



Housing Research & Advocacy Center Releases Housing Voucher Mobility Report in Cuyahoga County

Housing mobility for participants in the housing voucher programs in Cuyahoga County is low as voucher participants are being excluded from high opportunity areas. Housing Research & Advocacy Center's (The Housing Center) newest report, "Housing Voucher Mobility in Cuyahoga County," examines the ability of voucher participants to choose where they live and those obstacles that prevent participants from accessing housing in greater opportunity areas. Within Cuyahoga County, households using vouchers are clustered in racially segregated areas, with high poverty, high crime, low educational opportunities, and high exposure to environmental hazards.

When surveyed, the majority of voucher participants stated their desire for housing in neighborhoods of low crime and high quality schools. The most significant challenges to finding affordable housing cited by participants include: landlords who do not accept the voucher (79.3%), finding housing in their price range (58.3%), security deposit (53%), and moving costs (44.4%). Households using vouchers are priced out of much of the rental housing in Cuyahoga County. Fair Market Rent, the determinant of voucher buying power, is not enough for

the average rental unit in high opportunity neighborhoods. The voucher does not cover the security deposit or any costs associated with the move; therefore, voucher holders must come up with the security deposit and cover moving costs on their own.

While the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program could provide an opportunity to expand housing for voucher participants by financing low income housing in high opportunity areas, LIHTC properties in Cuyahoga County currently do not expand housing choice, and the majority are in areas of concentrations of racialized poverty. Housing providers are key actors in the success of the voucher program and the mobility of participants. However, of those landlords surveyed who participate in the voucher program, more than half report dissatisfaction with the program, citing issues with housing inspections, low rents, and administrative inefficiencies at PHAs.

The Housing Center recommends maintaining the usable value of the voucher based on Small Area Fair Market Rent;

implementing a funding program for moving cost and security deposit assistance program for current housing voucher participants; streamlining administrative processes and providing technical assistance to landlords; marketing the voucher program to landlords in higher opportunity areas; strengthening PHA support for voucher holders through mobility counseling, search assistance, up-to-date registries, and extended search times; construction of LIHTC units in low-poverty neighborhoods; and supporting source of income protection in municipalities.

This report was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The full report can be found on The Housing Center's website, www.thehousingcenter.org under research and reports.



Love is Not Protected in Fair Housing

“Love is love” was the refrain we heard last year as gay marriage became legal in the United States. Unfortunately, love is not protected in fair housing.

LGBTQ Renters in Cuyahoga County Face Persistent Discrimination

In the majority of states in the U.S., sexual orientation and gender identity are not protected classes, meaning housing providers can discriminate against individuals who are anything other than cisgender and heterosexual. A recent study published by Housing Research & Advocacy Center analyzed the prevalence of housing discrimination on the bases of sexual orientation and gender identity in Cuyahoga County. It was no surprise that discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender identity was found in more than 34% of all rental audits conducted during this study. People of color also experienced higher rates of such discrimination. The differential treatment manifested as landlords providing less information and/or inferior service to LGBTQ home seekers. The result is unequal housing opportunity.

If, as an LGBTQ person, I repeatedly get fewer calls back, delayed responses to my housing inquiry, or am only shown the crappy units, or am told “I don’t

rent to lesbians,” I have been denied access to housing. My choices have been limited, and my dignity has been harmed. I have missed an opportunity to live in my neighborhood and home of choice. My search is prolonged, likely costing me more money and additional stress. I may have to settle for something less than ideal, because of whom I choose to love. How I identify in terms of gender is affecting where I get to live. Discrimination places people at a severe disadvantage in something as basic and fundamental as housing. This is not fair.

Local Ordinances Don’t Provide Enough Protection

Fair housing laws were enacted to undo the harmful effects of segregation and to promote residential integration. The federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 protected people on the bases of race, color, national origin, and religion, and later added through amendments sex, familial status and disability. Currently, 22 states protect residents from sexual orientation discrimination. Only 19 include protections on the basis of gender identity. Ohio is not among them.

In Cuyahoga County, 15 municipalities ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and 11 prohibit gender identity discrimination. However, in

The Housing Center study, discrimination was just as prevalent in protected cities as non-protected cities. Without inclusive protections and greater enforcement, we are denying people their civil right to fair housing and failing to live up to the fair housing mandate.

So That All Is Fair In Love And Housing

In 2016, we should be eliminating barriers to housing and increasing opportunities for everyone.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued guidance in 2012 that prohibits discrimination in HUD-funded housing on the bases of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as marital status. This extends to private landlords who purchase rental property through an FHA-backed loan. Recently, HUD has begun to investigate sexual orientation and gender identity complaints as sex-based discrimination, in that people are being discriminated against due to non-conformity to sex-role stereotypes.

This new interpretation of the law is a step in the right direction. However, a more important step would be to amend the Fair Housing Act to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity protections, so that all is fair in love and housing.

THE 11TH ANNUAL FAIR HOUSING RECEPTION

ADVOCATE!
COLLABORATE!
CELEBRATE!

Thursday, April 28, 2016
5:30-7:30 p.m.
The Gallery at Trinity
Commons
2230 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115
Tickets: \$30 each

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Mission:

We promote fair housing and diverse communities, and work to eliminate housing discrimination in Northeast Ohio by providing effective research, education, and advocacy.

Values:

Equality, Respect, Honesty, Attention,
Acceptance, Commitment, Dedication,
Knowledge, and Understanding

Housing Center Names New Executive Director

The Housing Center board and staff are excited to announce the appointment of Carrie Pleasants to Executive Director. Ms. Pleasants served as Associate Director of The Housing Center for eight years prior to the recent appointment. “Carrie has long had the respect of the Board in her prior service to The Housing Center. We look forward to her leadership at the helm of this great and vital organization,” stated CARLETON MOORE!, President of The Housing Center’s Board of Directors.

“I am honored to serve as The Housing Center’s Executive Director and look forward to continuing and expanding the impact of the work we do,” stated Ms. Pleasants “I am grateful for the engaged Board of Directors, incredible staff, and important community partnerships I will rely upon in the years to come.”

Carrie demonstrated her passion for fair housing as a graduate student when her Master’s Thesis examined, *The Role of Community Organizations and Local Government in the Promotion and Maintenance of Stable Racial Integration in Greater Cleveland*. Upon graduation, she began her career with The Housing Center as a Community-Based Planner. In that position, she conducted housing research for several reports and mapping analysis. She was later promoted to Director of Research & Investigations, where her responsibilities evolved into designing methodology to detect systemic housing discrimination, investigating fair housing complaints and conducting research and mapping for other community organizations and Housing Center reports.

In 2008, Ms. Pleasants was again promoted, to Associate Director. This new role allowed her to oversee the entire testing and investigations program, as well as supervise the enforcement, research and education departments. She further analyzed and mapped data pertaining to community reinvestment issues and presented findings to local municipalities.

Carrie has been instrumental in The Housing Center securing excellent ratings in all of its U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Fair Housing Initiatives Program Grant assessments, and expanding education and outreach to a broader audience in Northeast Ohio.

Ms. Pleasants is a Northeast Ohio native and a graduate of Kent State University, where she earned both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Geography. She has more than 15 years of experience in nonprofit fair housing work. Her breadth of experience in a variety of community-based concerns includes social justice, housing discrimination patterns, and homelessness prevention. Carrie has served as the Interim Director since July 2015.





The Housing Center
Housing Research & Advocacy Center

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UPCOMING FAIR HOUSING EVENT

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CELEBRATE!

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The Gallery at Trinity Commons
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Cleveland, OH 44115

Tickets: \$30 each

Honoring our partner:
The Cleveland Tenants Organization

Purchase tickets on our website using PayPal at
www.thehousingcenter.org

Housing 101
Friday, April 8, 2016
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless
3631 Perkins Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44114
To register, contact Brian Davis, 216-432-0540
or briandavis@neoch.org
4 CEUs for Social Service Professionals

Fair Housing & Landlord Tenant Law
Wednesday, April 13, 2016
6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Parma City Hall
City Council Chambers
6611 Ridge Rd.
Parma, OH 44129
To register, contact Doris Honsa, 216-361-9240
or dhonsa@thehousingcenter.org
1.5 FREE CEUs for Real Estate Professionals