

Village of Oak Park
Fair Housing Task Force Report
Implementation Schedule - March 16, 2015

Task Force Recommendations	Village Manager Implementation Schedule	Comments
<u>Enforcement of existing laws and ordinances:</u>		
1 The implementation of fair housing enforcement and education should have a single organizational lead, which shall be designated and overseen by the Village Manager. Currently, fair housing enforcement and education activities of the Village are de-centralized.	Ongoing	This recommendation will be evaluated as part of Recommendation No. 3 (Review of Village Code) to ensure that Village ordinances and the Village Code align with designation of a single organizational lead. Further, from a daily operational perspective, the Village Manager will endeavor to actively engage in the collaboration of various Village Departments in fair housing education and enforcement.
2 The Village should conduct routine fair housing testing that consists of both random testing of landlords and targeted testing of landlords who are suspected of violating fair housing laws. The methodology for Village testing should reflect nationally-recognized practices. Random testing should occur at least every two years, and the results of Village testing should be documented so that progress can be monitored.	FY16 Budget	As part of the FY16 budget process, which begins at a staff level in Q3 2015, the Neighborhood Services Division of the Development Customer Services Department, will be seeking the necessary funding to begin a testing program in FY16. Implementation is subject to budget adoption.
3 The Village Manager and Village Attorney should review the Village Code and Village ordinances and policies relating to fair housing, and update them using the Model Fair Housing Ordinance and the Cook County Fair Housing Ordinance as examples. In addition, the Village Manager and Village Attorney should establish guidelines for hearings on fair housing violations to be conducted pursuant to the Village Code.	Complete by 1/1/16	Internal review of applicable ordinances will begin in July 2015 with anticipated presentation to the Village Board in early Q4 2015 which will allow for adoption by year end with an effective date of January 2016.
4 Utilizing the Model Fair Housing Ordinance and the Cook County Fair Housing Ordinance as examples, the Village Manager should establish guidelines for penalties imposed upon property owners for fair housing violations. Currently, the Village code is silent on this subject. The penalties that are established should reflect a "progressive" enforcement approach. First time violators should receive a warning and be required to attend additional fair housing training. Repeat violators should face increasingly severe penalties for each repeated violation, with revocation of their Village residential rental license as a penalty for the most egregious violators.	Complete by 1/1/16	Penalty procedures/guidelines will be incorporated into the ordinance review under No. 3 so that penalties can be implemented concurrently with Code amendments.

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5 The Village enforcement process should continue to emphasize conciliation. If the Village conciliation and adjudication processes are unsuccessful, the Village should provide guidance to claimants as to how to proceed through county, state or HUD enforcement mechanisms.	Ongoing	This recommendation is consistent with the current approach of the Community Relations Director and staff continue to emphasize conciliation between prospective tenants and landlords so that prospective tenants can obtain desired housing. As part of the ordinance review described above, staff will determine if any ordinance amendments are necessary.
<u>Community Education</u>		
1 The Village should review and update Village-led fair housing educational programs and create a testing component to such programs. Existing fair housing training should be updated to reflect current law, nationally-recognized research and effective practices, and should take into account the increasing use of the internet for rental activity. In addition, the Village should ensure that the new Crime Free Housing training program incorporates the updated fair housing education. Specific topics that should be added to existing fair housing education programs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Information regarding assistive technology for persons with disabilities; b) A checklist of unacceptable steering behaviors; c) Suggestions for more equitable tenant screening methods, such as those which focus on credit in comparison to an acceptable range, rather than on a precise credit score; and, d) Explanation of source of income as a protected class. 	Ongoing	Staff has already begun the process of updating its fair housing training in conjunction with the roll-out of the Crime Free Housing Training Program which began in October 2014. As staff begins the process of assembling the fair housing working group as described under Recommendation No. 2 below (to include landlords/realty community and Village departments) it is proposed that the Q4 Meeting focus on group review of training to seek input on creative and new training options. Through the end of February 2015, the Village has hosted 13 Crime Free Housing trainings through a partnership of the Development Customer Services, Community Relations and Police Departments (258 rental owners/operators have participated). In April 2015, the Village is also preparing to co-host a fair housing training with Hope Fair Housing Center that is focused on renting to persons with disabilities.
2 The Village should establish a fair housing working group that involves collaboration among the landlord/realty community, various Village departments dealing with fair housing issues, and representatives from the Village's housing agency partners. In addition to the goal of increased collaboration, the Village can utilize the working group to encourage various industry groups to promote fair housing awareness and compliance among their members.	Q3 2015	Staff will begin preparations in August for the group's creation, send invitations in September and convene the first group meeting in October 2015.

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| <p>3 The Village should conduct a Village-wide outreach and marketing campaign on fair housing. In connection with this campaign, the Village should review the Village website and determine whether additional educational materials should be made available on-line and that are easily accessible, given that the majority of leasing activity now occurs on-line. Educational materials available online should include an easy-to-follow question & answer sheet for landlords and tenants on basic fair housing issues. In connection with the foregoing recommendation, the Village Manager will need to make various determinations, including:</p> <p>a) Who will lead the Village-wide outreach and marketing campaign and what types of activities will be beneficial;</p> <p>b) Which local agencies/industry groups and Village commissions can effectively partner with the Village in carrying out an outreach and marketing campaign; and</p> <p>c) How often community meetings will be held to discuss fair housing issues.</p> | Q3 2015 and
FY16 Budget | In regards to an update and review of the Village website, the Departments of Community Relations and Development Customer Services will take the lead on content and work with the Communications Department to fully review information and conclude updates by the end of Q3 2015. In regards to the broader recommendation related to marketing/outreach, it will be addressed during the FY16 budget process under the lead of the Development Customer Services Department and with input from the Community Relations Department. It will be essential that the budget discussion include a review of marketing funding currently appropriated by the Village to private not-for-profits that conduct marketing with these public funds under an annual contract for service. The FY16 budget review will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of existing marketing in order to recommend improvements. |
| <p>4 The Village should re-institute the services provided by the Community Relations Department for community education via block parties. There is value to extending education beyond landlords and tenants. The Village should ensure that the community, as a whole, focuses on fair housing and on improving community relations. The block party services provided by the Community Relations Department promote integration in our community and are important to fund.</p> | FY16 Budget | As part of the FY16 budget process, funding for these services and communication efforts will be reviewed by the Departments of Community Relations and Public Works in conjunction with the Communications Department to improve the outreach process and provide programming for block parties. |
| <p>5 The Village should re-institute the services provided by the Community Relations Department in the form of new resident welcome packets. Currently, new resident welcome packets are only provided via the Village website. The Community Relations Department needs additional resources to make materials available at Village Hall to help educate current and prospective residents about fair housing and Oak Park's commitment to diversity and inclusion. In preparing and distributing the welcome packets, the Village should partner and collaborate with local community groups who are similarly involved with outreach to new and prospective residents.</p> | FY16 Budget | As part of the FY16 budget process, which begins at a staff level in Q3 2015, the Village Manager's Office, with the support of the Communications Department, will be seeking the necessary funding and community partners to revive New Resident Welcome Packets in Q2 2016. Implementation is subject to budget adoption. |

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6 In connection with the recommendations set forth herein, the Village Manager should review and make recommendations regarding increasing the staff capacity of the Community Relations Department. Currently, this Department has only one staff member, and as such, may be unable to effectively carry out the new and re-instituted programs recommended herein.	FY16 Budget	As part of the FY16 budget process, which begins at a staff level in Q3 2015, the Village Manager's Office will make recommendations regarding staffing in the Community Relations Department. Implementation is subject to budget adoption.
7 The Village should prepare and provide a summary of the Village's current Fair Housing Ordinance to landlords to be used with applications for housing in Oak Park, in accordance with Section 13-5-1 of the Village Code. The purpose of the summary would be to inform tenants of their rights while at the same time promoting landlord awareness of fair housing issues.	Q4 2015	The Communications Department, with the support of the Departments of Community Relations and Development Customer Services, will prepare the summary prior to year end. This effort needs to be coordinated with other recommendations including: CE #1 - review of fair housing training and CE #2 - establishment of fair housing working group.
<u>Oversight of Housing-Related Agencies in Oak Park</u>		
1 The Village should establish regular meetings with the Oak Park Residence Corporation, the Oak Park Housing Authority, and the Oak Park Regional Housing Center (collectively, the Village's "Housing Agency Partners"), the Community Relations Director, and the Neighborhood Services Manager. During these meetings, participants should regularly discuss trends, issues and problems that may indicate issues of housing discrimination. Participants should then work together to resolve or address problems.	Q2 2015	The meetings will be planned to start prior to the end of Q2 15 and will be held quarterly at a minimum. The Neighborhoods Services Division of the Development Customer Services Department will take the lead in agenda development and convening meetings. It is proposed that quarterly agenda topics include Village budget, and review of Fair Housing Training as well as Fair Housing Work Group information.
2 The Village should review the current scope of services of the Housing Agency Partners as well as funding amounts to determine whether any updates or revisions should be made to address current fair housing concerns and the Village's commitment to promoting diversity. Housing Agency Partners should be required to provide information to the Village on how their organizations have benefited the Village over the past five years. As appropriate, the Village should oversee increased involvement of Housing Agency Partners in fair housing activities of the Village and efforts to promote affordable housing in the Village.	Q2 2015 and FY16 Budget	As part of the FY15 budget adoption, the Contract for Services with the Regional Housing Center established a review requirement which is due to the Village Board by staff prior to July 1. In conjunction with the requirements of this current Contract for Services, the Development Customer Services Department will evaluate this recommendation. In regards to the other housing partners, their evaluation will be undertaken during the FY16 budget process.
<u>General</u>		

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<p>In addition to these recommendations, the Task Force would like to highlight the importance of affordable housing in providing fair housing opportunities to residents of the community. Given that the 2010 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice identified the relative lack of affordable housing in Oak Park as an impediment to fair housing, the Village should engage local organizations, industry groups and multifamily property owners to develop, sustain and promote affordable housing for low and moderate income residents of our community (who are disproportionately members of protected classes).</p>	Ongoing	<p>Under the direction of the Village Managers Office, staff will continue to identify and advocate for affordable housing opportunities. Currently, the Village is the lead grantee for a HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant and is working to identify projects that can utilize \$2 million in soft financing in exchange for a 30-year commitment to affordable rental housing. Additionally, as part of the redevelopment of the Village owned properties as South Boulevard and Harlem, the developer - Lincoln Properties will make an affordable housing payment of approximately \$750,000 (the final amount is related to permit fees which are calculated at the time of property closing). Village staff will recommend use of these funds by Q3 2016.</p>