

Community Development Committee

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of November 28, 2018

Subject: Metro HRA Administrative Plan Revisions

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve two revisions to the Administrative Plan to:

- Incorporate new language for the award of Mainstream Vouchers; and
- Incorporate language regarding a Housing Quality Standards (HQS) variance for windowless bedrooms.

Summary of Committee Discussion/Questions

Jennifer Keogh, HRA Manager, presented the staff's report to the Committee. Committee members had some questions about the eligibility criteria for the Mainstream Vouchers. Terri Smith, HRA Director, and Keogh provided additional information around definitions and federal requirements for the vouchers. The Committee unanimously recommended approval the proposed action at its meeting on November 19, 2018.

Community Development Committee

Meeting date: November 19, 2018

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of November 28, 2018

Subject: Metro HRA Administrative Plan Revisions

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Code of Federal Regulations Title 24, part 982 and 983

Staff Prepared/Presented: Jennifer Keogh, Manager, Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)

Division/Department: Community Development / HRA

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve two revisions to the Administrative Plan to:

- Incorporate new language for the award of Mainstream Vouchers; and
- Incorporate language regarding a Housing Quality Standards (HQS) variance for windowless bedrooms.

Background

The Council's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA) is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to adopt an Administrative Plan that establishes local policies for administering the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. While HUD develops regulations for program administration, the HRA establishes discretionary policies that go along with the regulations. The Administrative Plan outlines both the regulations and the discretionary policies. The Administrative Plan and any revisions must be approved by the Council.

Changes to the Administrative Plan are generally submitted for approval as part of the Public Housing Agency plan each October. The Council approved the most current Administrative Plan on September 26, 2018 ([Business Item 2018-251](#)). The Metro HRA is proposing two changes in this business item:

1. The Metro HRA was recently awarded 89 Mainstream Vouchers through a competitive grant application process. The vouchers will be used to provide federal housing assistance to homeless persons using the transit system as shelter. The below proposed language provides the policy language to put these Mainstream Vouchers into use:

Section 4-III.B. Selection and HCV Funding Sources

Mainstream Voucher Program

- This program provides funding to assist non-elderly persons with disabilities who are:
 - Transitioning out of institutional or other segregated setting,
 - At serious risk of institutionalization,
 - Homeless, or
 - At risk of becoming homeless
- The Metro HRA was awarded 89 vouchers to serve unsheltered homeless, non-elderly persons with disabilities, using transit as shelter.
- Admission for the program will be made through referrals from contracted service partners working directly with the Metro Transit Homeless Action Team

- If additional Mainstream vouchers become available through HUD, the Metro HRA will apply to receive additional vouchers.
2. The Metro HRA received a HUD variance to the Housing Quality Standards inspection criteria for multi-family development units that include an interior bedroom without a window. New two and three-bedroom units with one windowless bedroom are coming onto the market in opportunity areas. Families were unable to access these units due to a HUD standard that requires all bedrooms to have a window.

The units are typically brand new or rehabilitated units that have large openings, transom windows, other unit windows and patios, providing an abundance of natural light. Maximizing available units is critical in a tight rental market. The variance ensures access to additional units and is beneficial to voucher holders without compromising safety.

The underlined portion of the below is the proposed policy language:

Section 8.I.B. Additional Local Requirements, Clarification of HUD Requirements

- Any room for sleeping must have a window or an openable door to the immediate exterior unless it meets the eligibility criteria for a HUD approved variance for windowless sleeping rooms. To be eligible for the variance the unit must:
 - Be newly constructed OR rehabilitated in a multifamily development.
 - Meet all state and local building fire codes.

Rationale

Adopting the recommended policy language will allow the administration of the Mainstream Vouchers and allow families to access an increased number of units in quality housing projects in good locations.

Thrive Lens Analysis

Prosperity – Providing Mainstream Vouchers will allow homeless families using transit as shelter the opportunity for stable housing with supports and the means to flourish and thrive.

Equity – The HUD waiver for windowless bedrooms in new construction and rehabilitated units will provide opportunity for the region’s low-income residents to have greater choice and access to units in all neighborhoods, including areas with low poverty and high performing schools.

Funding

Funding for the 89 Mainstream Vouchers is provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Known Support / Opposition

Both policy changes are supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.