.
- 4) The City will purchase “*give aways*” to promote and draw awareness and interest to Fair Housing, using City funds.
- 5) The City will outreach to all Conroe citizens, through Citizen Boards and Community Groups, but at a minimum 5,000 citizens will receive Fair Housing information.
- 6) The City will follow their Fair Housing Plan in 2016.

Funding for Annual Fair Housing Activities: The City anticipates utilizing \$3,000 in City General Fund dollars each year to promote Fair Housing.

Section 3 Narrative

Section 3 is a provision of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Act of 1968 that helps foster local economic development, neighborhood economic improvement, and individual self-sufficiency. The City, as a recipient of federal funding must to the greatest extent feasible, provide job training, employment, and contracting opportunities for Section 3 Residents and Section 3 Business Concerns. The definitions provided and followed by the CDBG Department are consistent with those as set forth by HUD.

It is the City of Conroe’s CDBG Department’s Policy, to make a continued effort to seek, utilize, and hire qualified Section 3 Residents or Businesses, to the greatest extent feasible.

The CDBG Department will put forth specific efforts to seek out Section 3 Contractors and Businesses. At least annually, notices will be posted and placed in the newspaper to encouraging interested residents and/or businesses who believe they may qualify as Section 3, to contact the CDBG Offices. The CDBG Department will utilize language in Notices regarding Opportunities for Section 3 Businesses and Residents. Notices for bidding opportunities are sent to all Section 3 Businesses that have requested notices and to all Disadvantaged Business Owners and Historically Under Utilized Business Owners listed with the State of Texas, that are located in and around Montgomery County, Texas.

If a Section 3 Business Concern meets the qualifications of the project, including but not limited to, the capacity to complete the project, the Section 3 Business will be given preferential consideration for the contract. In 2013 we received one bid that was a Section 3 Business. They had not submitted the required bonding documentation with their bid. They were contacted and given the opportunity to provide the required bonds, but they were unable to secure bonds. The CDBG Department has rare opportunity to employ low or very-low income citizens, due to limited CDBG funding, procurement bonding requirements and the state licensing requirements for trade contractors. However, the CDBG Department, to the greatest extent feasible, will promote job training, encourage employment, and contracting opportunities for Section 3 Residents and Businesses in connection with HUD assisted projects and activities in Conroe.

The City had one person come in, as a result of the Notice to Section 3 Residents, who filled out the required form and wished to work if employment became available. The gentleman was subsequently called, but he had already found employment.

Implementation and Actions Steps

The City will take these specific actions/steps and implementation activities on an annual basis, following the guidelines, provided by the Fair Housing workgroup, and as directed by funding requirements.

The CDBG Citizens Advisory Committee will serve as a Fair Housing Working Group. The CDBG Citizens Advisory Committee is a diverse and knowledgeable group of various community members and it consists of both CDBG incomes qualified citizens and local successful business minded individuals. Members of the workgroup are instrumental in the creation of the City of Conroe's Fair Housing Plan. They will volunteer their time to work together to create a longstanding plan for the citizens of Conroe, Texas. The group is responsible for identifying fair housing impediments and proposing action steps for addressing them based on data they have available. The group is required to meet at least annually, to review the Action Plan, monitor progress, report findings and make recommendations to the governing body. During the current Analysis to Impediments of Fair Housing Choices, the most discussed barrier was cost of housing. Once again during this Program Year, cost proved to be the number one impediment to Fair Housing. In other words, in Conroe Texas, if you have the money you can enjoy any housing neighborhood you choose; and conversely, the area where you live and the home, is limited to what you can afford. Therefore, it was determined that the most significant impediment to fair housing in the City of Conroe continues to be the lack of funds available to citizens who wish to purchase or rent in a particular area. Cost is a substantial impediment to allowing a citizen to purchase or rent a particular home. Low-income, or even moderately low-income citizens, cannot afford a home of their choice. The reality is that if a citizen has money, they can purchase any home they wish. This is not always an obvious barrier, but nonetheless a barrier to those who have little funds available for housing. As in other cities, the most obvious barrier to affordable housing is the high cost of property, construction, as well as, down-payment and closing costs and monthly mortgage obligations.

Addressing the "Lack of Funds" and "Lack of Affordable Housing" - Impediments – The CDBG funding the City of Conroe receives, has been prioritized, to allow reconstruction of at least two sub-standard homes, annually, through forgivable loans for low, to extremely low, income minority homeowners, which will provide a minimum of two households, with affordable housing, when, due to the lack of funds, their housing choice was non-existent. The City continually works with Montgomery County Habitat for Humanity to provide affordable housing, for the coordination of resources, by providing tap fees and/or purchasing lots for their program. Conroe's City Council is conducive to keeping down the cost of housing by consistently encouraging builders and developers to be very flexible, in creating affordable housing.

Additional Steps

City of Conroe will periodically prepare, solicit and provide public service announcements for local radio and/or the City's TV Cable in order to provide knowledgeable information and resources available concerning Fair Housing.

City of Conroe will display Fair Housing posters identifying the City's Fair Housing Liaison, title, address and phone number in prominent locations. In addition, fair housing information will be distributed outside of traditional municipal locations including local realtor offices, bank lobbies and in kiosks displaying homes for sale or rent catalogs.

The Mayor will confirm annually the Fair Housing Policy Statement and Fair Housing Plan, and provide a public Resolution as an indication of its commitment to Fair Housing Month during the month of April each year. During Fair Housing Month, the City will promote Fair Housing by providing a table with literature and promotional items, hosting a Fair Housing Activity with prizes to educate youth, and provide an informative Fair Housing program during a Public Meeting, which, when available, will air on the City's cable channel.

All advertising of residential real estate owned by the City of Conroe, for sale, will contain the Fair Housing logo and equal opportunity slogan as a means to educating the home seeking public that the property is available to all persons regardless of color, religion, sex, race, physical or mental disability, familial status, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin, ancestry, or lawful source of income. The type of logo, statement or slogan will depend on the type of media being used (visual or auditory).

Analysis of Impediments

City of Conroe will cooperate and assist the state with its periodic Analysis of Impediments and conduct a review of policies, practices and procedures that affect the location, availability, and accessibility of housing. Conroe will update its local Analysis of Impediments as required by regulation by 2020, and possibly before if economic or demographic conditions change dramatically and require interim updates.

Timetable

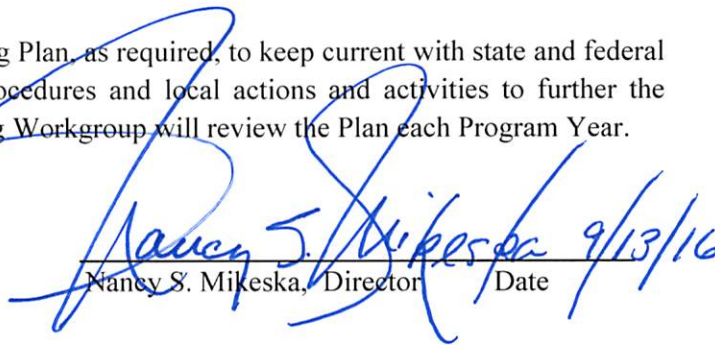
Some of the steps described in the "Action Steps" section of this Fair Housing Plan have been carried out on an on-going basis by the City of Conroe for many years. Other "Action Steps" the City has implemented or is preparing to implement. The City will continue to follow these guidelines as we proceed with the continuation of the City of Conroe Fair Housing Plan.

Amendments

The City of Conroe will amend and revise this Fair Housing Plan, as required, to keep current with state and federal affirmative action and equal opportunity policies and procedures and local actions and activities to further the purpose of this Plan. The City and the CDBG Fair Housing Workgroup will review the Plan each Program Year.



Toby Powell, Mayor Date



Nancy S. Mikeska, Director Date 9/13/16