

Executive Summary

Background

Los Angeles County is the most populated county in the state and nation, with a diverse population of more than 9.5 million residents. The County is comprised of residents of different ethnicities, of different cultural and ancestral backgrounds, and of different socioeconomic characteristics. Reflecting the Countywide profile, the Los Angeles Urban County (comprised of the County unincorporated areas and 48 of the 88 cities in the County) is also a diverse area.

Diversity enhances Los Angeles County as a unique urban environment in which to live, work, and play. To nurture diversity, each community must offer an environment where equal access to opportunities is treated as a fundamental right. In recognition of equal housing access as a fundamental right, the federal and State of California governments have both established fair housing as a right protected by laws, including:

- U.S. Fair Housing Act
- U.S. Fair Housing Amendments Act
- U.S. American with Disabilities Act
- California Fair Employment and Housing Act (codified in the Government Code)
- California Unruh Civil Rights Act (codified in the Government Code)
- California Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (codified in the Welfare and Institutions Code)

Additional statutes were passed by the California legislature to provide further protection:

- AB 2244, Housing Discrimination
- SB 2011, Discrimination with respect to Senior Housing
- SB 520, Housing for Persons with Disabilities

Scope and Intent of This Report

What is an AI?

The Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing Choice provides an overview of laws, regulations, conditions, or other possible obstacles that may affect an individual or a household’s access to housing. The AI includes:

- A comprehensive review of the laws, regulations, and administrative policies, procedures, and practices;
- An assessment of how those laws, regulations, policies, procedures, and practices affect the location, availability, and accessibility of housing; and
- An assessment of conditions, both public and private, affecting fair housing choice.

As the name of the report suggests, the document reviews “impediments” to fair housing. While this report also assesses the nature and extent of housing discrimination, the focus is on identifying impediments that may prevent equal housing access and developing solutions to mitigate or remove such impediments.

What is Fair Housing?

Fair housing describes a condition in which individuals of similar income levels in the same housing market have a like range of choice available to them regardless of race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, sex, disability, marital status, familial status, source of income, sexual orientation, or any other arbitrary factor.

Federal fair housing laws prohibit discrimination in the sale, rental, lease, or negotiation for real property based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, and disability. California fair housing laws build upon the federal laws and add marital status, ancestry, source of income, sexual orientation, and “any arbitrary discrimination” as the protected categories under the laws.

What is an Impediment to Fair Housing?

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Fair Housing Planning Guide, impediments to fair housing choice are:

- Any actions, omissions, or decisions taken because of race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, sex, disability, marital status, familial status, source of income, sexual orientation, or any other arbitrary factor which restrict housing choices or the availability of housing choices; or
- Any actions, omissions, or decisions which have the effect of restricting housing choices or the availability of housing choices on the basis of race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, sex, disability, marital status, familial status, source of income, sexual orientation, or any other arbitrary factor.

To affirmatively promote equal housing opportunity, a community must work to remove impediments to fair housing choice.

Geographic Areas Covered

This Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing Choice focuses on the Los Angeles *Urban County*, which is comprised of 48 participating cities and the unincorporated areas of the County (see Table E-1).

Table E-1
Los Angeles Urban County

Agoura Hills	Covina	La Puente	San Fernando
Arcadia	Cudahy	La Verne	San Gabriel
Artesia	Culver City	Lawndale	San Marino
Avalon	Diamond Bar	Lomita	Santa Fe Springs
Azusa	Duarte	Malibu	Sierra Madre
Bell	El Segundo	Manhattan Beach	Signal Hill
Bell Gardens	Hawaiian Gardens	Maywood	South El Monte
Beverly Hills	Hermosa Beach	Monrovia	South Pasadena
Calabasas	Irwindale	Rancho Palos Verdes	Temple City
Cerritos	La Canada-Flintridge	Rolling Hills	Walnut
Claremont	La Habra Heights	Rolling Hills Estates	West Hollywood
Commerce	La Mirada	San Dimas	Westlake Village
County Unincorporated Areas			

Scope of the AI

The AI is divided into eight chapters as described below:

1. *Introduction* defines “fair housing” and explains the purpose of the report.
2. *Community Outreach* describes the community outreach program and summarizes comments from residents and various agencies on fair housing issues.
3. *Urban County Profile* presents the demographic, housing, and income characteristics in Los Angeles County.
4. *Lending Practices* assesses the access to financing for different groups.
5. *Public Policies and Practices* analyzes various public policies and actions that may impede fair housing within the Urban County.
6. *Evaluation of the Current Fair Housing Profile* evaluates existing public and private programs, services, practices, and activities that assist in providing fair housing in Urban County.
7. *Achievements of the 1996 Strategic Plan* assesses the progress made since the preparation of the 1996 Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing Choice and the 1998-2003 Fair Housing Strategic Plan for the Urban County.
8. *Conclusions and Recommendations* summarizes the findings regarding fair housing issues in Los Angeles Urban County and provides recommendations on furthering fair housing practices.

Process for Developing the AI

This AI was developed through consultation with the community at large, service providers, professionals in the housing industry, and staff at the participating jurisdictions, among others. Technical and empirical data, existing studies, policies, and plans were also reviewed.

Methods Used to Obtain Community Input

To obtain input from the community, the following avenues were used:

- Community meetings for the Consolidated Plan (8 meetings throughout the Urban County)
- Community meetings for the AI (5 meetings throughout the Urban County)
- Housing and Community Development Needs Survey that included questions on fair housing
- Media campaign (newspaper ads)
- Internet (posting of survey and information on community meetings)
- Phone interviews with service agencies and professionals in the housing industry

Data Sources

The following data sources were used to complete this AI:

- 1990 and 2000 Census
- County of Los Angeles Consolidated Plan
- Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- California Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing Division
- Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data regarding lending patterns in 2001
- Dataquick housing sales activity data
- Housing Rights Center
- Fair Housing Foundation of Long Beach
- Fair Housing Council of San Fernando Valley
- Local boards of realtors
- Local apartment associations
- Local lenders

Impediments Identified

Based on the analysis conducted and input from the community, several impediments were identified:

Fair Housing Services

Impediment #1: A general lack of public awareness of fair housing rights and services.

Recommendations: The Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles (CDC) should ensure that fair housing providers:

- Have a stated method/strategy for targeting outreach and education efforts.
- Increase consistency of mailing newsletters and literature distribution amongst the participating cities and the unincorporated areas.
- Diversify the areas in which trainings, booths, and other outreach efforts occur.
- Seek ways to increase attendance of housing fairs and fair housing events.
- Target homeowners/realtors/investors who rent out single-family homes.
- Increase consistency of services across jurisdictions.

Impediment #2: Inconsistency in reporting services requested and services provided.

Recommendations: The CDC should:

- Increase reporting to include accomplishments in the unincorporated areas of the County.
- Increase monitoring efforts to ensure efficiency of services provided by each of the Fair Housing Councils.
- Create a uniform method of compiling accomplishment data to increase consistency in reporting efforts through better and more detailed forms and increased monitoring efforts.
- Include reporting statistics by census tracts.

Impediment #3: Testing and auditing efforts were limited and the results of the testing performed were not reported in detail.

Recommendation: The County should ensure that testing and auditing occur regularly and the results are reported upon consistently.

Impediment #4: Many of the strategies in the CDC's Five-Year Fair Housing Strategic Plan were never fully monitored or enforced.

Recommendation: In developing the new strategic plan in response to this AI, the County should coordinate with the fair housing service providers and relevant agencies/departments to develop implementation measures that are realistic, with measurable objectives.

Public Policies and Practices

Impediment #5: Half of the 49 jurisdictions in the Los Angeles Urban County (48 participating cities and the County) had housing elements that did not comply with state law as of November 2002.

Recommendation: The CDC should encourage participating cities to achieve compliance status with the State housing element law, particularly establishing programs and policies that meet the housing needs for persons with special needs.

Impediment #6: The survey conducted for this AI indicates that 19 of the 42 cities that responded to the survey do not have policies for reasonable accommodation to meet the housing needs of persons with disabilities.

Recommendation: The CDC should encourage participating jurisdictions to adopt procedures for reasonable accommodation.

Impediment #7: A community establishing an occupancy standard that is more restrictive than the Uniform Housing Code or State HCD guidelines may potentially be viewed as violating the fair housing law.

Recommendation: The CDC should strongly encourage cities with occupancy standards that limit the number of persons (related or unrelated) that may share a housing unit to remove such restrictions.

Impediment #8: A community’s zoning ordinance can restrict access to housing for relations failing to qualify as a “family.” Nineteen cities in the Urban County specify the number of unrelated persons that can reside in a unit and be considered as a family.

Recommendation: The CDC should encourage cities to remove the definition of family in their zoning ordinances or modify the definition to not discriminate against non-family households.

Impediment #9: Several cities do not have zoning ordinances that reflect requirements of the Lanterman Development Disabilities Services Act to permit licensed community care facilities serving six or fewer persons by right. Some cities do not permit facilities serving more than six persons.

Recommendation: The CDC should notify the cities of the need to update their zoning ordinances to comply with the Lanterman Development Disabilities Services Act.

Impediment #10: Most cities in the Urban County do not provide fair housing and sensitivity training to staff.

Recommendation: The CDC and fair housing service providers should organize and provide fair housing and sensitivity training to planning and housing staff in participating jurisdictions.

Lending Practices

Impediment #11: Most lower-income households are precluded from the homeownership market.

Recommendation: The CDC should continue to offer a range of homeownership programs for lower-income households to expand homeownership opportunities to this group.

Impediment #12: There is a lack of knowledge about available first-time homebuyer programs and loans.

Recommendation: The CDC should work with local lenders and government institutions such as Fannie Mae to provide information about government-backed financing for low- and moderate-income residents.

Impediment 13: Blacks and Hispanics continue to have lower home loan approval rates across all income levels compared to Asian and White applicants.

Recommendations: The County should contact local lenders with homebuyer assistance programs to explore ways to expand participation by potential homebuyers, focusing on efforts to expand homeownership opportunities to Hispanic and Black households.

Impediment #14: Predatory lending practices have escalated in the County, victimizing many minority and senior households.

Recommendations: The County should examine adopting a countywide ordinance to curb predatory lending practices or encourage cities within the County to adopt local ordinances restricting predatory lending.

Impediment #15: Considerably fewer home loans were approved in District 2 than other districts within the County.

Recommendation: The CDC should provide credit and financial counseling services within District 2.

Impediment #16: Coordination with lenders, realtors, landlords, and managers is limited.

Recommendations: The CDC should:

- Encourage lenders to utilize the newer and more accurate credit scoring software.
- Increase outreach to realtors and lenders through fair housing fairs, training sessions, and dissemination of fair housing information.
- Work with realtor associations and multiple listing services to monitor Fair Housing Violation policies of these agencies, the practices of their members, and increase coordination of outreach and training efforts.
- Monitor home purchase appraisals and sales data trends to address disparities among neighboring cities.

Discrimination

Impediment #17: Special populations such as large families with children, female-headed families, formerly homeless persons, disabled persons and persons with HIV/AIDS face higher levels of fair housing violations.

Recommendations: The County should:

- Embark on wider education for the special populations listed above and for rental property owners/managers about what constitutes a fair housing violation.
- Work closely with special population groups and/or programs that assist them to expand their housing options and educate them about their rights in the housing market.

Impediment #18: While limited housing is not a fair housing issue, when the housing market is tight, with high demand, low vacancies, and rising costs, the potential for discriminatory housing practices also increases.

Recommendation: While recognizing that funds for subsidizing housing are limited, the participating jurisdictions should continue to encourage the development of affordable housing through: (1) development fee waivers/reductions; (2) streamlined permit processing; (3) flexibility in applying design and development standards; (4) achievable density bonuses; (5) other general plan, administrative, and zoning efforts; and (6) public-private partnerships with developers of affordable housing.

Impediment #19: Many “for rent” and “for sale” signs and advertisements for housing are in Spanish or languages other than English.

Recommendation: The CDC will work with the fair housing service provider, Apartment Associations, and local Real Estate Associations to monitor discriminatory/exclusionary working within newspaper, internet, and outdoor advertisements for rental and for-sale units.

Impediment #20: Instances of steering by realtors to certain neighborhoods occurs in many communities.

Recommendation: The CDC should work with the fair housing service providers to ensure that adequate testing regarding neighborhood steering is occurring. This testing should occur within all five supervisorial districts of the County.

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