



**WHERE OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS
THE DOORS ARE LOCKED**



GREATER NEW ORLEANS
**FAIR HOUSING
ACTION CENTER**

Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center

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I. Background: Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center

Mission

The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) is a private, non-profit civil rights organization established in the summer of 1995 to eradicate housing discrimination in the greater New Orleans area. Through education, investigation, and enforcement activities, GNOFHAC promotes equal opportunity in all housing transactions including rental, sales, lending, and insurance. GNOFHAC is dedicated to fighting housing discrimination not only because it is illegal, but also because it is a divisive force that perpetuates poverty, segregation, ignorance, fear, and hatred.

History

Since its inception, GNOFHAC has built an impressive record of advocating for the fair housing rights of local consumers. The Center grew significantly in the aftermath of the 2005 hurricanes, when the area's sudden housing shortage brought forth an unprecedented amount of flagrant discrimination. Since then, GNOFHAC has successfully advocated on behalf of thousands of clients and has recovered millions of dollars in damages, including a \$62 million settlement on behalf of Katrina-affected homeowners who were awarded woefully insufficient repair grants from the Road Home Program.

In 2006, GNOFHAC collaborated with the National Fair Housing Alliance to launch the Hurricane Relief Project, an initiative to provide technical assistance and housing counseling to homeowners who were attempting to rebuild and recover after Hurricane Katrina. The project has since been renamed the Homeownership Protection Project (HOP) and now focuses primarily on foreclosure prevention. Since its inception, HOP has saved hundreds of homeowners—many of whom are African-Americans who were illegally targeted for subprime loans—from foreclosure.

GNOFHAC also proactively addresses housing discrimination through a robust education and outreach program. The Center trains more than 1,000 housing consumers and providers each year about their rights and responsibilities under the Fair Housing Act and also provides specialized trainings for professionals in housing-related fields, including real estate, architecture, and law. In January 2014, GNOFHAC hosted its seventh annual fair housing conference, *Fit for King*, for over 160 people.

Finally, the Center's Policy Department works to galvanize support for equitable legislation on the local, state, and federal levels. In 2013, GNOFHAC worked successfully to help pass the Louisiana Home Protection Act, which expanded protections for homeowners facing foreclosure. GNOFHAC's Policy Department is currently working to advance two statewide bills: one to expand fair housing protections to LGBT individuals, and one to expand housing protections to victims of domestic violence.

II. Overview of Fair Housing Law

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, commonly referred to as the Fair Housing Act (FHA), was passed on April 11, 1968. The FHA, as amended in 1988 (42 U.S.C. § 3601 *et seq.*), and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 (42 U.S.C. §§ 1981, 1982) provide the legal foundation for the fair housing movement. These laws prohibit discrimination in housing and provide protection for consumers seeking to rent or buy a home, secure a mortgage loan, or purchase homeowner's insurance.

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 gave black citizens the same rights as white citizens to inherit, sell, lease, hold, and convey real land and personal property.

The FHA expanded protections for home seekers by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, family status¹, and/or national origin. These bases of protection are commonly referred to as "protected classes." The FHA enumerates a number of actions and practices that are illegal when found to discriminate against a member of a protected class. No one may take any of the following actions on the basis of a person's membership in a protected class:

- Refuse to sell or rent housing;
- Refuse to negotiate for housing;
- Falsely deny that that housing is available;
- Refuse to make loans for real estate transactions;
- Apply different terms, conditions and/or privileges of sale or rental;
- Persuade or attempt to influence owners to sell or rent;
- Direct renters or buyers to certain neighborhoods or housing units;
- Make or print any statement that indicates a discriminatory preference or limitation;
- Coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person in the exercise or enjoyment of a fair housing right;
- Refuse to allow people with disabilities to make reasonable modifications to housing to ensure it is accessible;
- Refuse to make reasonable exceptions to rules, policies, practices, or services when such exceptions may be necessary to afford a person with a disability the equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling;
- Fail to make new multi-family housing accessible to people with disabilities;

In addition to federal protections against housing discrimination, the Louisiana Equal Housing Opportunity Act (La. R.S. 51:2601 *et seq.*) is substantially equivalent to the FHA

¹ Families in which one or more children under 18 live with parent, guardian or designee. "Family status" includes pregnancy.

and allows the Louisiana Department of Justice to investigate complaints of discrimination and to file enforcement actions when appropriate. The City of New Orleans' Human Relations Law (Chapter 86 of the Code of the City of New Orleans) provides protections for the same protected classes enumerated under the FHA, as well as five (5) additional classes: creed, gender identification, age, marital status, and sexual orientation.

III. Foreword

As a child, I dreamed of having super powers like invisibility or the ability to read minds. Some thirty years later, it seems I have gained a super ability: I can predict the future.

It is, however, far less fulfilling than I imagined it would be. Rather than cosmically bouncing through the future, I pour over data and reports in my office. Tedious though it may be, I can actually predict life outcomes for children across New Orleans. With little more than an address, even untrained demographers like myself can suggest likely life outcomes for people who reside in specific neighborhoods. The data suggests a child's precocious way of being or even how well her parents care for her become unreliable indicators of her success in life. Rather, her zip code is more likely to predict her levels of educational achievement, financial success or failure, whether or not she is likely to develop diabetes or high blood pressure, and even how long she can expect to live.

Regrettably, children born in New Orleans' 70112 zip code face a life expectancy decades lower than their neighboring peers in the 70125 zip code. They are, however, destined to confront crime, high blood pressure, diabetes, and poor education options. These facts shock the conscience when juxtaposed with similar information about peers from zip code 70125, who enjoy a life expectancy of more than 70 years and a lower likelihood of being a victim of crime, suffering from diabetes or high blood pressure, and other harmful health challenges.

Parents fully advised of these realities, realizing they are raising children in undesirable environments, may be inclined to make a key change: move to a neighborhood of opportunity.

Not so fast.

This study exposes some significant challenges that informed parents seeking opportunity face. If our mystery shoppers' experiences are an indicator, then nearly half of the time black parents seek housing in New Orleans neighborhoods offering high levels of opportunity, they are denied or otherwise disadvantaged simply because of their race. Even when adjusted for financial ability, discrimination will leave some children with little choice but to brave the toughest challenges in New Orleans' least desirable neighborhoods.

It is our hope that in exposing this problem, we assist New Orleans' leaders in taking key steps to ensure that opportunity exists for all her children.

By James Perry, Executive Director

IV. Executive Summary

"A child's course in life should be determined not by the zip code she's born in, but by the strength of her work ethic and the scope of her dreams." -Barack Obama

A June 2012 report, *Place Matters for Health in Orleans Parish: Ensuring Opportunities for Good Health for All*, revealed that life expectancy in the poorest zip code in New Orleans is 25.5 years lower than life expectancy in the city's richest zip code. The report indicated that overall, there is cause to believe that in New Orleans, a child's life outcomes are indeed correlated with the zip code she grows up in.

The *Place Matters* report raised some interesting fair housing questions. Notably, the places identified in the *Place Matters* report to have higher life expectancies and better overall health outcomes generally correlated with lower percentages of minority residents. This led GNOFHAC to wonder to what extent racial discrimination acts as a barrier to neighborhoods with better health outcomes. Over the years, GNOFHAC has conducted systemic and complaint-driven investigations that revealed high levels of racial discrimination in housing markets throughout the greater New Orleans area. *If some neighborhoods in the city offer greater opportunities than others, does everyone have equal access to those neighborhoods? And if not, how prevalent is discrimination in the areas of the city that offer the highest opportunity? What does that discrimination look like?*

Fortunately, there is an objective method that allows us to answer those questions: fair housing testing. Testing is a type of undercover investigation in which trained investigators, or "testers," mystery shop for housing. By comparing the experiences of black and white testers attempting to obtain rental housing in the highest opportunity neighborhoods of the city, GNOFHAC can objectively measure whether or not racial discrimination is a problem. The United States Supreme Court has recognized testing as a valid tool to investigate housing discrimination.

Over the course of four months starting in December 2013, fifty properties were investigated to determine whether landlords and housing providers discriminate on the basis of race in neighborhoods that social science research would indicate offer significant opportunity for healthier life outcomes. The sites tested included apartment complexes, single-family homes, and apartments located in multi-family buildings that advertised availability on *Craigslist* and in local publications such as the *Times-Picayune* (online and print editions) and *The Gambit*.

Paired sets of testers—always one white and one African-American—contacted the rental agent for each of the fifty properties investigated to express interest, elicit information about the terms and conditions, arrange a viewing, and ask for an application. The testers in each paired set were equally qualified to rent the advertised apartments.

This audit reveals that *equal access to housing opportunity does not exist in the highest opportunity neighborhoods of the city*. Of the fifty tests conducted, African-Americans who were otherwise fully qualified were denied the opportunity to rent or received less favorable treatment **44%** of the time. In those twenty-two tests, the similarly situated white tester was given the opportunity to rent or otherwise experienced favorable treatment in a stark demonstration of racial preference and discrimination.

Unfortunately in New Orleans, not only does the place where a person lives contribute to one's life outcomes, but race plays a significant part in determining whether one can find a home in neighborhoods that offer the greatest opportunity for positive life outcomes. These findings have profound implications for everyone in our city and require fast-acting remedies ranging from aggressive enforcement of fair housing statutes to thoughtful policy interventions.

V. Methodology

a. Selection of Sites and Quantifying Opportunity

All testing sites were located in neighborhoods of opportunity within Orleans Parish. However, readers should note that for the purposes of studies such as this, defining what constitutes a neighborhood of high opportunity is a difficult undertaking from statistical, social scientific and ethical perspectives. Defining such parameters is an imperfect science that is necessarily subjective and based on local conditions.

There is not widespread agreement about which characteristics quantitatively and qualitatively describe communities of opportunity. Indicators of neighborhood opportunity may include things like low poverty rates, low violent crime rates, high levels of educational attainment and low infant mortality rates. For the purposes of this study, GNOFHAC looked to information about quantifying neighborhood opportunity from a body of research resulting from demonstration programs and housing counseling mobility programs initiated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) such as *Moving to Opportunity*. According to this research, families with children that move from communities of high poverty concentration to low-poverty communities tend to perform better in school (e.g., dropout rates are lower, grades are better, college attendance rates are higher). In addition, families report benefitting greatly from reduced crime and greater employment opportunities.²

With these considerations, GNOFHAC staff randomly selected 50 test sites including units in apartment complexes, multi-family residences, and single-family homes located exclusively within neighborhoods that had less than 30% of families living in poverty according to 2012 American Community Survey data. The sites advertised availability on *Craigslist* and in local publications such as the *Times-Picayune* (online and print editions) and *The Gambit*. The 30% threshold is higher than that used by many mobility demonstration programs, but approximates the overall poverty rate for the City of New Orleans (28%). The 30% threshold made it possible to conduct enough tests for the purposes of this audit, and is appropriate given New Orleans' relatively high poverty rate.

The test sites were concentrated in neighborhoods such as Lakeview, East Carrollton, Uptown near Audubon Park, and Algiers Point, which are widely recognized as some of the most desirable neighborhoods in the City. These neighborhoods, with less than 30% of families living in poverty, also feature other notable demographic traits. Perhaps most obviously, all test sites were located in neighborhoods that were at least 70% white—

² See research cited in HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook (Chapter 2, Sec. 1).

much higher than the percentage of white residents in the City overall (about 34%). Further, according to 2012 American Community Survey Data, the median household income in census tracts for every site test was higher than the citywide median household income of \$36,600 and the aggregate median income for all tracts tested exceeded \$69,000.

Defining certain neighborhoods as areas of high opportunity inherently means that other neighborhoods in the city offer lower opportunity levels. Readers should note that “Opportunity levels” are a reflection of the cumulative effects of large institutions at play, and not a reflection of the inherent worth of neighborhoods or their individual residents. Being poor does not absolutely determine a family’s chances at success or an individual’s ability to make good decisions. But the baggage that comes along with poverty likely limits the field of options available, thereby profoundly affecting quality of life.

b. Testing and Investigation

The United States Supreme Court has recognized testing as a tool to investigate claims of housing discrimination. See *Havens v. Coleman*, 455 U.S. 363 (1982). The United States Department of Justice and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development also use testers to conduct investigations of housing discrimination.

In this audit, 50 housing providers were tested for racial discrimination against African-Americans using trained testers posing as home-seekers. Black and white testers were paired by matching incomes, career paths, family types, and rental histories so that the testers in each pair were equally qualified to rent the advertised unit. The paired tests were designed to hold all variables constant except race.

The methodology relies on and prioritizes the legal concepts of fair housing law and testing. It is not a statistical report.

c. Training of Testers

All testers received standardized training from GNOFHAC. The training included both classroom and field training. Testers were taught to be objective fact-finders and to report, but not interpret, the results of their test.

VI. Findings

Of the fifty tests GNOFHAC conducted, African-Americans who were otherwise fully qualified were denied the opportunity to rent or received less favorable treatment **44%** of the time. In those twenty-two cases, paired white testers with similar profiles were given the opportunity to rent or experienced favorable treatment in a stark demonstration of racial preference and discrimination.

The discrimination took many forms but always yielded the same result: discouraging or outright denying the African-American tester the rental opportunity. In several cases, the housing provider discriminated against the African-American tester in multiple ways throughout the rental process. Forms of discrimination included:

Refusal to Respond to African-American Testers' Inquiries

In four tests, inquiries made by African-American testers to housing providers went without response. In each case, these same housing providers promptly contacted white testers inquiring about the property.

This method of discrimination is a blunt and highly effective gatekeeping tool in high opportunity neighborhoods. Absent testing, the African-American prospective renter can only speculate why the provider never responded to an inquiry.

The Runaround

In ten tests—20% of the total sample—the housing provider pursued and favored the white testers while refusing to show the apartment, ceasing to respond to follow-up inquiries after a showing, or failing to provide a required rental application to the African-American testers.

In a test occurring in Lakeview, a Realtor refused to personally show an African-American tester the advertised property, stating the tester could drop by the apartment and that someone would be there to let them inside. However, when the tester arrived, no one was at the property and subsequent calls placed to the Realtor went unanswered. That same day, the Realtor met and showed the white tester the apartment.

A similar scenario occurred at another test property near Audubon Park, where a housing provider did not show up to the pre-arranged appointment to view the apartment with an African-American tester, but did show up that same day to show the apartment to the white tester. The owner subsequently contacted the white tester and

tried to lure him into taking the apartment with a break on the utilities payment. The owner never contacted the African-American again.

In an Algiers Point test, the leasing agent cancelled the pre-arranged appointment with the African-American tester to view the apartment, stating that a deposit on the apartment had been received. However, the agent subsequently met with the white tester to view the apartment, and followed up with the white tester to ask if he was interested.

In multiple other tests, after both the African-American and white testers had viewed the apartment, rental applications were only given to white testers despite the equal qualifications.

This “run around” form of discrimination is similar to a refusal to respond at all to interest from an African-American tester. The evidence of refusal to rent and racial discrimination simply emerges later in the process. Moreover, this type of discrimination wastes the prospective renter’s time and resources.

Favorable treatment and incentives

White testers were given preferential treatment in nine tests.

One way housing providers exhibited preferential treatment was by offering better terms and conditions to white testers than to their black counterparts. For example, housing providers spontaneously reduced application fees, lowered rental and deposit amounts, discounted utility fees, or waived the application process entirely for white testers. In one case, the white tester was offered an entire free month of rent.

Simultaneously, housing providers imposed stricter standards on the African-American testers. In one case, a white tester was told the application process was “laid back” and required only that the tester be employed; this same housing provider told the African-American tester that he needed to have six months’ employment, a landlord reference, and undergo a credit check.

Housing providers also exhibited preferential treatment by vigorously pursuing white testers, calling them after apartment viewings and encouraging them to apply or informing them of other apartments for rent. These same terms, incentives and courtesies were not provided to their African-American counterparts.

This form of discrimination, while more subtle than an outright refusal to rent to African-Americans, is significant. Most obviously, favorable treatment and incentives encourage white prospective renters to apply, while discouraging African-American

prospective renters. Further, testing indicates that some prospective renters in New Orleans' high opportunity neighborhoods are paying higher application fees, rent, or deposit amounts simply because of their race.

Stereotypical Assumptions about Rental Qualifications and Heightened Standards for African-Americans

Commentary and questions from some housing providers indicate that they may be making housing-related decisions based on stereotypical beliefs about black prospective renters.

For example, an Uptown housing provider repeatedly questioned an African-American tester about whether his salary was sufficient to cover three times the rental amount. This same question was never posed to the white tester.

Another housing provider asked an African-American tester whether he owned a gun, but did not ask this of the white tester.

The Results Are In

GNOFHAC tests confirm that discrimination clearly persists in some of the highest opportunity neighborhoods in New Orleans. When discriminatory and unfavorable treatment occur in the housing market, neighborhoods become out of reach for many African-Americans, who are too often pushed to racially segregated neighborhoods far from vital services and pathways to opportunity.

The "high opportunity" neighborhoods where testing occurred had a number of social indicators in common.³ Testing sites were unlikely to be in neighborhoods with a prevalence of violent crime.⁴ Neighbors in the relevant census tract were at least 10 percentage points more likely than the citywide average to hold a Bachelor's degree or greater.⁵ Households in the relevant census tracts earned up to three times the citywide median income of \$36,681⁶ and had good access to private or public transportation.⁷ Finally, selected neighborhoods were less likely home to low birth weight

³ See data tables and maps in appendix for more detail.

⁴ New Orleans Police Department crime mapping data was used to measure the number of violent crimes in a .2-mile radius and a one-year look back period. Violent crimes were measured as homicide, discharging a firearm, aggravated assault, simple battery, and aggravated battery. Instances of domestic violence were excluded.

⁵ Percentage of population over the age of 25 in the census tract with a Bachelor's degree or more. From American Communities Survey of 2012, 5 year estimates (2008-2012).

⁶ Median household income per census tract, from American Communities Survey of 2012, 5 year estimates (2008-2012).

⁷ There are no existing datasets dedicated to measuring access to public transit at a neighborhood level. Therefore, a ratio was established to a "score" for relevant census tracts using a numerator of the number of households that have no form of personal transportation, according to American Communities Survey data for 2012. New Orleans Regional Transit

babies, and were more likely to have lower hospitalization rates for complications due to chronic illness or congestive heart failure.⁸

Troubling GNOFHAC testing results coupled with demographic snapshots of neighborhoods tested make it clear: Local officials must do more to ensure equal access to existing high opportunity neighborhoods, while expanding opportunity in all neighborhoods.

Authority data were used to establish the score's denominator, or number of buses/streetcars that pass through the neighborhood over a 24-hour period Monday-Friday.

⁸ <http://www.nola.gov/getattachment/Health/Data-and-Publications/Child-and-Family-Health-in-New-Orleans-December-2013.pdf/>

VII. Recommendations

The New Orleans City Council should:

1) Deepen inclusionary zoning incentives included in the 2014 New Orleans Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO).

The 2014 CZO includes density bonuses for mixed use or residential developments that include affordable housing. Increased availability of apartments affordable to families at 30%, 50%, and 80% of the area median income (AMI) in neighborhoods of opportunity will promote diversity in neighborhoods of opportunity. These incentives should be extended to all new construction—not simply those that meet site size requirements.

2) Improve the quality of New Orleans' rental stock.

While discrimination is a barrier to neighborhoods of opportunity tested in this audit, part of the City's work to ensure fair housing choice must include expanding opportunity to neighborhoods not present in this audit. Most New Orleans renters have seen their rent increase while the quality of units on the market has decreased.⁹ Renters that face mold, rodents, sewage, or other health risks face major health concerns and spend significant time and money overcoming the effects of substandard housing. Improving the quality of New Orleans' rentals is a vital step to improving housing choice for most New Orleanians.

3) Combat discrimination through funding.

Since its inception, the New Orleans Human Relations Commission has been woefully understaffed and underfunded with a single staff member to handle all matters of discrimination affecting New Orleans. The New Orleans City Council approves the city budget. The Council should refuse to fund any budget that fails to fully fund the Commission.

4) Pass and support legislation that imposes strict penalties for those who engage in housing discrimination.

New Orleans is ahead of most municipalities with one of the only (and definitely the most progressive) municipal fair housing laws in the State. But there is always room for improvement. The current law is lax, leaving violators with little more than a slap on the wrist. The City Council should strengthen penalties in the current municipal fair housing law.

⁹ In 2010, U.S. Census data indicates that less than 50% of renters were cost burdened, or paying more than 30% of their income towards rent. By 2008-2012, 62.9% of renters were paying more than 30% of their income towards rent, despite overall citywide increases in income.

5) Combat discrimination through educational activities.

The New Orleans City Council has both a pulpit and a megaphone, which should be used to raise awareness about persistent discrimination, as well as promote education and legislation to combat the disparities in our neighborhoods and promote better access to opportunity in all New Orleans neighborhoods. Additionally, the Council should publicly support efforts to expand fair housing opportunity in neighboring parishes.

The New Orleans Mayor's Office should:

1) Ensure that City investments to improve neighborhood quality are coupled with strategies to retain long-time residents.

City investments have in many cases accelerated displacement of low-income residents. Neighborhoods such as the Bywater, St. Roch, Tremé, and Holy Cross have seen significant investments that made the neighborhood more attractive to new residents, but did little to preserve quality housing for or retain long-time residents. Increases in both rents and property taxes can create financial hardships for long-time neighborhood residents. The City should carefully analyze its investments of increasingly limited federal funds to ensure it is affirmatively furthering fair housing, not perpetuating displacement and segregation. Investments of federal funds in infrastructure or neighborhood improvements, such as those in the "Place Based Strategy Areas," should be coupled with a housing strategy designed to attract and retain both market rate and subsidized residents. Such a strategy could include activities such as owner-occupied rehab, special tax abatement zones, or funds to improve rental quality while maintaining affordability.

2) Use the Neighborhood Housing Improvement Fund for its intended purpose.

The City of New Orleans has a Housing Trust Fund, called the Neighborhood Housing Improvement Fund (NHIF). The fund is financed through millage at about \$2.5 million annually, but those funds primarily pay for administration and other city staffing positions. NHIF expenditures should be guided by an Advisory Committee nominated by organizations named in the statute, and used to combat the discriminatory effects of the private market as well as invest in the rehabilitation and financing of existing dwellings in order to expand housing choice and opportunity to all New Orleans neighborhoods.

3) Fully staff the Human Relations Commission.

The New Orleans Human Relations Commission has been woefully understaffed and under resourced since its inception. The Mayor's office should fully staff the Commission in order to demonstrate its commitment to a discrimination free New Orleans.

The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) should:

1) Pilot a zip code based payment standard.

HANO should work to refine the rent reasonableness program and the payment standard so that it can pay rents above the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for units in high opportunity areas. One option would be to adopt a payment standard that sets fair market rents at the zip code level, rather than the parish or regional level.

HUD's Moving to Opportunity (MTO) pilot program is one model that promoted Housing Choice Voucher (HCV, or Section 8) program participation in neighborhoods of higher opportunity. The program was designed to promote desegregation and increase voucher users' ability to have more choice in otherwise unattainable neighborhoods. Quantitative and qualitative data¹⁰ on the quality of life for MTO participants after 10 or more years in an opportunity rich neighborhood indicate that participants felt safer, lived in higher quality housing, and experienced better physical¹¹ and mental¹² health.

2) Implement a housing mobility counseling program.

HANO should recruit and assist tenants to move to low-poverty, low-crime, high opportunity neighborhoods. Because voucher holders face high rates of source of income discrimination,¹³ any successful mobility program must include additional supports. Such programs are typically part of the HCV program and include activities such as landlord recruitment, housing search assistance, and post-move counseling.

3) Implement the adopted criminal background policy.

The effects of discrimination described in this audit are compounded by further denial of HANO-assisted housing, particularly for African-American males, based on an outdated criminal background policy that considers arrests as well as convictions as evidence of criminal activity. HANO should implement the criminal background policy it adopted in 2013, which promotes family reunification and housing stability by

¹⁰ Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program: Final Impacts Evaluation. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research. November, 2011.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Measured by prevalence of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and other "health related risk behaviors."

¹² *Ibid.* Measured by lower levels of psychological distress and lower prevalence of depression or anxiety.

¹³ Of 100 phone tests performed by GNOFHAC in 2009 found occurrences of discrimination 82% of the time, either by landlords' outright refusal to accept vouchers, or the addition of insurmountable requirements for tenants using vouchers for payment.

considering only convictions and not arrests, as well as a reasonable look-back period, as part of a criminal background check for HANO admissions and housing occupancy. Implementing the policy will expand housing stability, choice and opportunity in and outside of the neighborhoods considered in this audit.

4) Implement a civil rights review of HANO demolition and disposition plans.

HANO's wide holding of former public housing and scatter sites citywide should be evaluated from a civil rights perspective to ensure that these valuable public assets are best used to create new housing for HANO clients in high opportunity neighborhoods.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) should:

1) Reform the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program to enhance mobility into high opportunity neighborhoods, including:

- Release the final portability rule to streamline families' moves across jurisdictions;
- Release the final consortium rule to make it easier for public housing agencies (PHAs) within a metro area to combine their programs;
- Implement the Small Area FMR program to enable local PHAs to pay higher rents in smaller area, higher opportunity neighborhoods;
- Release a proposed Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) rule that promotes deconcentration by race and poverty;
- Fund housing mobility pilot programs.

2) Release the proposed rule to reinforce and expand the fair housing and tenant protections contained in PIH Notice 2012-7, including a civil rights review of any proposed demolition or disposition of public housing.

3) Finalize the proposed rule to affirmatively further fair housing choice and promote access to neighborhoods described in this audit.

4) Increase the annual budget request for the Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) to ensure local agencies have adequate capacity to combat the kinds of discrimination found in this audit.

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GNOFHAC would also like to thank all of the testers who assisted in this investigation—our work would not be possible without your dedication and commitment.

Finally, a special thanks is due Blair Elizabeth Brown for her assistance with design and graphics.

Appendix

Neighborhoods Tested	Percentage of Low Birth Weight Babies (2011-12)
Orleans Parish	12.0%
Algiers Point	0.0%
Black Pearl	0.0%
Navarre	2.8%
Lakewood	5.0%
East Carrollton	5.1%
Marlyville/Fontainebleau	6.7%
Garden District	6.8%
Audubon	6.8%
Lakeview	8.2%
West Riverside	8.6%
West End	9.1%
Lower Garden District	10.6%
French Quarter	17.9%

Explanation:

“Low birth weight” refers to babies weighing less than 5.5 lbs. at birth.

“Historically, low birth weight babies have been at increased risk for infant mortality, neuro-developmental impairments, growth failure, behavior problems, and chronic health problems. In recent decades, low birth weight babies have had increased survival, but many of the other adverse outcomes have not been comparably mitigated.” (citation below)

Citation for data:

Early Childhood Risk and Research in Louisiana. Rep. New Orleans: LSU/Tulane Early Childhood Policy and Data Center, 2012. Print. Pg. 21

Neighborhoods Tested	Public Transit Access Score
Orleans Parish	1.92
Lakewood	0.00
Navarre	0.14
Marlyville/Fontainebleau	0.81
Black Pearl	0.89
Audubon	1.17
Lakeview	1.37
West End	1.39
Lower Garden District	1.66
Garden District	1.84
East Carrollton	1.98
Algiers Point	2.06
French Quarter	3.57
West Riverside	3.96

Explanation:

The Public Transit Access Score is the number of households without a private vehicle for every public transit vehicle (bus or streetcar) that passes through the neighborhood in a 24-hour period on a weekday.

Citation for score:

Children and Family Health in New Orleans: A Life Course Perspective of Child and Family Health at a Neighborhood Level, City of New Orleans Health Department, December 2013, available at: www.nola.gov/getattachment/Health/Data-and-Publications/Child-and-Family-Health-in-New-Orleans-December-2013.pdf

Citation for underlying data:

2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS), 5 year estimates
New Orleans Regional Transit Agency timetables

Neighborhoods Tested	Hospitalization Rate due to Chronic Complications (admissions/100,000)
Orleans Parish	978
Audubon	176
West End	178
Garden District	360
Lakeview	394
French Quarter	396
Navarre	543
West Riverside	590
Lower Garden District	728
Algiers Point	835
Black Pearl	986
East Carrollton	1,459
Lakewood	N/A
Marlyville/Fontainebleau	N/A

Explanation:

N/A refers to neighborhoods where the number was too small to report due to privacy issues.

This data specifically addresses people ages 18 years and over. Hospitalization admissions for Chronic Complications include all long- and short-term Diabetes complications, uncontrolled Diabetes, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Hypertension, Congestive Heart Failure, Angina, Adult Asthma, and Lower Extremity Amputation. Hospitalizations due to chronic conditions can generally be prevented with access to preventative and outpatient care. In that regard, this rate is a measure of residents' access to that care.

Citation:

Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals: Louisiana Hospital Inpatient Discharge Database, 2007-2009.

Neighborhood	Hospitalization Rate due to Congestive Heart Failure (admissions/100,000)
Orleans Parish	445
Audubon	97
French Quarter	110
Lakeview	183
West Riverside	186
Garden District	248
Navarre	307
Lower Garden District	325
Marlyville/Fontainebleau	374
Algiers Point	464
East Carrollton	563
Black Pearl	567
Lakewood	N/A
West End	N/A

Explanation:

N/A refers to neighborhoods where the number was too small to report due to privacy issues.

This data specifically addresses people ages 18 years and over.

Citation:

Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals: Louisiana Hospital Inpatient Discharge Database, 2007-2009.



