

Tenant Relocation Assistance Stakeholder Meeting Summary of Stakeholder Feedback 01/13/2016

On January 13, 2016 Neighborhood Housing and Community Development facilitated a stakeholder meeting to discuss the needs and experiences of renters due to redevelopment, renovation, or repair of multifamily properties in Austin. Meeting attendees included tenants who had experienced displacement as well as representatives from:

- Austin Energy
- Austin Tenants Council (ATC)
- City of Austin Code Department
- City of Austin Development Services Department
- City of Austin Neighborhood Housing & Community Development Department
- Foundation Communities
- Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA)
- Ladies of Charity of Austin
- Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid
- Texas Rose

What were the biggest challenges faced by displaced tenants?

- The up-front costs of renting a new apartment (the application fee; new security deposit; first month's rent)
- The immediate moving costs of moving (e.g. hiring a U-Haul, gas)
- The time and difficulty of searching for new housing
- The wealth a tenant loses when landlords do not refund security deposits
- When tenants are forced to move further and further from the center of Austin, they have to pay more for (and/or spend more time using) transportation -- to work, medical care, and basic services. The burden is even higher for folks using public transportation.
- Difficulty in remaining in same school district; costs of buying new uniforms; negative effects on children who change schools during academic year.
- Extra application fees or higher deposits charged to those with low credit scores or no credit.
- Insufficient notice to tenants of the need to vacate, which increases the difficulty of finding an affordable new home in the same area by shortening the amount of time tenants are able to search and save up for moving costs/higher rents

What would have been most helpful to displaced tenants?

- Returning security deposit in a timely manner
- Help finding a new apartment that is affordable and meets tenants' needs
- Ensuring resources are available in other languages and providing interpreters to tenants, and helped get their kids registered with new schools.
- Providing tenants with more information on who to go to or providing one centralized place or person to access for help navigating the relocation process
- Direct financial assistance to tenants for moving and relocation costs
- Providing more advanced notice of the need to vacate