

SECTION 2

AIFHC CITIZEN PARTICIPATION.

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INTRODUCTION.

Discussed in this **Section** of the **Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AIFHC)**, for Grand Island, Nebraska, is the comprehensive **Citizen Participation** process. This was accomplished through a Community Housing Survey and Community Housing Listening Sessions that focused on issues regarding access to fair housing in Grand Island, in addition to interviews conducted with “Key Players” in the Community involved with the housing delivery systems.

Housing planning activities for any Community is accurate and most effective when it includes opinions from as many local citizens as possible. The goal of this planning activity was to include the participation of the Grand Island Community, with special invite to the citizens of Grand Island currently involved with local affordable housing programs, as well as groups and organizations directly involved with the provision of affordable housing.

Notes and comments from interviews with the Grand Island Community Development Department and Hall County Regional Planning Department, as well as results from the Community Housing Survey and Community Housing Listening Sessions, implemented for the **Grand Island Community Housing Study with Strategies for Affordable Housing**, are highlighted in this Section. Complete results from the **Survey** are available in the **Appendix 1** of this **AIFHC Study**.

INTERVIEWS.

To better understand the fair housing situation in Grand Island, an interview with the City's Community Development Department staff and representatives of the Hall County Regional Planning Commission were conducted. The goal of these interviews was to analyze and document what the City of Grand Island has recently accomplished as it relates to the **provision of affordable and fair housing** for both current and prospective residents. The following text summarizes the discussion from these interviews.

- In recent years, very few fair housing complaints have been reported or documented in Grand Island, but measures have been taken to encourage the development of new housing projects that support low- to moderate income persons and families.
- The City of Grand Island has revised its “Group Home” and “Family” definitions within its Zoning Regulations. The revised definitions, include the following:

***“Family** shall mean a household head and one or more persons related to the head by blood, marriage, adoption, guardianship or duly authorized custodial relationship living together in a single dwelling, or no more than five (5) unrelated persons living together in a single dwelling.*

***Group Home** shall include both Group Care Home and Group Home for the Disabled. Group homes shall be classified by size as follows:*

Group Home (Small) shall mean a home designed to accommodate no more than 5 persons and shall be allowed in all zoning districts that permit dwelling units in the same manner as other dwelling units. These homes shall be built to no less than an R3 residential standard as defined by the International Building Code.

Group Home (Medium) shall mean a facility designed to house between 6 and 16 persons and shall require a conditional use permit in the LLR, R1, R2, R3 and R4 Districts and permitted in the RO, B1, B2, B3 and M3 zoning districts. These facilities shall be built to no less than an R4 residential standard as defined by the International Building Code.

Group Home (Large) shall mean a facility designed to house more than 16 persons and shall be permitted in the RO, B1, B2, B3, and M3 zoning districts. These facilities shall be built to an Institutional standard as defined by the International Building Code.”

- The City has created a new “Medium Density Small Lot” District, identified as an “R3-SL” District, to encourage low- to moderate income, medium density housing development. This new Zoning District allows for 3,000 square foot lots with a 35 foot minimum frontage setback and a “*maximum density of 14 to 15 dwelling units per acre with supporting community amenities.*”

Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice – Grand Island, Nebraska

- Habitat for Humanity has actively used this new zoning designation for the development of housing in Grand Island. Additionally, the development of a townhouse and row house project located in the Orchard Subdivision is utilizing this new Zoning designation.
- A total of 20 new townhomes and duplexes have been built by the Grand Island Housing Authority along Shady Bend Road.
- Street standards have been revised in the Community. A 32 foot standard width, decreased from 37 feet, has been adopted and implemented in new housing development projects in Grand Island.
- Future discussion is expected to take place regarding the City's position on accessory dwelling units.
- Residential zoning in Grand Island is density-based and no zoning solely for single family housing exists. The following highlights densities among each of Grand Island's residential zoning districts:
 - R-1 Suburban Residential District: one residential structure per 9,000 square foot lot.
 - R-2 Low Density Residential District: one residential structure per 6,000 square foot lot.
 - R-3 Medium Density Residential District: one residential structure per 3,000 square foot lot.
 - R-4 High Density Residential District: one residential structure per 1,000 square foot lot.

COMMUNITY HOUSING SURVEY.

The Grand Island “**Community Housing Survey**” was made available online to households in both English and Spanish. **Survey** participants were asked to give information regarding their current living situation, condition of their dwelling unit, monthly rent or payment and any impediments and/or barriers to fair and affordable housing. A total of **760 Surveys** were completed. The following summarizes the results of the **Survey**. The complete results of the **Community Housing Survey** are available in **Appendix I**.

- A total of 498 participants were females, while 229 were males. Most ranged in age from 24 to 44 years (363 participants) or 45 to 59 years (246 participants). A majority of the participants identified themselves as “Married” and “Caucasian/not Hispanic”.
- 329 participants (43.3 percent) identified owning a home with a mortgage.
- 233 participants (30.6 percent) identified needing a home with, at least, three bedrooms in Grand Island.
- A total of 291 Survey participants (38.2 percent) rated the condition of their current residence as “good.” An additional 195 participants (25.6 percent) rated their place of residence as needing moderate to major rehabilitation. The most common identified dwelling repairs included exterior, floors/ceiling and windows.
- 141 participants (18.5 percent) identified making a monthly house payment between \$400 and \$699. An additional 114 participants (15 percent) make a house payment between \$700 and \$899.
- The top three answers to the question of why Survey participants would want to move out of Grand Island include a need for more affordable housing (107 participants), needing larger housing (99 participants) and needing to “downsize,” or move to a smaller living unit (58 participants).
- 495 (65.1 percent) participants feel there is a need for additional low-income housing in Grand Island, including a need for single family housing, both for rent and for ownership, and duplex housing units for seniors.
- Participants were asked about their **top three barriers** to obtaining affordable, suitable and appropriate housing in Grand Island. The top responses for renters included the cost of rent and a lack of available decent rental units in the Community. For owners, issues/barriers included housing prices, lack of sufficient homes for sale in both size and in price, and the cost of real estate taxes.

COMMUNITY HOUSING LISTENING SESSIONS.

The comprehensive Citizen Participation program included **Community Housing “Listening Sessions”** with local organizations, elected leadership and general citizenry. A series of Listening Sessions were conducted in March, 2019, with representation from local continuum of care and vulnerable population supporters, realtors and landlords, contractors, developers, major employers, government and local elected leadership. The following highlights “consensus statements,” received from attendees of the Listening Sessions.

- Larger housing units are needed in Grand Island.
- Housing in Grand Island is overpriced.
- Need for three-bedroom ranch homes. Versatile for all age sectors.
- Concept of “affordable housing” does not exist in Grand Island. \$800 to \$1,000 is considered affordable.
- Lots of deferred maintenance in low income housing.
- Housing need for single parents with children
- Families are struggling with making house payments while working minimum paying jobs.
- Current housing construction is geared toward very specific price points and not taking advantage of new, innovative housing types.
- Affordable lots are scarce.
- Housing rehabilitation and purchase-rehab-resale is greatly needed.
- Investors are looking to sell properties.
- Vacancy rates are low in affordable rental housing programs and moderate to high in market rate rental housing programs.
- Waiting lists for rental housing are always high.

Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice – Grand Island, Nebraska

- Partitioned “conversion” housing could be an innovative housing development type, suitable for nonconforming lot development and have the ability to be a versatile housing unit concept.
- Housing awareness; include a partnership between city leadership and local/regional contractors.
- “Sweet spot” for development, generally including housing priced for persons and families of moderate income, is also the toughest to fund and finance.
- Revisions to existing zoning regulations have been made to advance the development of affordable housing. This includes the creation of the “R-3SL” zoning district which features a 3,000 minimum lot size requirement