

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROCESS

As a joint planning process, the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) worked, on behalf of the the Washtenaw Urban County and the City of Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC), to help coordinate and execute the community participation elements of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Plan.

Staff developed a general timeline and requested that the Urban County and Ann Arbor Housing Commission designate and populate the AFFH subcommittee. Next, staff utilized the HUD AFFH dataset to provide context for the subcommittee as well as subject areas to focus on and potential neighborhoods to explore further. The subcommittee then guided staff to look into additional data for particular areas (see Neighborhood Profiles in the Demographics Chapter) and seek local knowledge through stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and a neighborhood and housing survey.

Outreach Strategy

Approved by the AFFH Subcommittee and reviewed by the Urban County Executive Committee, staff strategized ways to reach out to both target populations and target neighborhoods in efforts to reach a broad range of audiences through stakeholder interviews, focus groups and surveys. Survey outreach was the most frequent strategy. By population, staff reached out to and partnered with various organizations and local stakeholders serving residents' target groups including older adults, people with disabilities, low-income families, people of color and the Latino community broadly. Additional outreach was done geographically. While the survey was open to all Washtenaw County residents, outreach was specifically targeted in the following neighborhoods:

- City of Ann Arbor: Bryant neighborhood
- City of Ypsilanti: Southside, Leforge, Eastside, Ecorse
- Ypsilanti Township: Gault Village, Sugarbrook, West Willow, Clark Road/Holmes Neighborhood, Ecorse
- Northfield Township: Whitmore Lake
- Superior Township: MacArthur, Clark Road

Plugging into the Network

Pursuing this outreach strategy, staff collaborated with the following partners in distributing surveys and hosting focus groups:

- **Housing Agencies:** Ann Arbor Housing Commission, Avalon Housing, Fair Housing Center of Southeast and Mid Michigan, Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley, Housing Access of Washtenaw County, Ozone House, Washtenaw Housing Alliance, Ypsilanti Housing Commission

- **OCED Programs:** Barrier Busters network agencies, Community Action Board (CAB), Community Housing Prioritization (CHP), Continuum of Care (CoC), Foster Grandparent Program, Housing Rehabilitation Program, Senior Nutrition Program, Urban County Executive Committee
- **Community Centers/Networks:** Bryant Community Center, Gault Village Neighborhood Watch Association, Peace Neighborhood Center, Parkridge Community Center, Sugarbrook Neighborhood Watch Association, and the New West Willow Neighborhood Association
- **Youth/Schools:** Mentor2Youth, Washtenaw Community College, Washtenaw Intermediate School District, Ypsilanti Community Schools
- **Persons with Disability:** Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living (CIL), Michigan Ability Partners
- **Older Adults:** Dexter Senior Community Center, University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) Housing Bureau for Seniors, Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels
- **Miscellaneous:** Financial Literacy Program at United Way of Washtenaw County, Offender Success Program at Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County, Washtenaw County Public Health, Ypsilanti District Library Michigan Branch
- **Local Units of Government:** Urban County members were encouraged to share through their email lists, social media and newsletters.

Communications

Early on, OCED staff posted a news item on the Washtenaw County (www.ewashtenaw.org) and the Office of Community and Economic Development (www.ewashtenaw.org/oced) websites about the AFFH efforts:

Process underway to develop Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Plan

The HUD mandated process challenges communities to understand historic racial and economic segregation and find ways to combat it in the future.

Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development, on behalf of the Washtenaw Urban County, is in the midst of work to develop a local plan to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing.

This exciting effort will push our community to look at historic patterns of segregation and poverty, and further challenge us to work collaboratively to undo some of the policies that have created economic and racial segregation, while focusing on strategies to support residents and work on improving housing and neighborhoods overall. [Click here for a short explanation of the project.](#)

The effort is using census and local data as well as local voices in the form of surveys and focus groups, to source both challenges and strategies to improve the lives of county residents. There are

several ways residents can engage including a survey in English and Spanish. Additionally, the county is looking to host focus groups and community dialogues in target geographies.

This summer the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing web page will be the place to check in on progress: www.ewashtenaw.org/affh. Data will be posted as available, meeting notifications and focus area profiles will be posted as they are completed throughout the month of July. Draft plans will start appearing in August, with weekly updates. Please check back frequently.

For more information or to help us host a focus group in your community, contact Sam Olson at olson@ewashtenaw.org or (734) 544 - 6714.

As previously mentioned, staff worked with existing programs and networks to spread the word of their AFFH progress by posting on social media, asking partners to post on their social media platforms and to include in newsletters, and updating the County's central AFFH webpage: www.ewashtenaw.org/affh. When reaching out to community partners and agencies, staff provided packets containing a one-page summary of AFFH, survey instructions, and 10 hard copies of the Washtenaw County Neighborhood and Housing Survey (see Appendix A).

To promote the survey, staff provided and encouraged partners to utilize social media, websites, and newsletters, using the following blurbs provided by OCED:

Housing and neighborhood stability are central to a successful community. Tell us about your experiences with housing in your neighborhood. Follow our [link to the Washtenaw County Housing and Neighborhood Survey](#). All who complete the survey will have a chance at a \$10 Kroger gift card.

The survey is part of Washtenaw County's work on a plan to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing. To find out more, check out our webpage at www.ewashtenaw.org/affh. If you'd like to engage more, we'd love your help setting up a focus group to talk to residents in your neighborhood. Contact Sam Olson at olson@ewashtenaw.org or (734) 544-6714.

La vivienda y la estabilidad de un vecindario son fundamentales para una comunidad exitosa. Cuéntenos sus experiencias con la vivienda en su vecindario. Siga nuestro enlace para la [Encuesta de Vivienda y Vecindario del Condado de Washtenaw](#). Todos los que completen la encuesta serán inscritos en un sorteo para ganar tarjetas de regalo de \$10 de Kroger.

Esta encuesta forma parte del trabajo del Condado de Washtenaw para realizar un plan que afirmativamente procure más vivienda justa (AFFH). Para obtener más información, visite nuestra página web: www.ewashtenaw.org/affh. Si desea participar más, apreciaríamos su ayuda creando un grupo de enfoque para hablar

con los residentes de su vecindario. Póngase en contacto con Sam Olson, escriba a allinteractioolsons@ewashtenaw.org o llame al (734) 544 - 6714.

For focus groups, staff designed flyers for each meeting and advertised them on the AFFH website. Facebook Events were also created in most cases as staff relied on community partners to refer best strategies to outreach to residents. For samples of the outreach materials, see Appendix B.

All meetings, with the exception of the Offender Success Program, were posted on the AFFH website (www.ewashtenaw.org/affh). The following table lists additional methods in which staff and community partners advertised focus groups:

TABLE 1_OUTREACH FOR FOCUS GROUPS

	Date	Methods
Bryant	July 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postcard mailings • Hard copies posted at Bryant Community Center
Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living (CIL)	August 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partner shared event internally with staff and program participants • Hard copies posted at CIL
Parkridge	August 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff created and shared Facebook Event • Hard copies posted at Parkridge Community Center
Ypsilanti Renters	August 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff created and shared Facebook Event with target group
West Willow	August 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posted hard copies at Community Resource Center • Community Resource Center staff posted on Facebook and Nextdoor.com
Offender Success Program	August 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program staff recruited program participants
Whitmore Lake (<i>cancelled</i>)	August 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partner shared flyer with local organizations • Township Supervisor posted hard copies in Town Hall

Meals were provided at focus groups to value past residents' time and encourage participation. The exception was the Ypsilanti renters, which was added later in the process. Neighborhood liaisons also received a stipend for their time recruiting and facilitating focus groups (Southside and West Willow).

Assessment of Community Participation Process

There was an overwhelming level of response and support through existing and peripheral networks with survey distribution and focus group coordination. Staff initially planned to conduct

two or three focus groups and use more energy towards distributing surveys. However, after receiving more than anticipated support by sub-committee members and community partners, staff refocused their energy to prepare for nine (9) focus groups.

Outreach in Leforge: The Leforge area is almost exclusively multi-family housing. It lacks a neighborhood association or organized tenant group. There are also no social service agencies, churches, businesses, or other assets in place to help coordinate a focus group. All point to a need for organizing and outreach to better serve the residents in the Leforge area.

Outreach to the Latino Population: Several county departments including OCED, have developed relationships with Latino community partners. While timing is always a concern, it was especially challenging to outreach to the local Hispanic and Latino populations as political tensions rose in Washtenaw County (and country). With the current political stance on immigration at the national level and ICE raids conducted locally, the climate was not a great for local leaders to focus energy on a housing survey when there were more immediate concerns about deportation, and lack of comfort with government agencies in general. This document lacks the perspective of the Latino community and that there is a real need to hear from Latino residents about their housing experiences. This will be a focus for future engagement as well.

Outreach in Whitmore Lake: The focus group in Whitmore Lake ultimately was cancelled due to a lack of RSVP's from residents. More time was needed for the meeting. Whitmore Lake area will be a future focus for outreach and engagement.

Focus Groups for Residents Only: There were a few ways in which staff promoted focus groups, including posting on the AFFH webpage, creating Facebook page events, and working with local leaders to hand out fliers and personally invite residents. Staff followed the lead of each community liaison in determining the most appropriate style for inviting participants. One lesson learned related to focus groups is that with broad promotion, people from surrounding areas (or with a vested interest in a particular neighborhood) chose to attend the meetings intended for residents only. As a result, in two occasions, two focus groups were conducted at the same time, with one focused on residents and facilitated by the community liaison and the second for non-residents with a staff facilitator. The resident-only focus groups were important to create an environment conducive for residents to provide honest reflections in the company of neighbors rather than staff or elected officials, for example.

Opportunity Knocks: While there are many existing partnerships in the community, staff was able to identify potential partnerships for further development, including organizations and local stakeholders serving resident target groups, such as low-income families, people of color, the Latino community broadly, foreign-born residents, and residents with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Summary of Focus Groups

A total of nine (9) focus groups were conducted with a total of 68 participants. Of the 68 participants, just over half (53%) were homeowners, 40% were renters, and the remaining 7% were in temporary housing provided by the Offender Success Program, which assists people coming out of prison with re-entry to the community.

A breakdown of the focus group participants by target neighborhood and target population is shown below (Table 2). It should be noted that four (4) of the West Willow and five (5) of the Parkridge focus group participants were not residents of those specific neighborhoods. To the extent possible, these individuals were moved to a “non-resident” focus group so that residents could speak amongst themselves in their own focus group.

TABLE 2_BREAKDOWN OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Target Neighborhood/ Population	Number of Participants	Number of Owners	Number of Renters	Program Participants
Bryant	15	10	5	-
West Willow	16	16	0	-
Ypsilanti Renters	9	0	9	-
Parkridge	17	9	8	-
CIL	6	1	5	-
Offender Success	5	0	0	5
Total	68	36	27	5

How Residents Learn About Resources in Their Neighborhoods

(i.e. childcare, jobs, bus routes, events, etc.)

Most groups noted that they learn about resources through word of mouth, news (online, print, and/or TV news), community newsletters, and online/social media (i.e. Facebook, Nextdoor, Instagram, email, blogs). Four of the nine groups mentioned public radio as a source of information they rely on, and in a few cases residents mentioned that they learn useful information from bulletin boards in local establishments such as public libraries or grocery stores or from marquees at the local public school. In four of the nine groups, some residents also rely on a local non-profit to keep informed.

Renting vs. Owning and Perspectives on Affordability

- The majority of homeowners felt that their home was affordable (including mortgage, property taxes, home insurance).
- Nearly a quarter of the homeowners (8 out of 36 people) noted having already paid off their mortgage. This subset was among the owners who felt their housing was affordable.
- Approximately 55% (20 out of 36) of the homeowners had owned their homes for more than 10 years, while only 22% (or 8 people) were new homeowners having owned for 5 years or less.
- Not all of the focus groups consisting of renters were asked if they feel their rental housing is affordable to them, but some observations about affordability for renters include:
 - Renters living in the Parkridge neighborhood all felt that their rent was affordable.
 - Renters with disabilities generally felt that their rent was *not* affordable, regardless of where they lived within the County.
 - In the Ypsilanti renters focus group - affordability was the #1 concern, with several participants noting annual rent increases since the end of the recession. Many were concerned about being pushed out of the Ypsilanti area due to increased rents, and most desired to continue living in the area.
 - The Ypsilanti renters group also noted, when pressed, that income is a connected issue to affordable housing with examples of nonprofit and retail/service jobs paying below a living-wage.

Biggest Expenses Beyond Housing

With the exception of the focus group with formerly incarcerated individuals, all the groups were asked the question, “After housing, what is your next biggest expense?” Response categories below (Table 3) are not mutually exclusive, as several respondents named more than one expense category.

Utilities, food and dining, transportation costs (primarily car payments and auto insurance premiums), and student debt were the most commonly cited expenses that pose the biggest burden to residents aside from housing.

TABLE 3_BIGGEST EXPENSE BEYOND HOUSING (FOCUS GROUP RESPONSE)

Biggest Expense Category (Beyond Housing)	Count
Utilities (including basic utilities, plus cable/phone/internet)	10
Food/groceries/dining	8
Auto expenses (insurance, car payments)/Transportation	7

Student debt/tuition	7
Children (i.e. child care, child support, tuition)	5
Medical (Healthcare)/Premiums/Hospital bills	4
Insurance	3
Home maintenance	3
Travel/Entertainment	2
Financial support for grown children	1
Clothing	1
Purchase of land	1
Business Expenses	1

Limitations or Challenges Faced When Looking for Housing

The phrasing of questions related to limitations or challenges experienced when last looking for housing (whether to rent or own) varied from group to group depending on the flow of the discussion; however, the responses were primarily negative across all groups. With regard to limitations, not surprisingly, the most frequently mentioned issue was lack of income to afford a place that they wanted to rent or buy. Within this theme, some noted inability to afford the down payment or deposit. In some groups, the participants were also asked if they felt they had ever been treated differently than other applicants. Factors mentioned with regard to different or discriminatory treatment and/or other limitations while looking for housing in the past included the following:

- Credit scores (mentioned in 3 groups)
- Level of Diversity (or lack of), i.e. feeling uncomfortable by being one of very few people of color in neighborhood (mentioned in 2 groups)
- Sexual Orientation/Lack of LGBTQ friendliness (mentioned in 2 groups)
- Lack of accessibility for people with disabilities (i.e. no walk in shower, no curb cuts, broken elevator, etc.)
- Family status, i.e. renting with kids
- Race
- Age
- Stigma of Section 8 vouchers

For more details about the focus groups, see Appendix D.

Summary of Survey Results

The Washtenaw County Housing and Neighborhood survey was open from July 5 through August 14, 2017. The Ann Arbor Housing Commission mailed hard copies of the survey to 600 voucher households while staff attended OCED program meetings and training sessions to present on AFFH and request assistance with distributing surveys. Additionally, staff and community partners posted the survey on Facebook, Twitter, agency websites, and newsletters. The survey was also mentioned in news outlets, including MLive on July 25 and Washtenaw NPR Public Radio on July 17 (See Appendix E).

Staff received a total of 788 survey responses. The online version of the survey, made accessible via surveymonkey.com, received 484 (61.4%) responses. Staff received 304 paper surveys (27.9%), which included 84 (10.7%) from Ann Arbor Housing Commission's voucher household population, and the remaining 220 from distribution by community partners and OCED programs.

Demographics of Survey Participants

The majority of survey participants live in zip codes 48197, 48198, and 48103, representing the City of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township, Superior Township, Pittsfield Township, City of Ann Arbor, Scio Township, and parts of Freedom Township and Augusta Township.

Below are responses to questions regarding age, gender, race, ethnicity, education attainment, employment status, disability status, etc.:

How old are you?

Under 18	1	0%
18 to 24	16	4%
25 to 34	99	22%
35 to 44	115	26%
45 to 54	74	17%
55 to 64	68	15%
65 to 74	58	13%
75 to 84	9	2%
85 and older	3	1%

What gender do you identify with?

Male	134	25%
Female	371	70%
Transgender	3	1%
Prefer not to answer	25	5%

What race do you identify with?

American Indian or Alaskan Native	51	4%
Asian	21	2%
Black or African American	239	19%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	7	1%
White	860	70%
Other	50	4%

Do you consider yourself as Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or of Spanish origin?

Yes, Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Spanish origin	32	5%
No, not Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Spanish origin	679	95%

Which of the following is your highest level of education?

Some or no high school	33	4%
High school graduate or GED	92	12%
Vocational/technical school after high school	20	3%
Some college	187	25%
College Graduate	408	55%

Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

Full time	301	41%
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Part time	82	11%
Looking for work	33	5%
Unable to work due to a disability	73	10%
Stay-at-home caregiver or parent	26	4%
Retired	193	26%
Student	11	2%
Other	10	1%

Including you, how many people 18 years of age or older live in your household?

Median	2
Minimum	0
Maximum	8

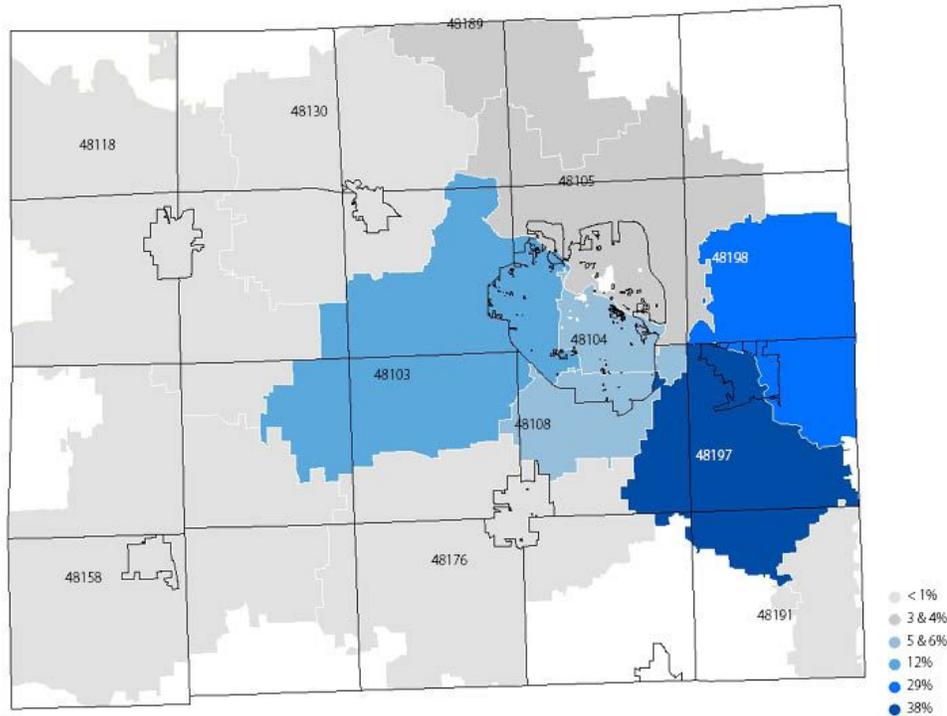
How many children under 18 years of age live in your household?

Median	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	9

Are you, or is someone in your household, living with a disability?

Yes	241	33%
No	486	67%

In what zip code do you currently live?



For more survey results, see Appendix F.

Public Hearings on Draft Assessment of Fair Housing

Staff held two public hearings: one at the Washtenaw Urban County Executive Committee meeting on Wednesday, August 2, 2017 and the other at the City of Ann Arbor Housing and Human Services Advisory Board meeting on Thursday, August 10. No comments were made at the Urban County Executive Committee.

At the Housing and Human Services Advisory Board meeting on August 10th, the following questions and comments were received:

- This (AFH Plan) is mandated from HUD, right?
Staff response: Yes, from the Obama-era HUD.
- What do you think you'll use this data for later on?
Staff response: We will use this data for neighborhood profiles and for studies on gentrification. We'll hopefully have good benchmarks to use when people want to focus on these sort of problems.
- Are you breaking down (survey) results by sub populations?

Staff response: Yes, we are. We plan on sharing back with communities or groups where there was a large response rate, for example the Ann Arbor Housing Commission respondents.

- Do you have any community profile reports?

Staff response: Yes, some are posted on www.ewashtenaw.org/affh. We have about four profiles that are final, and they have the census information going as far back as the 1960s for race, differences in unemployment, and income. In addition, there are information on changes in housing value and rentals, how neighborhoods changing and transitioning, and more. All will be posted online when completed.

- In regards to the area above Plymouth Rd:

Staff response: The new housing is very different (upper-middle class) from the neighborhoods there and is seemingly taking over the neighborhood. It didn't seem like much planning was done about that and could have negative consequences. The north side used to be a lot of minorities, but new areas don't seem like that at all.

- Is zoning in Ann Arbor listed as barrier?

Staff Response: Yes, as well as development fees as we have discussed previously here.