



EQUAL HOUSING
OPPORTUNITY

ANALYSIS OF IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING

City of Springfield 2013

Executive Summary

This Fair Housing Analysis analyzes the fair housing data for the City of Springfield (2008-2012) in order to identify barriers to fair housing and develop a plan to overcome these barriers.

Demographic Summary of the protected classes

In 2010, there were 32,743 females (52.4%) and 28,865 males (47.6%). Racially, the majority of persons in Springfield are White (45,607 or 75%), with the Black population being the second largest racial group (10,981 or 18%). This represents a 5% decline in White population and a 1% decline in Black population from 2000. The Hispanic population has increased up from 1.5% to 3% with 1824 total residents in 2010. 20% of the persons over the age of 65 have difficulty living independently and 30% have ambulatory problems. 11% of younger adult population (ages 18-64) have cognitive or ambulatory difficulties. 24.4% of the population is under the age of 18, which is up by six percent from 2000, although the population under the age of 5 has decreased.

In the City of Springfield, the majority of people own their own home, (57.3% are owner-occupied units, up .1% since 2000). Minorities and families with children are concentrated in some areas of Springfield where the concentration of rental housing is even higher than the City average. Substandard housing is also more common in these older neighborhoods have have a higher concentration of rental units. Families with children are more likely to be low income and living in rental housing, than families without children.

Since our last analysis, Veteran Status was added to Ohio's fair housing law. There are 5,434 veterans in Springfield. As a group, they have higher income than the non-veterans and tend to live in the higher income areas, but they also have a higher unemployment rate than the rest of the population.

Racial Segregation

Racial segregation has been a problem in the City of Springfield and Clark County since their beginnings. However our research indicates that the City is very gradually becoming more integrated. In our last analysis we reported that Black population density maps showed that the Black population became more dispersed throughout the City between 1990 and 2000. Statistical analysis conducted by Geographer Devon Lenz in this report shows this trend continuing, although there are still several areas of high density minority concentration which are in the southwest quadrant and lower income areas of the city. However, the poorest neighborhoods in the City have a White majority in the university area and also Selma Road.

The reality of racial segregation continues to be a fair housing concern in the City of Springfield. While the trend toward integration is apparent, the movement is slow. When one considers the larger region of Clark County, where the dissimilarity index also shows progress, there is an even greater segregation. The Black population of Clark County outside the City limits of Springfield is only 1.5% (See Table 9). This indicates a need for continual vigilance, education and enforcement to continue the progress of opening the doors of equal housing opportunity to all members of our community.

Housing Market Analysis

There is a concern that minority households have more of a cost burden, more rental housing and more problems with housing. A high percent of all renters are experiencing problems with their housing and there continues to be a substantial need for affordable housing, with 36% of the population being cost-burdened in their housing. The western part of the City is beginning to see an increase in property values, but other areas show a decline over the past 6 years. Further analysis of our housing market with updated census information would be helpful.

Public Housing

The Springfield Metropolitan Housing Authority reports they have do not have any fair housing problems at this time and that their last HUD fair housing review showed no problems. In the past five years they completed a substantial project of Lincoln Park, HOPE VI, which has replaced their aging rental housing with new units that provided a significant facelift for the southern part of Springfield.

They work hard to encourage their housing choice voucher holders to locate in higher income areas, although many do not choose to do so. They were unable to provide information on demographics of their sites, stating that they no longer maintain those records in an easily accessible method. They would like to continue to partner with the City of Springfield to provide fair housing education for both their staff, residents and voucher landlords.

Realtor Community

Much progress has been made in the area of fair housing, since the enactment of the law in 1968. Realtors must complete fair housing education as part of their initial licensing, and renewals. However, this review indicates that both the Realtors and consumers believe that there continue to be fair housing problems in Springfield similar to those identified in the past impediment listing. New areas of concern noted by both Realtors and consumers are: retaliation for filing a fair housing complaint, familial status discrimination and discrimination against LGBT residents (now a protected class for all HUD-funded programs). The Realtor suggestions for future action provide some possible strategies for both the City and the Board of Realtors that could be implemented. A key suggestion is to provide specific training on areas where the fair housing law is being violated, so that they can attend to these problems

Lending Community

The lending climate continues to be affected by the aftermath of predatory lending, which caused many of the foreclosure problems. The related economic downturn and tightening of credit has led to a significant decrease in home purchase. In addition, the foreclosure problem although community wide, is more pronounced in those areas of the City with the highest minority population. The number of foreclosures has begun to decline, but still poses a significant community problem.

This analysis reports that minorities are not able to purchase homes at the same rate as the majority population. Whether this is because of discrimination in the initial application process, in the loan processing or due to person credit issues is not clear. The perception of many, as evidenced by the Focus Groups, is that there is discrimination against minorities during the loan process and that the credit scoring process provides a significant barrier to homeownership.

Focus Groups

As part of this analysis, the City contracted with Harper Mack Group to conduct ten focus groups with the community to provide an inside look at fair housing issues. This

research indicates that people in our community still have many fair housing concerns which go unreported, perhaps due in part to concern of retaliation. The groups indicated that many areas identified in earlier analyses of impediments are still a concern, and also added issues related to retaliation, familial status, absentee landlords, sexual preference, disability discrimination, need for assessable housing, lender red-lining, and discrimination against Muslims. They were also concerned about the problem with people with criminal backgrounds being denied housing and would like action by the housing authority toward that problem. Some issues identified were much bigger than fair housing, including immigration, veteran awareness of their benefits and a general sense of hopelessness. The focus group members offered many suggestions for fair housing action that can be considered for future planning.

Fair Housing Testing

The City contracted with Miami Valley Fair Housing Center to conduct fair housing testing. In the majority of cases, it appears that real estate professionals are "doing the right thing," and have knowledge of the fair housing laws. Especially in the area of race, there was only one instance out of 12 indicating a problem. However in six of fourteen tests related to disability status in rental housing, there showed evidence of discrimination.

Fair Housing Complaints

Fair Housing Complaints filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development during the time period of this report indicate that there is a problem in the area of disability discrimination. In other areas, either there is less discrimination going on, or it remains unreported, but there was at least one case involving familial status, race, national origin, religion and color. The lack of complaints may also indicate lack of awareness of the fair housing rights and/or fear of retaliation.

Public Policies

The City of Springfield takes the lead in pushing for economic development, neighborhood revitalization, care for the homeless, and homeless prevention. They have exemplary policies to provide equal housing opportunity, demonstrated by their affirmative marketing policy, their fair housing ordinance, their affordable housing policy, their nonrestrictive zoning code. They have also aggressively addressed the problem of lead-based paint through six grants with HUD. The current Consolidated Plan incorporates efforts to target transitional areas for housing rehabilitation, demolish blighted housing, enhance Code Enforcement, expand tax credit projects for new housing opportunities, develop a green space policy and improve the city corridors.

City of Springfield Actions

During the reporting period, the City of Springfield Fair Housing Office has maintained an active presence in the City promoting equal opportunity in housing during the past five years, addressing impediments in earlier analysis. Progress has been made in providing fair housing education to both housing consumers and housing providers. Gross discrimination is not occurring on a wide scale, evidenced by relatively few incidents of reporting. However, there are still fair housing concerns requiring ongoing vigilance and action.

Impediments to Fair Housing

Thirteen areas are identified in this analysis of ongoing fair housing concern for the City of Springfield. These are: racial segregation/racial steering, discrimination against Latinos, discrimination against persons with disabilities, discrimination against African-Americans, discrimination against families with children, substandard rental housing, home loan discrimination for minorities, need for fair housing education of both housing consumers and housing providers, lead-based paint hazards especially for children and minorities, retaliation for filing fair housing complaints, veteran's housing concerns and LGBT discrimination.

Impediment/Concern #1: Racial Segregation/Racial Steering

There are reports that real estate agents are not always suggesting houses in all areas of Springfield to prospective homebuyers (Racial Steering).

There continues to be a problem with racial segregation in the City of Springfield, although the situation has been improving, but there is still a disproportionate concentration of both the African-American and Latino minorities in several census tracts.

Impediment/Concern #2: Discrimination against the Latino population.

From reports by the Latinos, by Realtors and other community members there seems to be a problem with housing discrimination against Latinos.

Impediment/Concern #3: Discrimination against persons with disabilities

From testing reports by Miami Valley Fair Housing, the percentage of fair housing complaints filed related to disabilities and reports of people with disabilities and persons who work with people with disabilities, there are some problems with discrimination against persons with disabilities. Another concern is adequate accessible housing.

Impediment/Concern #4: Discrimination against African-Americans

Focus groups report that African-Americans face housing discrimination in Springfield.

Impediment/Concern #5: Discrimination against Families with Children.

Focus groups report that some landlords seek to avoid renting to families with children.

Impediment/Concern #6: Substandard Renter-Occupied Housing

With the aging housing stock, there continues to be a large number of substandard rental units, especially in low income areas that are more concentrated with families with children and minorities. In focus groups with the community, there was a strong agreement that this continues to be a problem. Realtors and Lenders also mentioned the problem in focus groups.

Impediment/Concern #7: Those in the protected classes under the fair housing law are often part of lower income groups and have more difficulty qualifying for loans. Even some minorities in higher income groups are denied loans at higher rates than non-minorities. A smaller number of loans go to the minority populations in relation to their percentage in total population. Reliance on credit scoring also is causing problems for minorities and other low income people..

Impediment/Concern #8: There is a high rate of foreclosures in the City of Springfield, especially in minority areas.

Research indicates that the foreclosure rate is widespread, and also concentrated in minority areas. Although the number of foreclosures are in decline, it is still a substantial problem.

Impediment/Concern #9: There is a need for more fair housing education for both consumers and housing providers.

In Focus Groups, many people indicated that there is a need for fair housing education for members of protected classes, as well as for housing providers.

Impediment #10: Children under the age of 6, and minority children are at risk for lead-based paint exposure in the City of Springfield, particularly in the southwest quadrant and in other areas where the aged housing stock is deteriorating. This is a fair housing concern for families with children and minorities.

There has been progress made in this area, but it is still a concern, due to the aging house stock in the City of Springfield.

Impediment #11: Retaliation

In nine of ten focus groups, the participants expressed a concern that people face retaliation when they make fair housing complaints.

Impediment #12 Veterans Concerns

Veteran's Status was recently added to the Ohio fair housing law. In the Veteran's Focus Group, it appears that veterans are often not aware of benefits available to them and their fair rights. Many face discrimination because of their other protected class status, especially disability status and race.

Impediment #13 LGBT Discrimination

According to Focus Group reports, there are problems with housing discrimination for the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender population in Springfield. Although this is not a protected class in the local, state or federal fair housing laws, it is protected in all U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funded programs, which includes the city housing programs and all subsidized housing in the city.