

SPECIAL FOCUS TOPIC: COVID-19

The historic fight against national, and global, spread of COVID-19 is truly a defining moment. The impacts of this pandemic are far reaching and the devastating effects are being felt across all sectors and by all members of our society. From a national and local vantage point, the reality has set in that this highly communicable virus is non-discriminatory in terms of who can contract it, so all must take precaution. We also know that there are certain segments of the population, including those with preexisting conditions, that are more likely to face dire consequences if they contract the virus. In essence, what the fight against COVID-19 has truly done is place a spotlight on the poor and inequitable societal conditions that too many American citizens remain subjected to in our society. The national and local data unveiled daily regarding the death rates associated with COVID-19 is horrific in general, but the disproportionately high rate of death for African Americans is absolutely deplorable.

To understand the basis of the prevalence of the preexisting conditions that render African Americans more susceptible to having the highest levels of morbidity rates nationally and locally, one must address the issue from a historical context. This includes acknowledging the harmful impacts that have resulted from experiences of constant marginalization and profound forms of racism. Consideration must also be given to impacts created by pernicious policies and practices that have set the table for these disastrous results to be encountered by particular populations, and especially by African Americans. The abundance of preexisting conditions that are exhibited today are merely the tip of the iceberg. They are less of a matter of genetic code, than they are a derivative of longstanding injustices and inequitable experiences faced by multiple generations of African Americans across time.

We understand that these and other interrelated challenges exist when working to empower communities of people. We also believe that these challenges can be overcome. This is why [CCPPI](#) is “dedicated to advancing policies that promote human, civic, social and economic justice and to taking the necessary action to affect progress in all areas of civic improvement.” Generally we strive to strategically prompt change through focused work in the areas of affordable housing, healthcare, education, and safety and criminal justice. However, there are specific areas of advocacy that we are currently involved in that are meant to improve conditions for citizens immediately as we face the COVID-19 pandemic. In partnership with the [Center for Public Policy Priorities](#) (CPPP) and the [Children’s Defense Fund-Texas](#) (CDF-TX), as well as other endorsing partners, we are fighting for expansion of healthcare in Texas through the [#SickOfItTX](#) campaign. In response to the COVID-19 emergency, the campaign now includes a call for Governor Abbott to immediately expand Medicaid in order to help millions of uninsured Texans gain needed access (to learn more or get involved [click here](#)). On the housing front we are tracking the work of Congress as they focus on developing additional emergency packages in response to the horrific impacts of COVID-19 nationwide. We remain actively engaged in national-level affordable housing advocacy through initiatives led by the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#), while at the local level we advocate for change through the actions of the CCPPI housing team and through engagement in initiatives of the Houston Housing Collaborative.

There are many initiatives and supports being advanced in response to COVID-19. We will continue to promote information related to this pandemic and other conditions impacting communities that we strive to serve through the coming weeks. As we continue to work to ‘flatten the curve’ and create safe conditions for all, we hope that you join us in following the advisement of Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo and City of Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner to “Stay Home, Work Safe.”

Please visit the Houston Health Department web page at houstonemergency.org/covid19 for latest updates, recommendations and information about testing site locations, local risk, emergency preparedness tips, protective actions, communication resources, and more.

HOUSING

Construction Progress Update: Affordable Housing Operations Center



If you have traveled anywhere near the vicinity of Emancipation Avenue and Elgin Street you have seen the steel-layered skeleton of the Emancipation One Affordable Housing Operations Center (AHOC) stretching towards the sky. This impressive development can be easily spotted from views off of Highways 288 and I-45 just south of downtown Houston, as well as from various locations in and around the Greater Third Ward area. Spawned by efforts of the [Midtown Redevelopment Authority Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone \(TIRZ\) No. 2](#), [Old Spanish Trail/Alameda Corridors TIRZ No. 7](#), and [CCPPI](#) to spark innovation and additional commerce along the historic Emancipation Avenue corridor, the five-story 58,000 square foot building is

coming up at the right time with the right purpose! The need for greater access to affordable housing in Houston and elsewhere is widely published, and while this issue is not unique to our great city, the construction the AHOC is a unique response. As efforts of numerous entities focused on increasing availability of and access to affordable housing ramp up in the city, the AHOC will serve as a perfect generator of daily synergy across the multifaceted organizations that will occupy space in the building. With a completion deadline of December 31, 2020 on the horizon, efforts have shifted full-throttle towards occupancy and narrowing down the list of potential tenants that are requesting space. Opportunities to submit requests for space remain, but now is the time to indicate a desire to take up occupancy in the building.

For more information and to submit your request for space, please contact CCPPI Team Member Algenita Scott Davis at algenita.davis@ccppi.org.

Use the following link [Emancipation One Affordable Housing Operations Center Photo Gallery](#) to see photos of construction progress.

Development Funding Opportunity

Please note that the [City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department](#) has issued a Request for Proposals for the 2020 Disaster Recovery Small Rental Program (Solicitation [No. T29391](#)). The Program aims to increase the affordable rental housing stock (for this purpose individual buildings with no more than 7 units) through infill development of new affordable small rental properties. More details about this funding opportunity are available by clicking this [Harvey Recovery Small Rental Program link](#) to the City of Houston website. The solicitation deadline is Friday, May 15, 2020 at 3:00pm.

Eviction Prevention is Critical for Improving Access to Affordable Housing

At CCPPI we understand that affordable housing issues are wide ranging. One major issue that heavily impacts people's ongoing capacity to access affordable housing, and also is known to lead to homelessness, is eviction. Many who deal with evictions often lack knowledge about their rights and/or access to crucial resources that can serve to stave off evictions and ultimately change life trajectories. In the midst of the current COVID-19 crisis in America, mainstream media began to highlight the importance of this longstanding issue due to immediate concerns about housing affordability during this crisis and the consequential potential for mass evictions to occur nationwide. In response to these and related fears of potential mass foreclosures, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) suspended foreclosure and evictions for mortgages insured by the Federal Housing Administration, and the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) ordered Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to place a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures for single-family mortgages for at least 60 days. In addition, a recent stimulus package passed on March 27, 2020, embedded \$12 billion in resources for housing and homeless supports. While these temporary changes will definitely support urgent local and national needs in relation to the current COVID-19 crisis, once we emerge from this pandemic, long-term assistance for residents on the verge of eviction and potential homelessness remains unsecured.

CCPPI is involved with contributing to the development of housing-related solutions (i.e., eviction prevention and affordable housing accessibility) on both a local and national level. One way that that we work to positively impact housing and related policy in the Greater Houston Area is through regular interactions as members of the Houston Housing Collaborative (HHC). This coalition consists of multiple community members, non-profit agencies, and private companies that promote and/or develop affordable housing across

the Houston area daily. Led by new HHC Executive Director, Lori Pampilo Harris, members and workgroups collaborate regularly around identified areas of need with the goal of ensuring equity and access for all.

Extending our efforts to the community level, we became involved with a unique eviction prevention strategy initiated by [Judge Jeremy Brown, Harris County Justice of the Peace for Precinct 7, Place 1](#) about a year ago. Following his desire to use the courthouse in a more innovative way, Judge Brown began implementing a concept of redefining justice in the community by turning the courthouse into a center of legal intervention. A prominent component of the concept is the conversion of a former holding cell located near the courtroom into a resource room where people can gain access to eviction prevention resources on site (i.e., printed, electronic access via computer stations, and various agency staff). CCPPI began supporting this initiative as a thought partner and then through use of CCPPI interns who observed courthouse dockets and interacted with Judge Brown. These activities ultimately led to the development of a user-friendly, interactive [eviction prevention resource](#) for use by community members confronted with the possibility of eviction. We continue to support Judge Brown's efforts and recently engaged in a round table discussion at the courthouse with several other agencies. The interaction concluded with a tour of the resource center space and discussions about how agencies can better support tenant needs before and after the eviction process is initiated.

Moving beyond local engagement, CCPPI promotes related fair and affordable housing policy through involvement in national level initiatives. Following the lead of the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#) (NLIHC), a nationally recognized leader in the fight for socially just policy pertaining to access to affordable housing, we got involved in a national effort to solicit organizations and individuals to submit comments to HUD against proposed changes to the [Fair Housing Act](#) that would dismantle needed safeguards in communities of color. Additionally, we are engaged in ongoing virtual meetings and advocacy efforts led by NLIHC in response to the COVID-19 crisis and fully support the push for more federal resources and housing protections to be provided to support homeless and low income citizens. While a \$12 billion allocation was made for housing and homeless in the recent coronavirus stimulus package (for eviction and foreclosure prevention, emergency solutions, rental assistance, and more), additional supports are desperately needed, including resources for moderate income citizens in the next round of funding that will likely emerge when Congress returns from recess. CCPPI remains abreast of local and national policy activities and uses social media outlets such as our [@ccppi_htx](#) Twitter handle to communicate this and other policy impact information.

Public Comment Period for City of Houston Consolidated Plan 2020-2024

The draft City of Houston [Consolidated Plan 2020-2024](#) and 2020 Annual Action Plan is available for public comment, as is the draft [2020 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice](#). The Consolidated Plan details how the City plans to invest its resources to meet Houston's ongoing affordable housing, community development, economic development, and public service needs during the five-year period from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2024. The 2020 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI) reviews current fair housing barriers and lists recommended actions to further fair housing over the next five years. These documents are available at houstontx.gov/housing/.

Public comments may be submitted by email to HCDDPlanning@houstontx.gov or by mail to HCDD, ATTN: Planning, 2100 Travis Street, 9th Floor, Houston, TX 77002.

HEALTHCARE



CCPPI Endorses Healthcare Expansion **#SICKOFITTX**

By the close of the 86th Texas Legislative Session it had become clear to advocates who were hoping to impact significant change in the realm of health care that a more comprehensive approach would be required in order to get legislators more engaged and primed for change in the near future. Although it is arguable that steps were taken in the right direction during the last session, the reality is that legislation expanding healthcare coverage was not passed even though Texas has the worst uninsured rate in the nation. This is why CCPPI is an endorsing member of the **#SickOfItTX** campaign, a grassroots and grassroots effort designed to ensure that health care is a top issue for meaningful action by state lawmakers during the next legislative session. Through ongoing collaboration with our policy partners at the [Center for Public Policy Priorities](#) (CPPP) and the [Children's Defense Fund-TX](#) (CDF-TX), as well as many other high-impact organizations (i.e., The Texas Organizing Project, Texas AFL-CIO, National Association of Social Workers, National Alliance on Mental Illness Texas, etc.), we are working to engage as many voices as possible in the movement of this nonpartisan coalition that is advocating for expanded healthcare in Texas.

Elevated community involvement has already been initiated through **#SickOfItTX** block walk activities and deployment of 2020 candidate accountability questions designed to assist in gauging where candidates stand on the critical need for health care improvement in Texas. Additionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic there is a heightened sense of awareness across the state with regard to the need for more healthcare access. Although the campaign is pressing for legislative change during the next session, COVID-19 caused an upshift towards a call for more immediate emergency assistance from the Governor due to the fact that millions of Texans remain uninsured with disproportionate negative impacts likely to be encountered by historically marginalized communities. One way you can get involved today is by writing Governor Abbott to request him to expand Medicaid to eligible Texans (see this [link](#)).

Beyond our endorsement and general advocacy role in this crucial campaign, CCPPI is happy to directly support communication, research and policy development efforts of the campaign in partnership with CDF-TX and CPPP. For more information or to join in the fight go to the **#SickOfItTX** website located at sickofitx.org!

EDUCATION and CRIMINAL JUSTICE



CCPPI Provides Real-World Education Opportunities through Internships

Over the past year, the team at CCPPI has stepped up to assist in the educational and professional development of students attending local universities. Through partnerships established with the Third Ward Community Cloth and The University of Houston Hobby School of Public Affairs, we have hosted 3 undergraduate students in our offices and we are looking forward to bringing on our first graduate student as soon as this upcoming Summer or Fall. Previous undergraduate interns who worked with our team at the CCPPI office include: LaNecia Salsman, Prairie View A&M University (Social Work); and Claude Johnson,

University of Houston Hobby School of Public Affairs (Civic Houston Internship Program). Currently CCPPI is hosting Maya Ali, University of Houston Hobby School of Public Affairs, Civic Houston Internship Program (CHIP). Maya is an undergraduate student in her junior year who is majoring in Political Science. She has is now gearing up to apply to law school and hopes to one day impact the world through a focus on Healthcare Policy and Law. While completing her internship, Maya is compiling research and articles related to Social Determinants of Health and impacts in communities such as those that CCPPI seeks to serve. In addition, Maya contributes to publication of content via CCPPI social media and email distribution.

Houston ISD Support Services

(Contributing Author - Maya Ali, UH Hobby School of Public Affairs CHIP Intern)

Recently, CCPPI was introduced to the [HISD Student Assistance](#) Department. In connection with eviction prevention and truancy reduction support that CCPPI is providing to [Judge Jeremy Brown](#), Justice of the Peace Precinct 7 Place 1, we learned about the critical role that the Student Assistance Department plays in ensuring student equity, access and success. Housed inside of Peck Elementary School, the department is comprised of the Office of Student Assistance and The Homeless Education Office. This department consists of a small but vibrant staff that carries the district-wide responsibility of connecting students and families to needed assistance and supports, and ensuring that schools remain compliant with state attendance laws and student rights with respect to certain student populations such as children experiencing homelessness or children in foster care.

The Office of Student Assistance provides supports focused on improving academic outcomes, attendance, and graduation rates in HISD. Their work also includes hosting monthly meetings to provide supports to campuses, facilitating personnel trainings, providing student/parent education, and providing information on community resources and supportive services. The bulk of the work of this Office of Student Assistance is specifically focused on chronic absenteeism, truancy prevention and dropout recovery. The other component of the department is the Homeless Education Program, which provides support to homeless children and their families who are in transition and lack adequate housing. This department assists families with the enrollment and transportation of students, and another important aspect of the work that the members of the Houston community can make contributions to is their provision of resources such as uniforms, school supplies, food, and hygienic items. Typically, during April of each school year, HISD Student Assistance hosts Project Prom which provides not only free prom dresses and accessories, but also immunizations and talks about FAFSA assistance, college, and career opportunities. Unfortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this event has been canceled.

HISD Student Assistance provides tremendous resources to youth and families across Houston, but have a more far reaching impact in zip codes and communities that are historically overrepresented by poverty, people of color, and underperforming neighborhood schools. Furthermore, services provided through this department are intended to ensure that student rights are upheld and that children are properly served. This is particularly important in communities where one finds disproportionate numbers of children placed in in-school and/or out-of-school suspension, and where school-to-prison pipelines can be readily identified. Recent new laws affecting youth experiencing homelessness have been put into place in the State of Texas. This includes three new laws (see Texas Appleseed [Legislative Update](#)), one of which eliminates out of school suspension for homeless students, the other requires schools to consider mitigating factors in discipline decisions, and the third law waives fees for driver's licenses and necessary documents for homeless students and students in foster care. These laws favor students who lack substantial housing and helps them stay in school, makes it easier for them to receive a license by being able to use a school or shelter as their address, and requires their schools to consider whether they are experiencing homelessness or if they are in

foster care when setting up a behavioral intervention. These new laws are monumental for students and are particularly important for commonly marginalized people and communities. CCPPI is supportive of the services of the HISD Student Assistance department because what they offer is critical to the safety, health and further development of historically underserved communities where families deserve, and often need, these types of supports. For more information about this department and how you assist or get plugged in with them, click on the following link to the [HISD Student Assistance](#) web page.



CENSUS 2020 Deadline Extended

The importance of getting a full and accurate count during the 2020 Census cannot be understated. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Census Bureau made important adjustments to its operational schedule for the following purposes as stated on the [2020 Census Operational Adjustments](#) guide:

- Protect the health and safety of Census Bureau employees and the American public.
- Implement guidance from federal, state, and local health authorities.
- Ensure a complete and accurate count of all communities.

The guide reveals comprehensive a [summary table](#) of activities, schedules, adjustments and revised deadlines. Note that the “Self-Response Phase” has been extended through August 14, 2020, and we ask that you share information about the adjusted deadlines with as many people as possible. What’s at stake? Information from the census determines where billions of federal dollars for health care, public safety, schools, roads, and more go. Politically, the data is used to determine the number of seats that States get in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as for drawing state and congressional districts. Counting everyone is essential. We cannot risk the consequences of an undercount and the devastating results that an undercount would have for our communities and citizens! Go to [2020Census.gov](#) for more information or to submit your census response.

COALITIONS



Collaborative and Coalition Engagement Helps improve Impact

The team at CCPPI understands the importance of collaboration within and across communities. Our organizational stance is that we are not here to do things ‘to the community,’ but rather we exist to work ‘for and with the community.’ As such, we proactively seek to regularly interact with others who are striving to impact the community through mechanisms and systems that are aligned with our mission. A few notable local coalitions that we have connected with and maintain regularly engaged with in order to further the goals and aims of CCPPI include the: Houston Housing Collaborative, Greater Houston Coalition on Social Determinants of Health, Greater Third Ward Super Neighborhood 69/City of Houston Complete Communities,

Third Ward Community Cloth, and the University of Houston College of Medicine Third Ward Working Group. Outside of the collaborative work, we also maintain strong partnerships with several organizations that further move us towards identified goals and targeted outcomes in the realms of housing, healthcare, education and criminal justice. Some of the more far-reaching and established of these include strategic relationships with the: Midtown Redevelopment Authority, Center for Public Policy Priorities, Children's Defense Fund-Texas, University of Houston Hobby School of Public Affairs, Children's Museum of Houston, Houston Southeast Management District, Greater Southeast Management District, OST/Almeda Corridors Redevelopment Authority, and the Houston Area Urban League. CCPPI is thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with these partners and many others, and we are committed to continued establishment of trusting relationships with various grass roots organizations, leaders and community members.