

City Council Report

Date: September 28, 2015
To: City Council
Through: Natalie N. Lewis, Deputy City Manager
From: Liz Morales, Housing and Community Development Director and Ruth Giese, Department of Community Services Director
Subject: 2015-16 CDBG Program Annual Action Plan First Substantial Amendment
Arizona Fair Housing Center - Housing Alternative Dispute Mediation
Program Pilot Project



Strategic
Initiatives

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding the request to amend the City's FY 2015/16 Annual Action Plan by adding the following new Community Development Block Grant activity:

Arizona Fair Housing Center
Fair Housing Alternative Dispute Mediation Pilot Project - \$5,000.00

Background

As a condition of the receipt of Community Development Block Grants, HOME Investment Partnerships Program Funds and Emergency Solutions Grants, the City of Mesa (COM) is required to undertake activities that will promote fair housing and equal opportunity. Included in the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan, of which the 2015/2016 Annual Action Plan is a part, and the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing are several initiatives that will help to promote fair housing including, but not limited to, conferences, training, and the continuation of partnerships with organizations that are engaged in credit counseling, landlord/tenant law, and the promotion of civil rights, especially for persons principally of low and moderate income.

The Arizona Fair Housing Center (AFHC) is a nonprofit, HUD-Approved Fair Housing Organization. They receive funding directly from HUD to provide fair housing education and enforcement of federal civil rights laws for citizens who believe their rights may have been violated. AFHC also works closely with units of government on providing staff trainings and evaluation of fair housing programs and services that will help to promote fair housing and equal opportunities.

Discussion

Landlord/Tenant complaints often times happen as the result of parties not being fully made aware of their legal obligations. Valid complaints ranging from lack of air conditioning, making rent payments on time and language barriers often end up in court. In many instances, the lack of legal representation or the lack of disposable funds makes it virtually impossible for affected tenants to have a successful outcome in the court system.

In order to address this concern, AFHC is proposing the creation of an Alternative Dispute Mediation Program. This pilot project will create a unified procedure for the referral of cases from COM to AFHC. The project proposes to train a total of fifteen mediators who will be available to resolve housing complaints. Housing and Community Development staff will also receive in depth training regarding the mediation process and the use of mediation to resolve housing complaints.

Fiscal Impact

Funding for this request will be provided by federal Community Development Block Grants funds.

Coordinated with

Housing and Community Development Department, Community Services Department and the City Manager's Office have reviewed this proposal and support this authorization by the City Manager to amend the City's FY 2015/16 Annual Action Plan.