

**HOUSING AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT (HUD) PATHWAYS
TO REMOVING OBSTACLES TO
HOUSING (PRO HOUSING)
APPLICATION – **DRAFT****

October 2023

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Exhibit A: Executive Summary

Union County is submitting its HUD PRO Housing grant application to continue making progress towards affordable housing. Our goal is to directly evaluate and implement housing policy and neighborhood plans, as well as improve housing strategies and develop a mechanism to facilitate affordable housing production and preservation throughout Union County.

The award of this grant will allow Union County to accomplish comprehensive planning and policy activities to support affordable housing and position itself as an innovative leader in the affordable housing sector. This proposal will be used to address barriers identified in the 2022-2026 Analysis of Impediments, North Carolina Housing Coalition's 2023 County profile, and 2022 Union County Health Assessment. The data collected reveals a clear disparity in income between renters and homeowners. The information gathered clearly indicates that there is a need for additional affordable housing units to meet area median income. Lack of affordable housing ranks as the most common quality of life issue among residents in Union County.

The objectives of the proposal:

- **Developing Housing Policy:** The grant will enable the development of comprehensive housing policies that consider the unique needs of Union County. These policies will be designed to improve housing affordability and accessibility.
- **Evaluating Neighborhood Plans:** Union County plans to directly evaluate existing neighborhood plans to identify areas that require specific attention in terms of affordable housing initiatives. This approach ensures a tailored and community-focused strategy.
- **Enhancing Housing Strategies:** The grant will be used to enhance existing housing strategies, incorporating best practices and innovative approaches to address the affordable housing issue effectively.
- **Facilitating Production and Preservation:** Union County aims to create a mechanism that will both produce new affordable housing units and preserve existing ones. The multifaceted approach will ensure long-term sustainability in addressing the affordable housing challenges.

The proposal aims to position Union County as an innovative leader in the affordable housing sector and will address identified barriers from various reports, such as the 2022-2026 Analysis of Impediments, North Carolina Housing Coalition's 2023 County profile, and the 2022 Union County Health Assessment. The primary objective is to bridge the income disparity between renters and homeowners and create additional affordable housing units to meet area median income, addressing the most common quality of life issue among Union County residents, which is the lack of affordable housing.

Through funds made available from the PRO Housing grant, Union County will be a catalyst to transformative planning and policy improvements. This endeavor will not only have an immediate impact on affordable housing but will also have far-reaching implications for the County's future. The grant will empower Union County to implement innovative strategies, sustainable policies, and collaborate with community stakeholders to tackle the affordable housing crisis comprehensively. Union County's proactive approach will foster collaboration with local housing experts, community leaders, and housing advocacy groups to ensure that the policies and plans put in place are effective, equitable, and responsive to the specific needs of its residents. This grant will act as a springboard for Union County to engage in:

- **Policy Innovation:** The county will have the resources to develop forward-thinking housing policies that address the unique challenges faced by its population. These policies will aim to streamline affordable housing development and preservation while encouraging inclusivity and equity.
- **Data-Driven Planning:** Union County will employ data-driven decision-making to identify areas with the greatest need for affordable housing and the most suitable strategies for meeting those needs. The grant will support comprehensive analysis and planning.
- **Capacity Building:** The grant will enable Union County to strengthen its housing sector by building the capacity of local agencies and organizations to effectively manage and implement affordable housing initiatives.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Union County can leverage the grant funds to foster partnerships with private developers, community organizations, and financial institutions to expedite the construction of new affordable housing units and the preservation of existing ones.

Exhibit B: Need

i) Describe your efforts so far to identify, address, mitigate, or remove barriers to affordable housing production and preservation. (12 points)

Union County has made intentional efforts to identify, address, mitigate, and remove barriers to affordable housing production and preservation. These efforts are apparent in data collected from various sources, including the NC Housing Coalition's County Profiles, the 2022 Union County Health Assessment, and several strategic plans and initiatives. Union County strongly believes that funding from HUD PRO Housing will allow us to strengthen our efforts and establish meaningful and impactful strategies moving forward.

HUD CPD Entitlement Program: Union County's designation as an Entitlement Community under the HUD CPD program reflects its commitment to providing decent housing and suitable living environments for low- and moderate-income individuals. The program's annual grants are based on community needs, such as poverty levels, housing conditions, and population growth. Union County has been receiving funding for seven years, which has been used to support affordable housing initiatives.

Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Report (AIFH):

The 2022-2026 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Report represents an extensive research endeavor mandated by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, delving into the intricate landscape of fair and affordable housing efforts within Union County. This serves as a comprehensive examination of municipal housing, economic, and transportation conditions, as well as the policies, both public and private, that influence housing choices and opportunities for the community's residents.

In response, Union County has formulated this analysis outlining its objectives and methods to actively promote fair and affordable housing in the region. The essence of this endeavor extends beyond addressing discrimination; it necessitates meaningful actions to eliminate patterns of segregation and cultivate inclusive communities that transcend barriers limiting opportunity based on protected characteristics. Key strategies for affirmatively furthering fair housing include addressing disparities in housing needs, fostering integrated living patterns, transforming areas of concentrated poverty into zones of opportunity, and ensuring compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws. In recognition of these findings, Union County has initiated the formation of a Fair Housing Advisory Council.

Figure J
Monthly Housing Costs
Union County, NC
2015 and 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Monthly Cost	2015 ACS Estimates		2019 ACS Estimates	
	Units	% of Total	Units	% of Total
Housing Units with a Mortgage				
Less than \$500	715	2%	504	1%
\$500 to \$999	8,350	19%	6,116	13%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	14,154	33%	14,921	32%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	9,061	21%	10,093	22%
\$2,000 or more	11,306	26%	14,420	31%
Total	43,586	100%	46,054	100%
Median (dollars)	\$1,447		\$1,567	
Housing Units without a Mortgage				
Less than \$400	5,864	45%	4,771	39%
\$400 or more	7,046	55%	9,718	61%
Total	12,910	100%	14,489	100%
Median (dollars)	\$421		\$451	


Median Housing Costs. The 2019 ACS estimates that the median contract rent has increased by about 19% since 2015, while the median home value increased by roughly 22%.

NC Housing Coalition's County Profiles: The NC Housing Coalition's County Profiles offer a comprehensive dataset that includes information on cost-burdened households spending over 30% of their income on housing, job market comparisons, trends in home prices, foreclosure rates, and rental options within our local communities. These profiles are specifically crafted to empower community advocates and enable productive discussions with our local and state elected officials, serving as an invaluable educational resource to address the housing challenges that our cities and towns collectively encounter.

The data is meticulously gathered from a variety of reputable sources, such as the most recent American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021) by the US Census Bureau, the latest Occupational Employment Statistics (2021) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Fair Market Rents for FY23 by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Income Documentation System for Median Family Incomes in 2022, and Civil Issue Filings/Order Results for FY21-22 from the NC Judicial Branch. This wealth of data plays a pivotal role in shaping informed decisions and strategies to improve housing conditions in our community.


When Housing Costs Too Much

When housing costs become too much, a family can lose their home. This takes an incredible toll not only on a family, but also on the entire community.



152 families in Union County faced a foreclosure this year...

1.26% of all cost-burdened homeowners.



789 families in Union County faced an eviction filing this year...

16.0% of all cost-burdened renters.

Ranks

#38

for evictions among renter households.

(1 = highest and 100 = lowest)

2022 Union County Health Assessment: The Union County Health Assessment revealed the significant impact of housing affordability challenges on residents. A substantial percentage of renters in Union County face a cost burden, with 39.5% of them paying more than 30% of their income on rent. The assessment also highlighted the issue of chronic homelessness among vulnerable populations, emphasizing the need for supportive housing interventions.

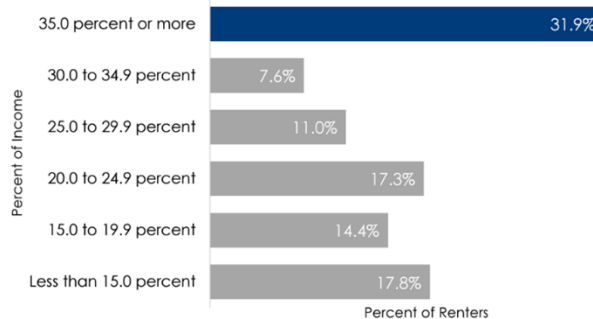
Income Disparities and Cost Burden:

The assessment reveals a clear disparity in income between renters and homeowners.

- Most renters make less than \$75,000, while most homeowners earn over \$75,000.
- Approximately 22% of Union County residents, equivalent to 16,966 households, are considered cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. This cost burden is most acute among renters, with 39.5% of them exceeding the 30% threshold.

Nearly **1 in 3 renters** in Union County **pay more than 35% of their income on rent.**

Rent as a percentage of gross household income in Union County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Income Needed for Affordable Housing:

The assessment demonstrates the significant income required to afford Fair Market Rent in Union County, which stands at \$53,320 annually. This equates to a wage of \$25.63 per hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment. This highlights the challenge many residents face in securing housing that is within their financial reach.

Public Concern and Quality of Life Issues:

Lack of affordable housing ranks as the most common quality of life issue among residents in Union County. This concern cuts across demographic groups and geographic areas within the county.

- The prevalence of low income/poverty as the leading quality of life issue, particularly in certain zip codes like 28112 and in places like Unionville, underscores the urgency of addressing affordable housing.

Efforts to Mitigate Housing Poverty:

Union County recognizes the severe housing affordability issue and the challenges faced by low-income households.

- As per HUD standards, more than one-fifth of Union County residents are considered cost-burdened.
- The data from the North Carolina Housing Coalition highlights that nearly 40% of renters in the county are spending more than 30% of their income on housing, making them cost-burdened.

Chronic Homelessness and Supportive Housing:

The assessment underscores the need for supportive housing, especially for those experiencing chronic homelessness. Permanent Supportive Housing is the recommended intervention for this group, yet the county faces a scarcity of resources to provide appropriate support.

- The assessment reveals that 13.9% of the county's homeless population experiences chronic homelessness, primarily due to disabling conditions such as mental illness, substance use disorders, or physical disabilities.

Fair Housing Advisory Council: In response to the findings of the AIFH report, Union County has made efforts to establish a Fair Housing Advisory Council. This council will play a critical role in exploring housing barriers, developing sustainable plans to increase access to affordable housing, and researching public awareness campaigns related to fair housing. The advisory council will also provide recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on strategies that promote fair and affordable housing.

Thrive! Union: The mission of Thrive! Union is to alleviate poverty and increase economic mobility within the community. County staff actively participate in the Affordable Housing Subcommittee, which is dedicated to addressing the shortage of affordable and available housing in the area. This collaboration between Union County and Thrive! Union demonstrates a comprehensive approach to addressing housing affordability issues by addressing the broader economic factors contributing to housing challenges. As part of their efforts, the Affordable Housing Subcommittee plans to host the 1st Affordable Housing Symposium in February 2024. This event will provide a platform for discussing and addressing the lack of affordable and available housing in the community.

ii) Do you have acute demand for affordable housing? What are your remaining affordable housing needs and how do you know? (13 points)

Union County faces a pressing demand for affordable housing, as evidenced by a multitude of indicators. The county is grappling with chronic homelessness, affecting 13.9% of its homeless population who endure homelessness for a year or more, often due to serious mental illness, substance use disorders, or physical disabilities. The critical need for permanent supportive housing is underscored, with limited resources available, leaving many individuals unsheltered, residing in tent communities. This dire situation is further exacerbated by a housing affordability crisis, with a considerable percentage of renters, particularly those with income levels below \$75,000, facing cost burdens.

The annual income required to afford Fair Market Rent, \$53,320, and the hourly wage needed for a two-bedroom apartment, \$25.63, place affordable housing well beyond the reach of many residents. Specific demographic groups, such as Black respondents and those in certain zip codes, have identified lack of affordable housing and low income as top quality of life concerns. Furthermore, housing conditions, especially for respondents with a high school education or less, those from specific zip codes, and Marshville, have been recognized as problematic. The data points to a vacancy rate in Union County of around 4%, compared to 6% in neighboring counties, along with significant pandemic-induced income loss, resulting in numerous families facing eviction. The North Carolina Housing Coalition's report for 2023 highlights the substantial challenge, with 40% of renters and 19% of homeowners struggling to afford their homes. Additionally, 152 families in Union County faced foreclosure, and 789 families were subject to eviction filings. Approximately 22% of the county's population, or 16,966 households, are cost burdened. Union County ranks 38th in the nation for evictions among renter households.

Furthermore, the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates reveal that 37% of households paying rent have costs exceeding 35% of their household income, emphasizing the severity of the housing affordability issue. The median monthly housing costs have witnessed an increase since 2015, further straining residents. While there are 619 safe and affordable rental units for low-income families and individuals, the county's poverty level exceeds this capacity, with a significantly larger number of families living below the poverty line. Lastly, the 2020 Census data shows a substantial increase in total housing units in Union County between 2015 and 2020, but occupancy rates have grown even more significantly, suggesting a demand for affordable housing that remains unmet.

iii) What key barriers still exist and need to be addressed to produce and preserve more affordable housing? (10 points)

Several key barriers persist, impeding the production and preservation of accessible, affordable housing in Union County.

The UNC Greensboro Public Opinion Study: This study highlights the urgent need for housing units accessible to people with disabilities, often overlooked in conversations about affordable housing. Those reliant on disability benefits, particularly SSI, face significant challenges in finding and maintaining affordable homes. Accessibility issues are closely linked to homelessness, as many homeless individuals report physical disabilities, emphasizing the need for accessible housing as a part of the solution to homelessness. Additionally, the negative connotations associated with the term "affordable housing" present a barrier, as it's sometimes equated with poverty or undesirable housing conditions.

The UNC Charlotte 2022 State of Housing Report: This report provides critical insights into the housing landscape in Union County and the broader Charlotte metropolitan area. Notably, Union County stands out with the highest vacancy rate, but this statistic requires nuanced interpretation. The elevated vacancy rate is primarily due to a significant number of newly opened housing complexes that are still in their initial "lease-up" phase. This temporary surge in vacancies inflates the overall vacancy rate, which traditionally averaged around 6.4% from 2000 to 2020.

The report also sheds light on the challenges faced by renters in the Charlotte Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), where approximately 45.8% of all renters experience a cost burden. This burden underscores the strain on renters due to housing costs compared to their income. While Charlotte MSA is a region experiencing substantial growth, it faces mounting housing affordability challenges. Although housing prices remain relatively modest, they are steadily rising, outpacing many regional and national counterparts. This trend, if unchecked, could potentially lead to significant housing affordability issues in 2023 and 2024.

The dramatic increase in home prices, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has exacerbated the problem of housing affordability. Rising interest rates have further complicated the situation. Affordably priced homes have become increasingly scarce, with only 3% of houses sold falling under the \$150,000 price point, and a mere 2.5% under \$300,000. The pandemic-induced housing market shifts are evident in the report, with median house prices in the Charlotte region soaring from \$273,000 in January 2020 to an astounding \$420,000 by September 2022. Consequently, housing affordability has become a substantial concern for middle-income households in the region.

The challenges aren't limited to homeowners; rental rates have surged during the pandemic. In 2021, the average effective rent per unit rose by a notable \$198, representing a 16.6% increase. These trends underscore the critical need for comprehensive and effective housing policies and initiatives to ensure housing affordability for all residents in Union County and the Charlotte region.

The North Carolina Housing Coalition's 2023 Housing Need in Union County Report: This report sheds light on the stark economic disparities and housing affordability challenges facing the community. To afford the fair market rent, which is set at \$1,333, individuals and families in Union County require an annual income of \$53,320. However, when considering the average annual salaries for various professions in the county, a concerning mismatch becomes evident. The average annual salary for those employed in healthcare is \$29,690, falling significantly short of the income necessary to meet fair market rent. Similarly, those working in childcare earn an average of \$23,490 annually, demonstrating the substantial gap between wages and housing costs. The situation remains challenging for agricultural laborers, with an average annual salary of \$29,850.

Moreover, the report highlights that to afford a Fair Market Rent apartment, individuals need to earn a wage of \$25.63 per hour. This wage requirement underscores the strain that housing costs place on the local workforce and residents. These statistics underscore the urgency of addressing affordable housing issues in Union County, where a significant portion of the population faces the burden of housing costs that outpace their income levels, emphasizing the need for comprehensive solutions to enhance housing affordability and economic well-being for the community's residents.

The HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS): HUD identifies specific housing challenges, categorized into four distinct problems. These issues encompass incomplete kitchen and plumbing facilities, overcrowding (defined as having more than one person per room), and cost burden exceeding 50% of household income. Furthermore, HUD designates a subset of these challenges as severe housing problems, including incomplete kitchen and plumbing facilities, overcrowding beyond 1.5 persons per room, and a cost burden exceeding 50% of household income.

Among Union County's 75,165 households, the CHAS data reveals a concerning prevalence of these housing difficulties. Approximately 18,830 households, whether owners or renters, grapple with at least one of the four primary housing issues. Additionally, 8,485 households experience one or more of the four severe housing problems. Furthermore, the data highlights the extent of

the cost burden in the region. Over half of Union County's households (56,845), encompassing both owners and renters, face a cost burden that is less than or equal to 30% of their income. Another 10,875 households experience a moderate cost burden, ranging between 30% and 50%, while 6,690 households, both owners and renters, endure a severe cost burden, surpassing the 50% threshold. These findings underscore the pressing need for comprehensive action to address housing challenges and enhance affordability for Union County's residents.

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Exhibit C: Soundness of Approach

i) What is your vision? (15 points)

Union County is requesting \$1 million in PRO Housing grant funding to support planning activities that will allow us to help overcome local barriers to facilitate the increase in affordable housing production and preservation. Union County is proposing planning and capacity-building activities for HUD PRO Housing funding support.

Union County is proposing to conduct a study that will result in an Affordable Housing Plan to address the significant barriers that exist at the local level. The goals of the plan will be to:

- Welcome, attract, and retain a diverse population.
- Meet the housing needs of a diverse population, including providing housing that is affordable to people with moderate and low incomes and of different age groups.
- Create new affordable housing opportunities.
- Preserve the existing affordable housing stock.
- Partner Countywide to meet the housing needs of vulnerable populations.
- Raise community awareness of affordable housing needs, solutions, and broader impacts.

The affordable housing challenges confronting Union County residents cannot be effectively resolved solely by the market. Market-driven mortgage and rental rates are influenced by the expenses associated with constructing and maintaining housing, which encompasses land costs and increasing annual percentage rates. Due to escalating land prices and increasing demand, both mortgage and market rental rates surpass the financial means of numerous low- and moderate-income households. Government assistance is indispensable for providing housing to these households, as the market alone cannot meet their needs.

Affordable housing is mentioned in the Comprehensive Plans of 5 municipalities located within Union County. Indian Trail, Monroe, Stallings, Waxhaw, and Wingate all discussed the need to look at policies that might incentivize affordable housing and encourage mixed-use developments that would increase housing options. The comprehensive Affordable Housing Plan will include an in-depth review of all areas of Union County and the development of Neighborhood Master Plans in several LMI areas of Union County. Union County's PRO Housing proposal has anticipated positive effects for the entire county. The development of the Affordable Housing Plan will help us reach our goal to overcome barriers and achieve affordable housing throughout the County. This in turn will preserve and create housing units and will identify high-opportunity areas that expand the potential for development in underserved communities across Union County as a whole.

The steps to bring the Affordable Housing Plan to completion will include:

- Assessing housing needs, which will combine an analysis of demographic, economic, and real estate market trends with input from stakeholders to identify a clear picture of housing trends and affordability needs in Union County.
- Working with the existing Affordable Housing Committee in multiple sessions to develop a vision and goals for the plan and discuss potential affordable housing tools that Union County can implement to meet its housing needs.
- Developing recommendations for feasible programs and projects alongside impactful strategies and tools the County can pursue to address its housing needs and meet its affordable housing goals; and
- Drafting a plan for public review before adoption by the Union County Board of Commissioners.

In addition to the creation of the Affordable Housing Plan, Union County believes that hiring an Affordable Housing Officer is crucial to the success and long-term implementation of affordable housing initiatives. The responsibilities of this position would include:

- Spearheading the planning, management, and oversight of affordable housing development projects through public-private partnerships.
- Identifying and analyzing the identified affordable housing development opportunities and methods to increase and preserve the inventory of affordable housing.
- Successfully select, manage, and work collaboratively with development partners, outside consultants, legal counsel, and technical experts.
- Serve as a liaison between affordable housing applicants and the County to support projects navigating the project development and approval process.
- Working closely with market-rate residential developers to develop affordable housing proposals and monitor compliance once projects are approved.
- Working with existing Grants staff to incorporate affordable housing programs and projects into their HUD Consolidated and Annual Action Plans.

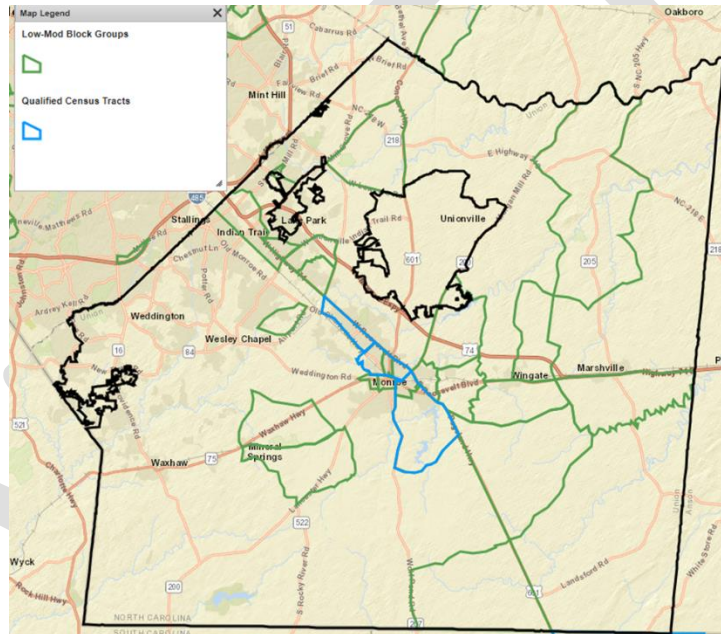
Local government entities like Union County and nonprofit organizations face significant challenges in effecting change and mitigating established or presumed obstacles to accessible and affordable housing. This is primarily due to the inability to allocate funding for essential planning studies and specific tasks needed to tackle these issues. Moreover, these entities cannot viably support the housing development pipeline when they lack the financial capacity and must bear the associated costs and risks of pre-development planning efforts.

Once Union County has completed its plan and identified viable programs and projects, we intend to complete environmental assessments and design studies that are necessary for moving projects into the development phase. Union County also intends to integrate the identified goals and projects into future HUD Consolidated Plans and Annual Action Plans to make the best use

out of future CDBG, HOME, and other HUD funding. The County also intends to use collaborative funding sources to bring programs and projects to reality.

ii) What is your geographic scope? (5 points)

Union County is an entitlement community designated under the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Union County’s current CDBG Grant Program area consists of Marshville, Monroe, Stallings, Waxhaw, Weddington, Wingate, Fairview, Indian Trail, Wesley Chapel, Mineral Springs, and unincorporated areas. There are 3 qualified Census tracts in the City of Monroe. In addition, there are 17 Low Mod Block Groups in Union County.



Union County’s CDBG Grant Program area consists of the unincorporated areas of Union County as well as the following municipalities:

- Marshville: Population 2,617
- Monroe: Population 36,018 Includes 3 Qualified Census Tracts: 204.05, 204.06, and 206.02.
- Stallings: Population 33,102
- Waxhaw: Population 22,533
- Weddington: Population 27,426
- Wingate: Population 4,141
- Fairview: Population 3,603
- Indian Trail: Population 41,724

- Wesley Chapel: Population 9,040
- Mineral Springs: Population 3,294

iii) Who are your key stakeholders? How are you engaging them? (5 points)

Union County’s key stakeholders include but are not limited to residents, affordable housing developers, local and regional agencies, local nonprofits, and advocacy groups.

Union County has identified the following stakeholders and will need to continue to strategize to encourage public participation, build support, and engage community members, including continued meetings and publishing notices to affected communities. Here’s how each of these key stakeholders are engaged in the proposal.

- **Thrive! Union:** Thrive! Union is a pivotal partner in the initiative, representing a network of nonprofit organizations committed to addressing affordable housing issues. These nonprofit members play a crucial role in driving community engagement, outreach, and support for affordable housing initiatives. Their expertise, resources, and community networks are leveraged to ensure the success of the proposal.
- **Monroe-Union County Community Development Corporation (MUCCDC):** MUCCDC is a key player in the local community, specializing in community development and revitalization efforts. They assist low- and moderate-income families in improving their quality of life, obtaining affordable housing, developing small businesses as well as strengthening economic development through education, services, and training. Their involvement is instrumental in executing strategies for affordable housing, as they bring in-depth knowledge of the local housing landscape and access to resources critical for affordable housing projects.
- **City of Monroe:** As a municipal entity, the City of Monroe has a significant role in the proposal. The city government collaborates closely with Union County in implementing housing policies, building codes, and Comprehensive Plan updates. Their engagement is essential to ensuring that local government policies align with the goals of the Affordable Housing Plan.
- **Community Link NC:** Community Link is an essential partner, contributing to the proposal by offering resources, services, and expertise in the field of affordable housing. Their engagement focuses on providing direct support to individuals and families in need of affordable housing solutions, thereby making a tangible impact on the ground.
- **Monroe Housing Authority:** The Monroe Housing Authority is a critical stakeholder with expertise in housing management and administration. Their involvement ensures that affordable housing units are efficiently managed and maintained over the long term, contributing to the sustainability of the proposal's objectives.
- **The Arc of Union County:** The Arc of Union County's engagement extends beyond housing to address broader issues affecting individuals with intellectual and

developmental disabilities. Their involvement reflects a commitment to inclusivity and ensuring that affordable housing initiatives consider the needs of all residents.

Outreach

Union County conducted several methods of outreach in developing this proposal by:

- Posting the application on our website
- Hosting a public hearing
- Consultation with citizens, surrounding municipal staff, non-profit executive directors, Continuum of Care members as well as internal County departments such as County Manager’s Office and the Board of Commissioners during a public Council meeting.

Our methods for continued outreach include stakeholders’ meetings and public engagement needed to scour the County to gather intensive data and develop planning and policy initiatives.

Engagement

Engagement is impeded in our practices to develop the annual action plans and CAPER as we work to address the affordable housing and fair housing goals in our Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan. The County is dedicated to community engagement to solicit feedback to address issues in our community. Through community engagement efforts the housing industry including affordable housing developers as well as persons in need of affordable housing feel that planning, policy, and strategies are needed to develop additional affordable housing units. The Union County CDBG program has also designed a website called “Engage Union County” that encourages the participation of all our residents, including minorities, non-English speaking individuals, and persons with disabilities in our planning processes and to gather input for identifying community development needs, setting priorities, allocating funds, and recommending program activities.

The engagement of these key stakeholders is multi-faceted and may involve:

- Regular meetings
- Collaborative planning
- Data sharing
- Resource allocation
- Ongoing communication

This collaborative effort harnesses the expertise and resources of various organizations to address affordable housing comprehensively and ensure its long-term success, with an emphasis on meeting the diverse needs of Union County residents.

iv) How does your proposal align with requirements to affirmatively further fair housing? (5points)

The proposed affordable housing plan aligns perfectly with the requirements to affirmatively further fair housing, as outlined in the 2022-2026 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Report. Here’s how the proposal addresses each of these critical areas:

- Addressing Significant Disparities in Housing Needs and Access to Opportunity:**
 The proposal recognizes and will directly remove barriers to the development of affordable housing by developing goals, planning and policies to address the significant disparities in housing needs within Union County. By focusing on improving access to affordable housing and creating a mechanism for its production and preservation, the proposal seeks to bridge the gap in housing opportunities, ensuring that all residents have equal access to quality housing options. This not only furthers fair housing but also contributes to a more equitable and inclusive community.

Figure Q Disproportionate Housing Needs Union County, NC AFFH-T 2020 Data			
Households experiencing any of 4 housing problems	# with problems	# households	% with problems
Race/Ethnicity			
White, Non-Hispanic	8,670	37,589	23%
Black, Non-Hispanic	3,039	6,409	47%
Hispanic	2,051	4,011	51%
Asian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	258	793	33%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	54	238	23%
Other, Non-Hispanic	155	382	41%
Total	14,290	49,520	29%
Household Type and Size			
Family households, <5 people	7,638	32,273	24%
Family households, 5+ people	2,312	6,920	33%
Non-family households	4,304	10,303	42%
Households experiencing any of 4 Severe Housing Problems	# with severe problems	# households	% with severe problems
Race/Ethnicity			
White, Non-Hispanic	3,674	37,589	10%
Black, Non-Hispanic	1,545	6,409	24%
Hispanic	1,248	4,011	31%
Asian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	190	793	24%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	44	238	18%
Other, Non-Hispanic	120	382	31%
Total	6,814	49,520	14%

- **Replacing Segregated Living Patterns with Integrated and Balanced Living Patterns:** The proposal is designed to directly evaluate neighborhoods and develop plans and implement housing policies that promote integrated and balanced living patterns. By enhancing existing housing strategies and developing policies tailored to the unique needs of Union County, the plan aims to break down the barriers that contribute to segregated living patterns. The goal is to create a more inclusive and diverse living environment, which aligns with the objective of affirmatively furthering fair housing.
- **Transforming Racially and Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty into Areas of Opportunity:** The proposal is a proactive step towards transforming racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity. By improving housing options and creating a mechanism for affordable housing production and preservation, the plan contributes to enhancing the overall quality of life in these areas. It promotes access to better housing, educational opportunities, and community resources, thus addressing the goal of fair housing by reducing concentrated poverty.
- **Fostering and Maintaining Compliance with Civil Rights and Fair Housing Laws:** The proposal, through its comprehensive planning, policy development, and data-driven decision-making, ensures that Union County remains in compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws. By fostering a culture of transparency, equity, and inclusivity, the plan will provide a framework for the county to consistently meet its legal obligations in the realm of fair housing.

The Affordable Housing Plan will aim for affordable housing best practices that ensure affordable housing will not be concentrated in low-opportunity areas.

The goal of the plan is to increase housing choice by expanding housing options in neighborhoods in which residents who need affordable housing can live. This includes the review of best practices and industry standards to address the unique housing needs of members of protected class groups, including persons with disabilities, families with children, and underserved communities of color.

This proposals' planned activities do not lead to the displacement of vulnerable residents. In fact, the activities in this proposal provide planning and policy and housing solutions.

This proposal directly addresses 2022 AIFH impediment 3 - Insufficient supply of new affordable housing to meet the growing needs of low and moderate-income residents. Lack of partnerships and support between public and private partners to efficiently leverage resources to build affordable housing or create mixed-income communities.

The proposal is well-aligned with the requirements to affirmatively further fair housing, addressing key areas identified in the Analysis of Impediments report. By promoting access to affordable housing, integrating living patterns, reducing concentrated poverty, and fostering compliance with fair housing laws, the plan demonstrates a strong commitment to advancing fair housing in Union County.

v) **What are your budget and timeline proposals? (5 points)**

Proposed Budget:

Activity	Estimated Cost
Affordable Housing Plan	\$200,000
Admin (Affordable Housing Officer)	\$300,000
Pre-Development Costs (i.e., Environmental Review and Design Costs)	\$500,000

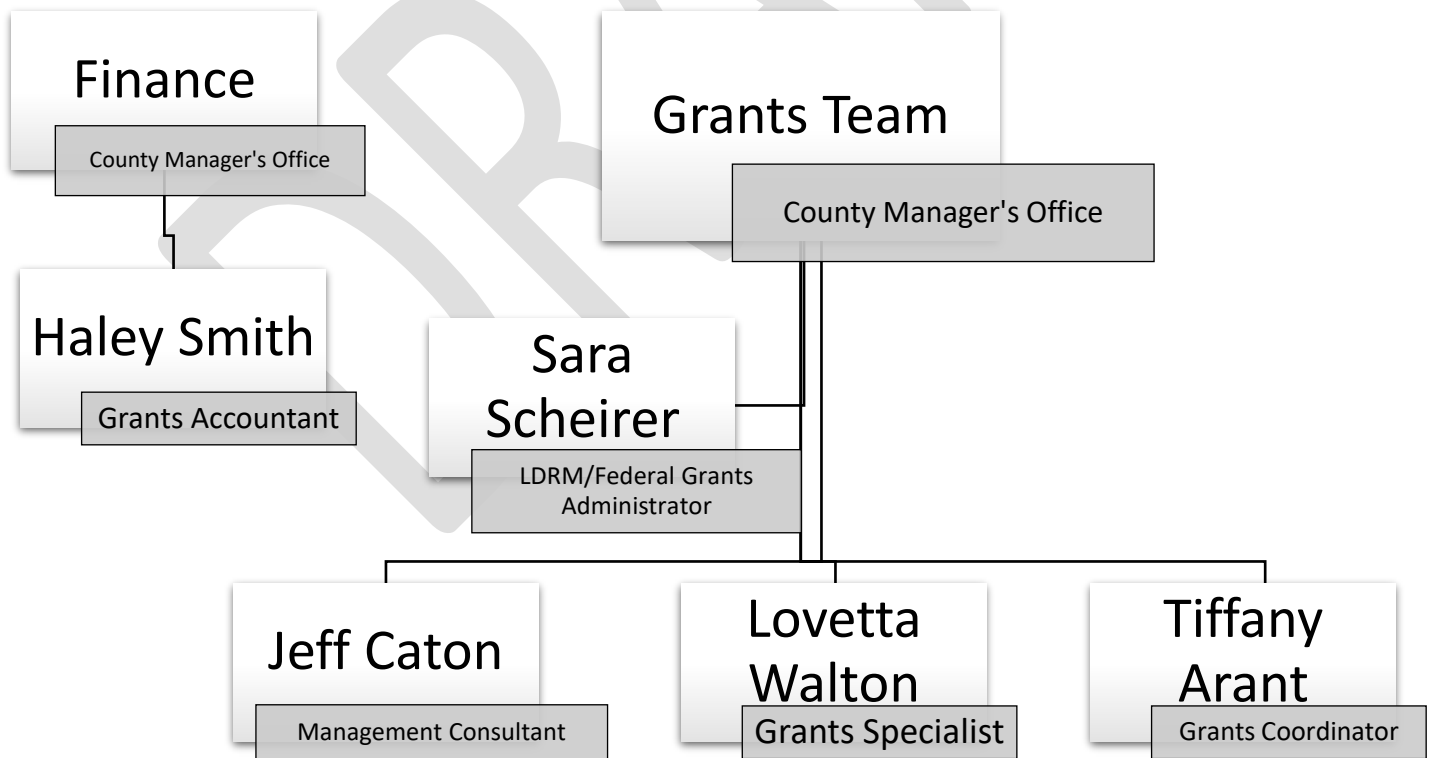
Proposed Timeline:

Milestone	Estimated Completion Date
Grant Funding Received	1/31/2024
Affordable Housing Officer Position Posted	2/15/2024
Affordable Housing Officer Position Hired	4/15/2024
RFPs Developed and Out for Bid	5/1/2024
Affordable Housing Plan Consultant Selected	7/1/2024
Contract Awarded and Executed	8/15/2024
Study/Planning Begins	9/1/2024
Affordable Housing Plan, Neighborhood Master Plans Completed	9/1/2025
Identified Projects Selected for Pre-Development Costs	10/1/2025
RFPs Developed for Environmental Review and Design	1/15/2026
All Pre-Development Activities Completed	12/31/2026

Exhibit D: Capacity

i) What capacity do you and your Partners(s) have? What is your staffing plan? (10 points)

Union County is a member of Thrive! Union as a space where individuals with different economic experiences work to ensure the County’s prosperity is accessible to all. Staff from Union County’s Grants Team and Health and Human Services Department serve on the



Affordable Housing Subcommittee. This group works to address the lack of affordable and available housing in the community and will be a critical component to successfully implementing our proposed goals.

- Union County is the lead entity and will partner with internal County departments and community stakeholders to complete the activities within the proposal. Union County Manager’s Office has successfully managed the CDBG entitlement program since 2016 and has continued to increase staff and capacity, onboarding 5 new staff members in the last year who are dedicated to grants.
- Administrative support and financial oversight of Federal awards is provided by the Union County Finance Department. The Grants Team routinely collaborates with the financial accountant dedicated to grants. Union County has significant experience and a successful track record in managing Federal grant funds from application to closeout.
- Union County’s Procurement Department is well versed in procuring and soliciting for Federally funded projects. The County has a robust Policy and Procedures Manual that includes the addition of “Appendix A – Procurement Procedures with Federal Funds.”
- The County has been making strategic and thoughtful efforts to onboard staff over the last calendar year to ensure grant compliance, and enhance and grow grant funding, including initiatives in affordable housing, disaster recovery and resiliency, and cybersecurity.

Exhibit E: Leverage

i) Are you leveraging other funding or non-financial contributions? (10 points)

Union County plans to leverage other funding as well as non-financial contributions. The County will continue to seek opportunities for partnerships in the affordable housing sector. As an entitlement community, Union County receives the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Program provides annual grants on a formula basis to entitled cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. Union County's Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan includes affordable housing, public infrastructure, and improvements. CDBG entitlement funding is an ideal source to leverage HUD PRO Housing funds. Coupling HUD PRO Housing funds allows the use of extensive affordable housing planning and policy development to enable the county to increase the affordable housing units and affordable housing initiatives throughout the county.

- \$90,000 FY22 and \$683,500 FY23 CDBG funding is available for the use of affordable housing and public facilities and improvements to address the needs of affordable housing in Union County participating jurisdictions.

Exhibit F: Long Term Effect

i) What permanent, long-term effects will your proposal have? What outcomes do you expect? (10 points)

The proposal's long-term effects are expected to be multifaceted and impactful, addressing the affordable housing issue in Union County in a sustainable manner. The proposal will further develop, directly evaluate, and implement housing policy and neighborhood plans as well as improve housing strategies and create a mechanism to facilitate affordable housing production and preservation throughout Union County. This will aim to bring about lasting changes in Union County's housing landscape. We anticipate several additional outcomes:

- **Sustainable Housing Growth:** By creating a mechanism to facilitate affordable housing production and preservation, the proposal will pave the way for a sustained increase in affordable housing options in Union County.

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** The Affordable Housing Study will serve as a valuable resource for years to come, empowering various stakeholders, including elected officials, nonprofits, developers, and universities, with credible data to make informed decisions and address housing issues effectively.
- **Expert Guidance:** The Affordable Housing Study will provide access to subject matter experts who can educate public officials and other stakeholders. By offering data-driven insights, these experts will not only highlight the needs but also the opportunities for a path forward. This knowledge transfer will continue to guide decision-makers in addressing affordable housing challenges in the long term.
- **Policy Integration:** This proposal will integrate affordable housing considerations into County policies, such as Comprehensive Plan updates and building codes. These policy changes will contribute to long-term housing solutions.
- **Educational Impact:** Thrive! Union coalition of nonprofits will benefit from this proposal's focus on data and planning. It will help educate the community and increase efforts to address affordable housing needs comprehensively.
- **Awareness and Best Practices:** The proposal will raise awareness about the importance of affordable housing planning and policy activities, aligning with industry best practices to achieve affordable housing goals efficiently.
- **Sustained Progress:** The dedicated staff will continue to work towards achieving the PRO Housing goals, adding affordable housing units to the community year after year.
- **Government Assistance and Incentives:** The development of affordable housing planning and policy will encourage local government assistance and discuss incentives, ensuring a supportive environment for affordable housing initiatives over the long term. In essence, this proposal seeks to create a lasting impact by establishing a robust framework for affordable housing that will endure for years, benefiting the community and fostering a more sustainable housing landscape in Union County.

Exhibit G: Public Comments

Union County will hold a Public Hearing on Thursday, October 26, 2023, at 6:00 pm which Union County will solicit public input to apply for the PRO Housing grant funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) This public hearing follows a public comment period that commences on Tuesday, October 17, 2023, and will conclude on Thursday, October 26, 2023.

The HUD PRO Housing application will be available for public review and comment for a period of ten (10) days. The application can be accessed on the County's website, here: <https://www.unioncountync.gov/cdbg>.

Comments can be sent to 500 North Main St., Monroe, NC 28112 Attn: County Manager's Office: PRO Housing Citizen Participation- Grants Specialist or emailed to CDBG@unioncountync.gov. All comments must be received by Thursday, October 26, 2023, by 5:00 pm to be considered for the application submission.