



City of Stockton

Legislation Text

File #: 25-0263, **Version:** 2

ADOPT A MOTION TO ALLOCATE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) FUNDING FOR FAIR HOUSING SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approve by motion action:

1. Allocating an amount up to \$200,000.00 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program funds to a two-year contract to Project Sentinel for fair housing services;
2. Authorizing the City Manager, or designee, to enter into a contract with Project Sentinel for fair housing services, for a period of three years, with option to renew; and
3. Approving and authorizing the City Manager, or designee, to take all necessary actions to carry out the intent of this action.

Summary

The City of Stockton is committed to ensuring equal access to housing for all residents, in alignment with the Fair Housing Act and state housing laws. This initiative aims to award funding for Fair Housing services to support the City's ongoing efforts to address and/or prevent housing discrimination, increase awareness of fair housing laws, and foster inclusive communities.

As part of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, funding will be utilized to provide vital fair housing services, including legal resources, counseling, and educational outreach to low- and moderate-income residents who may face housing discrimination. This effort will directly contribute to the City's goal of improving housing accessibility and ensuring compliance with federal and state housing regulations.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was released in January 2025 (PUR 25-014) to acquire the use of fair housing service providers. Following the RFP selection process, it is recommended that Council approve an agreement with Project Sentinel, a northern California non-profit agency, to deliver comprehensive fair housing services.

DISCUSSION

Background

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is a federally funded program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist entitlement jurisdictions, such as the City of Stockton, in addressing various community development

File #: 25-0263, Version: 2

needs, particularly for low- and moderate-income persons. Established under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, CDBG is one of the longest-running federal programs aimed at promoting the development of viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment. The program supports a wide range of activities, including housing, economic development, public services, and infrastructure improvements.

As an entitlement jurisdiction, the City of Stockton receives annual CDBG allocations to implement programs that promote community development and improve the quality of life for its residents. Specifically, the City has historically utilized a portion of CDBG funds to provide Public Services, including fair housing services, which are critical in addressing discrimination and promoting inclusiveness in housing practices within the community. These services are an active step in addressing state and federal Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH) requirements.

Effective fair housing services strive to educate residents about their housing rights, provide legal resources to those experiencing discrimination, and ensure that low-income and minority residents have access to safe, affordable housing without fear of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability. Effective services should also include the investigation and resolution of complaints related to housing discrimination.

The federal government's mandate to affirmatively further fair housing requires all recipients of CDBG funds to take proactive steps to prevent housing discrimination and promote equal access to housing. The initiative being recommended through this item is designed to fund a program that would meet state and federal requirements of affirmatively furthering fair housing to address and/or prevent housing discrimination in Stockton.

Present Situation

To support the City's commitment to fair housing, an RFP was issued on January 2, 2025, to solicit proposals from qualified firms or organizations capable of providing a full range of fair housing services to Stockton residents, including education, outreach, investigation, and enforcement.

Three applications were received in response to the RFP, and after a thorough evaluation and interview process, Project Sentinel was selected to provide the needed services. Project Sentinel will be responsible for implementing programs designed to protect residents from housing discrimination and support the City in meeting its fair housing obligations under state and federal law. In addition to providing housing discrimination investigative services, Project Sentinel provides tenant-landlord dispute resolution services as well as educational workshops/presentations related to tenant rights and landlord responsibilities.

Project Sentinel is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt organization established to, "...develop and promote fairness and equality of opportunity for all persons and to advocate peaceful resolutions of disputes for community welfare and harmony," as stated in their published Mission Statement. With over 45 years of experience, the agency delivers comprehensive services including fair housing enforcement, housing counseling, dispute resolution, and mortgage intervention to communities in Northern California. Project Sentinel maintains 24 local entitlement contracts across its service areas. Seven offices are strategically located to provide localized support, including in Modesto and Sacramento. Services are offered in English, Spanish, Hmong, Hindi and Vietnamese through existing bilingual staff, and other language interpretation is provided through Language Services

File #: 25-0263, **Version:** 2

Associates, ensuring accessibility to diverse populations. Project Sentinel has indicated it is willing to establish a local office in Stockton to accomplish the fair housing deliverables. Staff will work with Project Sentinel to support the establishment of a local office in Stockton during its first year of operation.

Project Sentinel asserted in their proposal that they are a Qualified Fair Housing Enforcement Organization (QFHEO) by HUD. They have investigated over 300 housing discrimination complaints annually. Such case origination has resulted in significant settlements and groundbreaking decisions related to familial status, source of income, licensed home daycare and disability. They also have consistently secured Performance-Based Fair Housing Initiative Program (FHIP) grants, which could assist in leveraging funding to assist in fair housing services provided to residents of Stockton.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

There will be no financial impact to the City's General Fund or any other unrestricted fund as a result of this action. Funding will come from the CDBG grant funding, specifically there is sufficient funding available in the Community Development fund (230-231) to support this action.