



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

RON NIRENBERG
MAYOR

March 25, 2021

Dear Housing Commissioners,

In September of 2018, the City Council accepted the Mayor's Housing Policy Task Force Final Report, also known as the Housing Policy Framework (HPF). As one of the recommendations of the HPF, the Housing Commission was reconstituted to provide public oversight, guide the implementation of the HPF and to engage the public. As you know, the HPF identified 5 action items supported by 11 policy priorities and 24 implementation strategies. The actions items in the HPF include the following:

- Develop a coordinated housing system.
- Increase the City's investment in housing.
- Increase affordable housing production, rehabilitation, and preservation.
- Protect and promote neighborhoods.
- Ensure accountability to the public.

I am pleased that the Commission has continued to work on aligning the City's housing policies and programs with the actions detailed in the HPF. Despite the 2020 global pandemic disrupting the many goals identified by the Commission's January 2020 retreat, the Commission nevertheless continued its charge to guide the implementation of the HPF. In 2020 alone, the Commission developed a survey and evaluation of the Emergency Housing Assistance Program, informed the definition of affordability in San Antonio, cultivated a partnership with the San Antonio Housing Trust, oversaw anti-displacement strategies in the form of the ForEveryoneHome initiative, contributed to the Strategic Housing Implementation Plan, and created an outreach working group to better engage the public.

As the Commission prepares for its upcoming retreat, please consider the following as you discuss the upcoming year:

Setting collective priorities

The Housing Policy Framework is an ambitious charge and each of its priorities require due diligence. I would like to ask you to agree on clear priorities that will govern and sequence your meetings and serve as touchpoints for accountability during 2021. It is my hope that with a sharp focus, which you collectively establish and adopt, commissioners will be best positioned to collaboratively steer the HPF's progress.

Engaging and informing the community

I ask that you discuss and agree on how the commission's structure can be adapted to ensure meaningful and equitable community engagement. I recommend that the emerging plan considers how the commission will appropriately engage all residents and stakeholders that the Housing Policy Framework includes. Lastly, I ask that you identify a strategy e.g. a dashboard, that the city can use to keep the community informed of the HPF's progress.

Long-term Emergency Housing Assistance Program (RMF)

The HPF called for the creation of a Risk Mitigation Fund to prevent and mitigate displacement. In 2018, a \$1M Risk Mitigation Fund was created and an official Risk Mitigation Policy (RMP) was approved by City Council in March 2019. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Emergency Housing Assistance Program, informed by the RMP, was formed and was funded by combining city and federal funds with the remaining RMF dollars. As part of the ongoing HPF implementation, I ask that the full commission and city staff, review the RMF/P and EHAP in order to shape and establish a post-pandemic, housing assistance program, that lives up to the HPF's recommendation and our community's need.

Developing a framework to inform the 2022 Bond

The upcoming 2022 Bond provides an opportunity for our City to identify projects that can address and reduce the many longstanding inequities in our community. To ensure that the projects selected for the 2022 Bond address the systemic injustices in our community, we need to ask three questions: Are we advancing our goals for connecting people? Are we advancing our goals for improving public health outcomes? And are we moving forward on making our systems more resilient? Connectivity, public infrastructure, and resiliency need to be the guiding pillars that inform the types of projects that get selected for inclusion in the bond program. Keeping these guiding pillars in mind, I invite commissioners to develop an evaluation framework to help inform the selection of projects for the neighborhood/housing proposition slated to be included in the 2022 Bond.

Establishing and appropriately structuring Subcommittees

I understand that two standing subcommittees operate under the Commission. I ask that the commission develops expectations for current and any future subcommittees. I recommend that each subcommittee establishes a charge that includes clear guidelines on membership, goals, deliverables, and that each subcommittee include a serving commissioner as chair, specify how they will work with city staff, engage the community, if necessary, and how it will communicate progress to the full commission.

Time Boundaries

The Commission should consider setting and adhering to time boundaries for future housing commission meetings to respect the time that individual commissioners, City staff, and the public dedicate to the Commission.

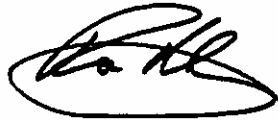
Adopting and committing to aligned HC values

There has been a lot of change this past year, and the pandemic forced many of us to change priorities and strategies. The HC was not an exception and I'm grateful to you for persevering. This work requires deep commitment and with that comes frustrations and disagreements. As you retreat, my last request is for the HC to discuss and agree on the collective values that will guide your teamwork through this next year.

The ambitious scope of the HPF means that we still have a long way to go toward creating a sustainable, affordable housing system in San Antonio. Thank you for considering the priorities detailed in this letter as you shape your work in the upcoming year. Thank you again for your commitment to the HPF, especially during a very challenging year.

Please reach out to my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Nirenberg", written over a horizontal line.

Ron Nirenberg
MAYOR

