

UNITING CITIZENS FOR HOUSING AFFORDABILITY (U-CHAN)
53B TAFT AVENUE
WEST NEWTON, MA 02465
[REDACTED]

January 17, 2020

Amanda Berman, Director of Housing and Community Development
Department of Planning and Development
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Ms. Berman.

I am writing to submit information which U-CHAN believes should be considered as the Housing Department composes its DRAFT of the 2021-2025 Consolidated Plan.

Many of us for many years have been disappointed and frustrated at the lack of participation in the public meetings by the direct beneficiaries of the human service programs and housing projects funded by the federal funds. We do not believe it is because they are disinterested rather it has been due to meetings being held at a time not convenient for them to attend i.e. middle of the day when they are working or evening when they would need to have childcare.

This year we decided that we would seek an alternative way to seek their input – a survey. To that end we contracted with a Brandeis student under the supervision of Tatjana Meschede, Ph.D. Associate Director, Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP), Senior Scientist/Senior Lecturer at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University to prepare an online survey which would be used by (1) nonprofits that service this population and (2) managers of housing subsidized by public funds. Those nonprofits and property managers distributed the surveys. While the number of respondents was limited – 28 -; it is substantial compared to the number of attendees at the Planning Department public presentations. So we think the data are meaningful.

We included questions in the survey about (1) family income; (2) housing and neighborhood, including experience of homelessness ; (3) transportation; (4) employment need/desires.; (5) perceived social supports and (6) connection with the community. With the assistance of our Brandeis collaborators, we compiled what we consider the most important

results in a summary report that is attached. I hope that you will consider them as you prepare the draft.

Please feel free to contact me if you have need of any further information. We have more results than those highlighted in the report and would be happy to share them with you.

Sincerely,

Josephine McNeil
Co-Chair U-CHAN

Cc: Ruthanne Fuller, Mayor
Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development Department
Peter Doeringer, Planning and Development Board Chair
Susan Albright, President of City Council