



Travis County

Appendix B:

Public Comments

2006-2010 Consolidated Plan,
Amended August 2007



Public Comments

Public Comments on the Consolidated Plan, August 2006

All comments were accepted as they aligned with the intent and priorities of the five-year Consolidated Plan. Where some of the comments requested information from another county department appropriate information coordination will occur. When comments noted a lack of specific need data, staff directed the citizen to the areas of the Plan that contained the need data requested.

A total of four public comments were received on the draft of the Consolidated Plan. Three written comments were received via email and one person testified during the public hearing held in Commissioners Court on July 11, 2006. No one testified during the public hearing on July 18, 2006.

Written Comments

Via email on 6/27/2006 11:30 AM

Christy and Meg,

With the short amount of time, it seems as though you've come up with a comprehensive plan. Here is my one comment for inclusion:

1) As land is acquired for the Habitat for Humanity and Family Eldercare Project, please make sure that public transportation is either already available at the site or coordinate with the local transportation authority to ensure that transportation is available to the residents.

Sam Woollard
Community Action Network

Via email on 06/30/06 4:38 PM

Hello Christy Moffett,

I have read over the Summary of 2006-2007 Projects. I was wondering if the street improvements project might include the Kennedy Ridge area off of FM 969? I am a public health nurse and make home visits in that neighborhood. The streets are a hazard to drive due to big gullies, rocks, and impassable when it rains. Also, I see that the water/sewer improvement project is slated for North Ridge Acres. Kennedy Ridge is in great need of improvement to assist families to afford to hook up to water lines that were only installed in the neighborhood a few years ago.

In the planning project for 2006-2007 please consider surveying the Timber Creek subdivision in Del Valle. This neighborhood has been targeted by Travis Co. for buy out due to the flood plain however the residents there have not heard from Travis Co. in more than 2 years. They are in "limbo" about the County's plan to buy them out. And if they are bought out, whether they will be reimbursed the true

value of their property. Also, this area has been targeted as a park in the Travis Co. Natural Resource Dept.'s master plan. Yet the residents know nothing about this master plan. Finally they are very concerned about the environmental impact of TX Hwy. 130 that is being built literally in their back yards! Again, they met with TX Dept. of Transportation and the Corps of Engineers in the last couple of years and their questions were not answered.

I have been meeting weekly this month with the residents of Timber Creek. If you or a designee could come out to meet with them now during this public comment period that would be very helpful to guide them in who they could talk to about their concerns about the County's plan for their neighborhood.

If you cannot help us get some of these issues included in the CDBG plan for 2006-2011, please direct us to who might help.

With appreciation,
Linda Murphy, RN
UT School of Nursing
Children's Wellness Center

Via email on 7/27/2006 7:32 PM

Hello Ms. Moffett,

Please see my attached comments. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Susan Stone
Executive Coordinator
Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Monitoring Committee

Attachment:

As Executive Coordinator of the Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Monitoring Committee, I am writing to reflect that the Travis County Consolidated Plan 2006-2010 embraces many of the goals in our Committee's focus areas for 2006. In fact, all of the Housing Activities and Public Services listed in the High Priority Activities section of the draft plan are consistent with our community's overall goal of building a national model of a mentally healthy community. For quality of life on a number of different levels, individuals with mental illness and mental retardation desire a broad array of housing options to meet their current and ongoing needs.

I did note, however, that there was no mention of individuals with mental illness or mental retardation in the Summary of Community Need. The literature is increasingly showing that safe, affordable and accessible housing is a critical factor in successful community integration for individuals with mental health needs. Our Committee is in the process of developing a comprehensive housing plan for individuals in Travis County with mental health needs. This plan will document the availability of housing for individuals with mental illness, gaps in availability and priorities for future housing

development for this population. While our housing analysis will not be complete in time for inclusion in this version of the Consolidated Plan, we would be happy to draft a short paragraph about this population for inclusion in the Summary of Community Need.

Susan Stone, J.D., M.D.
Executive Coordinator
Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Monitoring Committee

Oral Testimony During Public Hearings

Received during public hearing on July 11, 2006*

My name is Linda Murphy, I'm a public health nurse. I work at the Children's Wellness Center in Del Valle. I'm a resident of Travis County, but I work in an area of Travis County since 1997, and I just appreciate the opportunity to the court to be able to give comment, not so much on behalf of myself personally, but as a public health nurse my job is outreach. And I've been able to go through the provider part of giving comments on the consolidated plan, and they've done an outstanding job and I just wanted to witness the process as it goes along and encourage residents in the del valle area of the county to come and give comment because many of the dollars I believe -- I consider that area a priority of course because I work out there, but we'd just like to offer that we'd come and givenness witness as -- give witness as the process goes on through the next five years. It sound like a lot of the monies will be used for planning in the area of Del Valle more than actually providing sewer improvements, water improvements, housing and services to the elderly and youth. Being a part of a clinic that's primary care, we do serve children and their families and we certainly see a big need for services for youth in that area. So I guess my point is just I would like to give public testimony that I want to help with this process as much as possible and that I'll do my best to get residents out to give you public comment because I believe that in this process so far, perhaps not many of them have given comment. And I don't want to speak for them, and I will do my best to get them to come and speak to you. So thank you.

*The source of this transcript is the closed captioned text version of the Travis County Commissioners Court. The comments were taken from the Travis County web site prior to the minutes being approved. Slight changes may occur once the certified minutes are available, though the integrity and intent of the comment will not change.

Public Comments on the Substantial Amendments to the Plan

November 2006

All comments were accepted as they aligned with the intent and priorities of the five-year Consolidated Plan. Where some of the comments requested information from Travis County HHS/VS, CDBG staff provided it in writing.

A total of five public comments were received on the draft of the Consolidated Plan. One written comment was received via email and four people testified during the public hearing held in Commissioners Court on November 28, 2006.

Written Comments

Via email on 11/29/2006 11:25 AM

Dear Meg Poag and Christy Moffett,

The residents of Plainview Estates in eastern Travis County would like to request that the provision of water to their community be considered in the following years to receive CDBG funding. The community consists of 39 households fully dependent on well water, which, due to recent development in the surrounding area, is no longer a reliable source of water in this community. Some residents have been without water for over 5 years, some have just run out of water, and some live with unpredictable wells.

Plainview Estates lies within the CCN of Hornsby Bend Utility Company and the residents live along the roads of Plain View Drive and Clear View Drive. A feasibility study was completed earlier this year by Murfee Engineering Company, Inc that concluded the provision of water service would cost about \$250,000. We have recently met with Hornsby Bend Utility Company, which agreed to absorb some of the costs, such as the Impact Fee and tie-ins along a part of Plain View Drive. We are aware that Plainview Estates is within a census tract ineligible to receive CDBG money and that an economic survey is necessary to obtain a waiver for the grant money. In order to minimize administrative costs, the residents of Plainview Estates and the University of Texas Environmental Law Clinic are willing complete these surveys ourselves.

We recognize that it is difficult to prioritize the funding for CBDG now that the available funds have been significantly reduced. We have researched similar communities with the same problem, but many of the resources that were available earlier, such as ORCA grants, are no longer available to us now. We ask you to please consider Plainview Estates in the coming years , because this situation meets a timely need, fits within the objectives of the CDBG program, and is quite unbelievable that people in this day must live without water.

Thank you very much,
Robin Lynch
UT Environmental Law Clinic
and
Residents of Plainview Estates

Oral Testimony During Public Hearings

Received during public hearing on November 28, 2006*

My name is Connie Gonzalez. A Travis County resident living in the community as a member of Santa Guadalupe Catholic Church and a leader of Austin Interfaith. Plainview Estates is a part of the Hornsby Bend community. It consists of 40 families who have lived here for five generations. Every morning for the last six years, I wake up to the fact that I do not have running water in my home. And I have to decide where it is that I am going to go take a shower for that morning. Sometimes I have to drive at least 15 miles to my sister's house to do that. Also, a five gallon bucket has become my best friend. That's to carry water from my neighbor's house to flush my toilets and wash my dishes every day. As a community we have suffered the lack of water for more than six years. And as a community we are acting to respond to it through conversations with our local churches, other local churches, Austin Colony homeowners association and Hornsby Bend Utility Company. We are aware of the Community Development Block Grant and the reduction. This is playing in our disadvantage, but we want to be able to work with our County Commissioner -- for our families, our children and our grandchildren to have water in our homes again.

[Question from the Commissioners Court as to the location of Plainview Estates]

Plainview Estates is adjacent to Austin's colony off of Hunters Bend Road. FM 969 at Hunters Bend Road. Austin Colony is on the right-hand side, and we are on the left-hand side of that. It's 71 acres. And like I said we have like 40 families living there that have been living there for many generations.

Received during public hearing on November 28, 2006*

Lupe Sedillo came with Connie Gonzales and gave no additional comment, but expressed her agreement with Ms. Gonzales' statement.

Received during public hearing on November 28, 2006*

Ruben Flores came with Connie Gonzales and gave no additional comment, but expressed his agreement with Ms. Gonzales' statement.

Received during public hearing on November 28, 2006*

Yes, sir. Good morning, Judge, Commissioners, Gus Pena again speaking. On the issue of not -- not for anybody. It is -- it is very, very sad. Again the relationship to poverty, not having running water for areas that do pay taxes. Remember Kenneth Schnieder, I didn't know him before, all of these many years he advocated for North Ridge Acres. I do believe that Commissioner Davis you will take the lead in this, you will help them out any way you can. Dan also did a good job. We need to acknowledge people that help out, you know. They have been very helpful in this issue. I'm not here to talk about that, but to support them in trying to get running water for the family. This is the United States of America. I just don't believe that.

Anyway I guess my concern is this, as mentioned to not only the city council boss or the school board because they have a lot of tie ins, the definition of affordable housing. This is not too much funding to purchase land because, you know, land is very expensive. And what the definition is of affordability, when I say we, we had a delegation go to visit HUD in Washington. The definition of affordability that we came back with from HUD is not what the community wanted to hear. If it's in excess of \$100,000, it's not affordable for a lot of people here in Austin, Travis County.

My question to you is this, I would like that question answered from Sherri's office. Excuse me is what is the definition of affordable housing? We have heard many, many definitions and we would like a clear cut -- on this issue also with San Antonio HUD. Also, we have been pushing for transitional housing for homeless veterans, their family, other people that need housing also to reenter, you know, society. But if I could get that, you know, I would appreciate it very much. Let's not lag on this issue. This issue has been going on many years. I have been dealing with this type of issue for many years, city side, county side, also at the legislature. If you can do that for me I would appreciate it. I appreciate the output they gave us.

[Comment from the Commissioners Court regarding Habitat for Humanity as the recipient of the land and their philosophy on affordable housing]

Oh, absolutely. I do agree that Habitat for Humanity promotes affordable housing. I'm glad that you defined that because it's not defined as a backup or in any backup that you have or on the agenda, people need to know when you speak about affordability that you are going to be working with entities. I agree Habitat for Humanity, also Mark Rodgers and their group are doing a lot of good over there in the Guadalupe Area. But yeah, still the affordability definition that comes about HUD. Because a lot of this funding is from HUD, the government, you know. Being a former IRS Investigator, we know about the specific parameters. That's why I asked for the definition. Thank you for explaining that's very good for the people to know. Just to read the agenda it doesn't tell you anything. I mentioned the conviction of affordability. Thank you very much for that. I do have family living out there. I am not representing them. My mom asked to speak about this issue, you know her very well.

*The source of this transcript is the closed-captioned text version of the Travis County Commissioners Court. The comments were taken from the Travis County web site prior to the minutes being approved. Slight changes may occur once the certified minutes are available, though the integrity and intent of the comments will not change.

August 2007

All comments were accepted as they aligned with the intent and priorities of the five-year Consolidated Plan. A total of two public comments were received on the three actions proposed which includes the amendment to the 2006-2010 Consolidated Plan's Strategic Direction, the substantial amendment to the PY06 Action Plan and the draft of the PY07 Action Plan. Two written comments were received and no people testified during the public hearings held in Commissioners Court on June 26, 2007 and July 10, 2007.

Written Comments

Via email on 6/29/07 at 2:57 pm

Hi, I read about the HUD grant in the Chronicle and I though I believe it's too late, I wanted to mention an interesting option for affordable rural housing in Travis County.

Texas has thousands of manufactured housing parks, though I'm not sure about their presence in Travis County. There's an interesting movement in northern New England, especially New Hampshire. Residents of manufactured housing parks are buying their parks and owning/managing them as cooperatives. This gives residents the benefits of both controlling their parks and sharing in the equity of the land.

New Hampshire currently has dozens of such cooperative parks, with over 4000 units. The phenomenon has spread to Maine and upstate New York, as well as Vermont. However, I haven't read about any such effort in the south.

This strategy is proving incredibly effective in raising quality of life and overall economic security for rural residents in those states; perhaps it's worth considering in Texas?

Again, I don't know about housing in the unincorporated portions of Travis County, so this might not be appropriate. I thought it was worth mentioning though.

This is the website for the New Hampshire Manufactured Housing Park program, with links to detailed documentation of their work:

<http://www.nhclf.org/programs/housing/mhpp/index.html>

Thanks for your time and have a great day.

-Donald Jackson

Received by mail July 9, 2007

Dear Ms. Moffett,

Foundation Communities would like to take this opportunity to provide comment on the Travis County Consolidated Plan for program years 2006-2010. As you know, Foundation Communities owns eleven affordable housing communities in Travis County that provide homes for families and individuals who would otherwise have difficulty finding quality housing. We also operate fie Learning Centers at our Austin communities, offering residents and neighbors on-site educational programs, after-school tutoring, money management and computer classes.

Since our mission is “to create housing where families succeed,” we felt it was of great import to offer remarks on the allocation of Federal resources to meet the housing and community development needs of Austin’s low and moderate income residents. We feel that a portion of this money should be divided up to support *housing solutions* and *supportive services* for extremely low income families with children.

Housing solutions for extremely low income families with children

Extremely low income families with children are Austin’s largest underserved group. Over 26,000 children in Travis County live in households with incomes less than \$1,000 per month. This is SIX times the number of seniors. The odds of being a child in poverty in Austin and getting housing assistance - vouchers or project based- is about 1 in 5.

In 2003, Foundation Communities created the Children’s HOME Initiative-our first program to target extremely low income families with children. We used grant funds to pay down the mortgage at two of our properties and permanently reduce rents on 38 units. We also employ two full-time case managers to help families set goals to increase their self-sufficiency. The Children’s HOME Initiative provides families with stable housing which is a key step in enabling families to make positive changes in other areas of their lives. Overall, 68% of families in the program maintain or improve housing stability and see their income increase by half within a year. While [no text continued here]

Supportive Services for extremely low income families with children

Case managers meet with adult participants at least monthly and often weekly or more to help them maintain stable housing, increase job skills, seek employment, obtain health insurance for themselves and their children, and reduce their debt.

In addition to lack of skilled job training and chronic health issues, many families participating in the program have mental health needs, most of which have gone unaddressed due to lack of education, funds for care, or motivation. Case managers in the Children’s HOME Initiative assist participant to identify and address mental health needs, making referrals for proper care. To promote success, case managers may even sit with participant while they make appointments and drive them to those appointments. Case managers continually look for new resources and programs that will benefit participants. For example, a recent grant from the Anne Casey Foundation will enable us to strengthen relationships with other workforce improvement organizations such as WorkSource, Skillpoint, and Capital Idea and help Children’s HOME Initiative participants access their services.

While the housing component of the Children’s HOME Initiative is what initially keeps a family from becoming homeless, it is the case management portion of the program that helps participants make lasting changes in their lives that will lead to self-sufficiency. These sorts of programs are imperative to meeting the County’s goals to provide decent housing and increase access to quality public and private facilities and services.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments in the Consolidated Plan. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 512/447-2026.

Sincerely,

Julian Huerta

Acting Executive Director, Foundation Communities

3036 South First, Ste 200

Austin, Tx 78704

Oral Testimony During Public Hearings

No testimony was given during the two public hearings on June 26, 2007 and July 10, 2007.