

# City of Harvey Fair Housing Action Plan

## WHAT IS FAIR HOUSING?

Fair housing is having the choice to live where you want to live and where you can afford to live without the fear or threat of discrimination. Discrimination, in this sense, is any housing practice or action that is unlawful under Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended. The City of Harvey plan protects people from discrimination in housing when it is “based upon a person’s race, color, sex, age, religion, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, and military discharge status, source of income, gender identity or housing status.”

In 1985 the City of Harvey adopted a Housing Discrimination Ordinance to ensure the provision of fair housing throughout the City, and to ensure that all persons have full and equal opportunity to consider all available housing and obtain fair and adequate housing for themselves and their families within the City without discrimination.

The City of Harvey remains committed to the policy of affirmatively furthering fair housing within its boundaries. The City’s commitment is focused on the goal of reducing and eliminating obstacles to fair housing choice within Harvey. To ensure the achievement of this goal, the City will undertake the following activities through its Fair Housing Action Plan (FHAP):

- Promote fair housing choice for all persons;
- Reduce and eliminate housing discrimination in the City;
- Educate and raise awareness among the public, public officials, advocate groups, and housing providers through hosting educational and outreach seminars and workshops for current and prospective residents;
- Provide residents and realtors with written information about property maintenance codes and standard procedures for inspections;
- Offer residents a first time homebuyers program for City owned property;
- Partner with community organizations that can offer homeownership counseling, first time homebuyers programs and other resources;
- Create brochures and other written information in English and Spanish;
- Promote housing that is structurally accessible to and usable by all persons, particularly person with disabilities, and
- Conduct periodic review, evaluation, and revision of the Plan

As a recipient of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, Harvey is required to affirmatively further fair housing by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In spite of the City’s best intentions, past efforts at fair housing planning have fallen short of expectations. The City is committed to finding willing and contributing partners to implement tasks and to achieve desired outcomes.

The City of Harvey recognizes that it does not have all of the answers nor does it possess all the human and other resources needed to effectively implement the tasks of affirmatively furthering fair housing. To be fully effective, such an effort requires a cooperative, community-based effort comprised of committed and involved private, public, and nonprofit industry, provider, and advocate agencies and organizations dedicated to affirmatively furthering fair housing. The City of Harvey proposes this revised 2009 Fair Housing Action Plan as a new beginning for addressing its fair housing responsibilities and changing needs.

The City's Planning and Zoning Board is comprised of twelve (12) members who make recommendations on various issues related to special use, zoning, housing and business relations, new home construction, and business development for future community growth. In January 2006, the Mayor and Harvey City Council approved the adoption of a Housing Commission to address issues related to housing.

There are a number of neighborhood watch groups that monitor real estate activities and discuss common housing concerns. Issues that arise are presented to the City's Planning Department for recommendation and actions as necessary.

The City is active in the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, which is a collaboration of municipalities who study the needs of the region, including fair housing, and make regional policy recommendations to address those needs.

The City of Harvey developed a handout that describes the procedures to be used by rental property owners to ensure equal access and to inform citizens of general code requirements of apartments or homes for rent. Pertinent information will be included in the City's Harvey Pride quarterly publication, which is distributed to all residents and businesses in Harvey.

As an annual practice, the City of Harvey will continue to offer homebuyer's seminars, seminars on preventing foreclosure, landlord/tenant workshops, home maintenance workshops and other informational workshops to residents. The City of Harvey will continue to partner with CEDA, local banks and housing agencies to offer many of the above workshops.

Harvey has a Landlord/Tenant Ordinance that outlines the rights and responsibilities of renters. The City's inspectional services work diligently to ensure that no Harvey resident is living in substandard conditions and that landlords comply with ICC codes pertaining to property maintenance. Even in this difficult housing market, Harvey continues to see building permits issued, which directly correlates with developers and investors, new owners and existing homeowners working to correct violations and create better housing for the residents of Harvey.

#### **DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

Any person who feels that he or she has been discriminated against in an attempt to secure housing within the City of Harvey may file a complaint with the Department of Planning and Development located at 15320 Broadway, Harvey, IL 60426. Office hours are Monday-Friday 9:00-5:00. The office phone number is (708) 210.5350.

**Complaints shall be filed no later than sixty (60) days after the act of discrimination occurred.**

To facilitate and standardize the complaint filing procedure, forms provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) may be used. Additional forms or background information will be developed as required.

The Director of the Planning Department shall review the complaint and if unable to effect voluntary compliance with the law on the local level, the complainant shall be referred to the Cook County Human Rights Commission or a fair housing organization for investigation. The Planning Director shall be responsible for keeping track of all referrals, including progress and status reports, and providing whatever assistance is needed by the agencies involved.