

# PUT HOUSING FIRST PLATFORM

Put Housing First is a campaign to secure the support of 80,000 people who stand behind the advocacy efforts of the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance (GNOHA) and demand that our leaders prioritize safe, affordable, healthy housing for all in New Orleans. This platform includes HousingNOLA's five policy priorities, the related questions that we will ask of all candidates for fall 2017 elections, and the actions that we will expect of them.

## Preserve existing supply and expand the total supply of affordable rental and homeownership opportunities throughout New Orleans

### QUESTIONS

The city has committed to create 7,500 affordable housing opportunities to address the needs of over 30,000 cost burdened households identified by HousingNOLA. How do you plan to honor this commitment?

In order to afford a modest, two-bedroom apartment in New Orleans, renters need to earn \$18.54 per hour. That's more than the typical renter earns and more than twice what minimum-wage workers earn. Will you support the Smart Housing Mix policy to ensure that a percentage of new units coming online are affordable to the average worker?

Will you agree to protect existing city-level sources for affordable housing, such as the Neighborhood Housing Improvement Fund, and work to secure additional funding to develop more housing?

If so, how will you work to secure funding?

How will you work with the state to secure more funding for affordable housing?

Do you commit to work to diversify funding sources for affordable housing, given what is happening at the federal level?

Do you commit to secure more resources for first-time homebuyers including homebuyer education, financial literacy and loans and/or grants to make homeownership possible?

If so, how?

The Finance Authority of New Orleans is the city's housing finance agency and can provide a range of support to citizens and developers in order to create new housing opportunities. Do you commit to support the expansion of the utilization of resources and programming for the Finance Authority of New Orleans?

What is your vision for wealth building for low-moderate income households?



## ACTION ITEMS:

- Increase production efficiency and organizational capacity among government partners, non-profits, and developers to support unit production
- Advocate for public agencies, the City, and the Orleans Parish School Board and Recovery School District to develop a process to reserve land for the development of affordable housing
- Advocate for the Louisiana legislature to create a dedicated source of revenue for the Louisiana Housing Trust Fund reserved for demonstrated need
- City Council should adopt a Smart Housing Mix ordinance
- HousingNOLA will advocate for a study of current zoning regulations that prohibit the production of affordable housing; this study should result in a Council motion

## Prevent future displacement through development activities and continued studies and review

### QUESTIONS

As New Orleanians struggle with a housing crisis, over four thousand units in the city are being used as short-term rentals for tourists, especially in rapidly-gentrifying neighborhoods. Even with the current permitting system, many residents complain that the concentration of short-term rentals disrupts the residential character and sense of community: for example, the city has issued 8 permits - representing 31 bedrooms, and only two units owner-occupied - on just one block of Ursulines in the Treme. Given the difficulty of building hundreds of new units in historic neighborhoods, how would you like to amend the short-term rental ordinance to respond to current housing needs?

New Orleans is a majority renter city with thousands of units in disrepair, few rules for landlords, and almost no enforcement. Will you support the Healthy Homes Ordinance to create basic health and safety standards for all rental units?

Neighborhoods such as the Bywater, Treme, and Mid-City have seen significant public investments, but these investments often increase housing prices and make it difficult for long-time residents to remain. How will you ensure that new investments in neighborhoods likely to gentrify—like the \$140 million Resilience District project slated for Fillmore—include protections for existing residents, such as property tax relief for long-term, lower-income homeowners?



## ACTION ITEMS:

- The City Council should adopt the Healthy Homes ordinance
- The City should study and create a loan fund/loan loss reserve to assist homeowners and landlords with seed funding for property rehabilitation and encourage re-use of vacant lots by current residents and pre-storm residents
- The City should add a residency requirement, create permit buffers, raise the booking fee to 4% for the NHIF, and license the listing platforms.
- The City should explore and draft a proposal for additional property tax relief for low-income homeowners facing increases in property assessments based on how long they have lived in their home and their income
- The City should investigate other tax relief measures for investor owners who would agree to preserve and create affordable rental units in neighborhoods facing displacement

## Enforce and promote fair housing policies throughout New Orleans

### QUESTION

Despite being far less transient than market-rate renters, Housing Choice Voucher (“Section 8”) households are often held up as examples of problem neighbors. Will you repudiate negative stereotypes of voucher households and challenge NIMBY-ism based on similar stereotypes of low-income renters?

In 2016, the City and Housing Authority of New Orleans submitted what is widely regarded as a model fair housing plan to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This Assessment of Fair Housing plan calls for targeting new affordable housing in low-poverty neighborhoods near job centers and transit, while simultaneously increasing infrastructure and economic development investments in higher-poverty, underserved communities. Will you support this goal and if so, what ideas or strategies do you have to achieve it?

The largest and most flexible subsidies available to the City to incentivize and direct affordable housing and economic development are not traditional housing and community development funds, they’re tax reductions offered through the Industrial Development Board (IDB). Will you commit to nominating/confirming IDB members who support HousingNOLA’s goal of targeting affordable housing investments in low-poverty neighborhoods near job centers while targeting economic development investments in underserved communities?

### ACTION ITEMS:

- Expand education programs for property owners that receive home repair grants/loans and enrollment in Louisiana Homebuyer Collaborative certified counseling agencies that emphasize fair housing
- Explore policies that would encourage more landlords to accept vouchers
- Support HANO’s efforts to rebuild mixed income housing on scattered sites in low-poverty neighborhoods (new for 2018)
- The City Council should draft and pass an ordinance that requires transparency and accuracy in background check used to secure public and private rental housing

## Encourage sustainable design and infrastructure for all New Orleanians

### QUESTION

Will you advocate for the Council Utility Committee to require that Entergy invest in energy efficiency measures that would mitigate the need for the proposed power plant in New Orleans East?



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## ACTION ITEMS:

- The Energy Efficiency for All Coalition will advocate for easier access to utility data and lead benchmarking efforts for GNOHA members' properties. The City should also agree to benchmark commercial and public properties
- Support the implementation of Resilient New Orleans
- Advocate for the City Council Utility Committee to ensure that Entergy New Orleans increases programming of Energy Smart for multifamily properties
- Work to facilitate policy change that addresses the root causes of New Orleans' high utility costs for homeowners and renters

## Increase accessibility for all, including residents with special needs

### QUESTION

Do you support the continued implementation of UNITY of Greater New Orleans' Bold Plan of Action, which includes goals of attaining functional zero in youth homelessness by Dec. 31, 2019 and reducing street homelessness by 75% by Dec. 31, 2020?

## ACTION ITEMS:

- The City should pursue additional funds to pay for home modifications to increase accessibility for renters and homeowners with special needs
- Advocate for and enforce the existing requirement that all public agencies providing housing programs or services should produce materials in Spanish and Vietnamese and have a language access plan in place
- GNOHA will work with service providers to create a data repository to collect and track data on special needs populations and accessible housing units, and educate landlords on the benefits of housing special needs populations with vouchers

