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City of Northampton Launches a Project to Assess Fair Access to Housing

The City of Northampton, through the Northampton Housing Partnership and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), will be continuing a decades-long quest to ensure all Americans are able to live in safe, quality neighborhoods - a cause brought to prominence by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who would have turned 90 this month. The City is launching this effort to learn what current barriers to fair housing - the ability to choose housing free from unlawful discrimination, are present in Northampton and the region and set out a work plan to ameliorate those barriers. The fair housing analysis is being funded by the City of Northampton.

The community engagement process, entitled “Unlocking Opportunity/ An Assessment of Barriers to Housing Choice in Northampton” will seek to identify patterns of racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty, disparities in access to opportunities, and disproportionate housing needs, among other considerations. The project will include a review of laws, regulations and administrative policies of the City and how those laws affect the location, availability and accessibility of housing in the community. Additionally, the public and private conditions affecting fair housing choice for all people will be assessed as well as the availability of affordable, accessible housing in a range of types and sizes.

The project will offer numerous opportunities for public input including: stakeholder interviews with social service providers, private and non-profit housing property managers, Housing Authority representatives from 5 communities, Disability Community advocates, local officials from surrounding towns, housing providers, housing developers, realtors and local government officials including the Mayor, the Human Rights Commission, the Disability Commission, the City Council, the public schools, the Senior Services Department, the Office of Planning & Sustainability and Veterans Services. The stakeholder interview sessions will be followed by focus groups, comprised of people with direct and lived experience. A community survey will be widely circulated to garner additional input. Results of the public process will be presented at a public forum to be held in the late spring. Through this process, the City seeks to:

- Analyze and work to eliminate housing discrimination in the City;
- Promote fair housing choice for all persons, provide opportunities for inclusive housing patterns regardless of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, disability, national origin, and sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, military or veteran status, and housing subsidy status;
- Promote housing that is structurally accessible to and usable by all persons, particularly for persons with disabilities.

For more information: Contact Peg Keller, Mayor’s Office CDBG Director 413-587-1288 or Catherine Ratte, PVPC Principal Planner 413-285-1174.