

Houston Patchwork Briefing: Council District Profiles Of Affordable Housing Executive Summary 2022

Houston Organizing Movement for Equity (HOME) Coalition is a diverse coalition of community-based organizations in Texas. Our shared mission is to make Houston stronger, more resilient, and more equitable in the long road to recovery from Hurricane Harvey and future climatic events. HOME recognizes that storms like Harvey hit hardest for people of color, immigrants, low-income families, and low-wage workers. Long-lasting legacies of segregation and historical disinvestment created barriers for these community members resulting in massive inequality, making it challenging to thrive following subsequent storm damage. To provide true pathways to success for all Houstonians, contributing factors leading to disparate outcomes must be examined and solved.

Upon taking office, Mayor Turner committed to creating one Houston in place of the deep-rooted city of “haves and have nots” that is the daily reality for many community members. Though attempts to address inequality in various sectors were made, the housing affordability gap continues to widen, making affordable housing out of reach for many Houstonians. After Houston received \$1.2 billion to address housing needs following Hurricane Harvey, less than 1% of those funds were used to build and/or repair housing. The lack of ability to deploy funds demonstrates the ineffectiveness of reactive planning. As inflation increases and working wages continue stagnating, policymakers, decision-makers, and leaders in Houston must prioritize the lack of housing affordability to stabilize low-wage earning Houstonians.

In the fall of 2021, Houston City Council members expressed concerns about affordable housing and the administration of the city's housing funds and operations. Until recently, a comprehensive view of the impact of funding allocations and development awards was unavailable. **Houston PATCHwork, Profiles in Affordable Trends & Challenges In Housing**, is an exploratory effort to provide data about the current state of affordable housing, specifically in each council district. The analysis comprehensively represents Houston's eleven council districts by combining various sources' most recent data sets.

What we have found:

There is substantial affordable housing inequality among council districts.

- Only 11% of all subsidized units are located in desirable, “strong market” areas consisting of District C, E, and G. These districts account for 28% of the total population but 57% of Houston’s White non-Hispanic populations. They are recognized as “high opportunity” and have the highest median household income, median rents, and median home values.



The legacy of housing segregation perpetuates in districts with high Black and Hispanic populations.

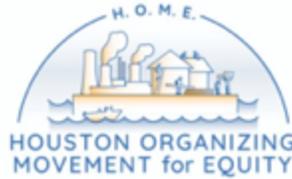
- Half of all subsidized units are located in districts B, D, and H. These districts have some of the highest percentages of Black and Hispanic populations and some of the highest poverty rates in the city.
- Houston's Black population is 22%, yet Districts B, D, and K have 54% Black population. Houston's Hispanic population is 44.5%, yet Districts A, I, H, J, and B are 60% Hispanic population.
- Districts J, H, B, I & D have higher poverty rates than the City of Houston (20%). District B and J have the highest number of households in poverty, accounting for 124,000 people or about a quarter of Houston's people in poverty.

Renters face the most housing challenges regarding availability, housing conditions, and cost burden.

- Districts I, H, J, B have substantial numbers of housing that was built before 1980. Most of these housing units are apartment buildings, many of which are in fair to poor condition.
- Districts J and F have the most significant proportion of renters, followed by G, I, and B.
- The largest number of renters are in Districts G and C, followed by J and F, with approximately 228,000 renters or 46% of Houston's renters among all four.
- Renters are much more likely to be cost-burdened than homeowners in every district. 55% of Renters in District B are most cost-burdened and severely cost-burdened, with tenants paying more than 30% and 50% of their income on rent.
- Districts J, B, and F have the highest percentages (56% - 58%) of renters reporting housing issues, including inadequate sewage, plumbing, and electrical conditions.
- Conversely, tenants in Districts C, E, and G have below-average percentages (38% - 49%) of inadequate housing reports.

Tenant targets are not represented or distributed equitably in City Council districts across the City.

- Family affordable housing developments are built in districts with high concentrations of poverty, which deepens housing segregation and deprives low-income families access to well-resourced schools and other public services and amenities.
- Higher-income districts lack a truly affordable housing tenant mix, providing only affordable housing for senior tenants.
- Persons experiencing homelessness are represented in every council district; however, single-room occupancy developments are not built in every district.



Core Challenges and Proposed Solutions

Despite planning efforts, roundtable discussions, pilot projects, and taskforce assemblies, Houston remains a city of haves and have nots. Far too many low-income families, particularly families of color, struggle to find affordable housing and consequently face displacement, substandard infrastructure, minimal access to amenities, and widespread neighborhood inequality and residential segregation. In a city recognized among the most ethnically and racially diverse cities in the United States, Houston neighborhoods are among the most ethnically and racially segregated in the United States. Houston's diversity is unique. But it only exists in the aggregate at the metropolitan area and does not translate down to the neighborhood level. To affirmatively address these long-standing issues, the City of Houston leaders should seriously consider the following.



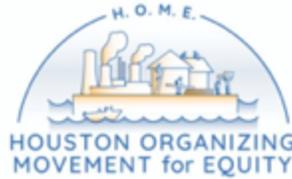
The concept of addressing affordable housing shortfalls simultaneously while furthering commitments to fair housing is nothing new to the City of Houston. The City committed to four basic rights of fair housing in their 2015 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing and renewed its commitments in the Draft [2020 Analysis of Impediments To Fair Housing](#).

The Right to Choose: All Houstonians have a right to live in a decent home in a neighborhood of their choice, free from discrimination.

The Right to Stay: Transitioning neighborhoods in Houston should be revitalized for the benefit also of existing residents without replacement.

The Right to Equal Treatment: Houston will work to end discrimination and disinvestment in low-income, minority concentrated neighborhoods and ensure that infrastructure, public services and facilities, and other public resources are provided equitably to all neighborhoods

The Right to Have a Say: All citizens have a right to be informed about, and have an input in, decisions that affect their communities.



By adopting and implementing coordinated and effective policies that uphold these basic rights, housing cost burden of low - moderate income households will decrease. Furthermore, quality neighborhoods will be stabilized, and housing choices throughout Houston will be expanded, specifically for low-income households. Policy considerations should include, but not be limited to:

- Ensuring all housing development receiving assistance (funding, abatements, etc.) from the City, the Houston Housing Authority, and the Houston Housing Finance Corporation include housing affordable to all income levels. Enforce a long-term affordability period of at least 40 years and require a nondiscrimination policy against voucher holders.
- Ensure the elimination of dangerous buildings, maintain decent housing quality (single-family & multifamily), and implement a vigorous code enforcement program.
- Increase subsidized housing units and housing choice vouchers in areas less than 20% poverty within 1/2 mile of a transit stop.
- Undertake efforts to preserve unsubsidized affordable housing.
- Establish clear and accessible pathways for renters to enter homeownership
- Ensure that hazardous industrial and other uses are not placed in communities of color, and create a plan to mitigate the impact of environmental injustice on affected districts, including voluntary relocation.
- Infrastructure and public services investment is prioritized to neighborhoods that have historically been disinvested and have substandard infrastructure and services.