

Comments on HUD Draft Strategic Plan (January 2010)

Submitted by Housing Opportunities Made Equal (VA), Poverty & Race Research Action Council (DC), and the National Fair Housing Alliance (DC).

Where you live is in many ways more important than the actual structure you live in. Those who live in neighborhoods of opportunity, where the values of homes will appreciate and with good schools, access to jobs and services, safe streets, healthy food choices and good role models will be much more likely to achieve their full potential than those who do not have access to communities with these amenities. In order to accomplish this goal, we must both invest in historically disinvested communities, and give families with traditionally limited housing choices the ability to move to better neighborhoods.

In contrast with repeated public assurances by the HUD Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing, HUD's draft strategic plan appears to ignore the second component of an effective housing strategy. It paints HUD's role almost entirely in terms of bricks and mortar and HUD's own communities, and says nothing about the need to eliminate housing discrimination or of HUD's responsibility to affirmatively further fair housing and to ensure that its grantees do the same.

We recommend the following additional language to address this oversight in the draft plan (highlighted in red below)

Draft Vision Statement

Our vision is to improve lives and strengthen communities to deliver on America's dreams

For Residents: We will improve lives by creating affordable homes in safe, healthy communities, and by protecting the rights and affirming the values of a diverse society

For Partners: We will be a flexible, reliable problem solver and a valued source of innovation

For Employees: We will be a great place to work where employees are mission-driven, results-oriented, innovative, and collaborative

For the Public: We will be a good neighbor, building sustainable communities that create value and investing public money responsibly to deliver results that matter

For Homeseekers: *We will ensure freedom of choice, actively assist families to find housing in neighborhoods with high quality schools, and work to eliminate housing discrimination*

Draft Goals and Sub-Goals

Goal 1: Repair the nation's economy and housing market

- 1A: End the foreclosure crisis
- 1B: Protect consumers when they buy a home
- 1C: Re-create a strong housing finance system

- 1D: Promote affordable, financially sustainable and appropriate housing options, including homeownership

Goal 2: Ensure equal access to housing and eliminate housing discrimination and segregation throughout the United States

2A: Aggressively seek out and eliminate housing discrimination in order to guarantee the fair housing and fair lending rights of all housing consumers

2B: Ensure that HUD's own programs and all housing and community development programs throughout the federal government affirmatively further fair housing and do not contribute to the concentration of poverty or racial segregation

2C: Ensure that the recipients of HUD funds are held to a high standard of accountability for affirmatively furthering fair housing

2D: Utilize the Housing Choice Voucher program to deconcentrate poverty and give voucher holders access to neighborhoods of opportunity

2E: Forge strong partnerships with private fair housing organizations to enhance HUD's capacity to eliminate housing discrimination

Goal 2: Promote affordable rental housing

2A: Expand the supply of quality affordable rental housing, particularly outside of racially segregated communities and in lower poverty neighborhoods

2B: Preserve the existing supply of Federally-assisted quality affordable rental housing

2C: Increase rental housing affordability across a broad range of incomes while reducing the number of families and individuals with severe housing needs

Goal 3: Utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life

3A: Improve educational and early childhood development outcomes for those living in HUD-assisted housing

3B: Improve health outcomes for those living in HUD-assisted and HUD regulated housing

3C: Increase economic security and self-sufficiency for those living in HUD-assisted housing

3D: Provide housing and social stability for the homeless and those at risk of being homeless

Goal 4: Build inclusive and sustainable communities of opportunity

4A: Excel in disaster preparedness, resiliency and recovery

4B: Improve the health and economic self-sufficiency of all community residents, while reducing the impact of communities on the environment

4C: Catalyze economic development and job creation, while preserving community assets

4D: Ensure diverse, equitable and fair communities for all

4E: Advance strong local and regional public and private organizations

Goal 5: Transform the way HUD does business