

U.S. Habitat III National Committee

In partnership with and at the request of the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has been leading the nation's preparatory process in advance of Habitat III, the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development, through a broad and inclusive approach, leveraging the international Habitat processes within the U.S. with the goal of fostering dialogue around policy and practice domestically.

In December 2014, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in partnership with the U.S. Department of State and other federal agencies convened the U.S. National Committee to prepare for the nation's involvement in Habitat III, the bi-decennial United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development that will take place in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016. The National Committee is comprised of over 40 organizations representing government agencies, academia, philanthropy, civil society, and the private sector. The National Committee reflects our nation's commitment to a broad and inclusive approach in our preparations for Habitat III and our contributions to the *New Urban Agenda*, the outcome document at Habitat III. The National Committee formed three subcommittees to facilitate dynamic and inclusive Habitat preparatory processes:

- **The National Report Subcommittee** contributes to and provides feedback on the U.S. 20/20 Habitat III Report prepared by HUD and other federal partners;
- **The Education and Outreach Subcommittee** engages communities to advance the public understanding of urban development issues and trends in the U.S.; and,
- **The Connecting the U.S. to Global Conversations Subcommittee** raises awareness and engages all levels of U.S. government in a discussion of sustainable urban development, and connects this dialogue to processes leading to Habitat III and to relevant global conversations. The Subcommittee also elevates best practice abroad and highlights U.S. model solutions to urban challenges.

This document summarizes efforts of the U.S. Habitat III National Committee accomplished by each of the three Subcommittees, and seeks to highlight local issues and solutions for elevation abroad by the U.S. Habitat III Negotiating Team and Delegation to Habitat III.

National Report Subcommittee

As part of the U.S. preparatory process for Habitat III, HUD and U.S. government partners prepared the U.S. 20/20 Habitat III Report with contributions and feedback by the U.S. National Report Subcommittee, co-chaired by Urban Institute and University of Chicago. The U.S. 20/20 Habitat III Report is a supplemental report produced in addition to the national report submitted to the Habitat III Secretariat in 2015. It aims to tell the story of housing and urban development in the U.S. over the past 20 years in a manner that reflects the U.S. experience and the progress since Habitat II through three main themes:

- Investing in People and Communities for Upward Mobility
- Securing Housing Options for All
- Responding to Change and Building Resilience

Connecting the U.S. to Global Conversations Subcommittee

As part of the U.S. preparatory process for Habitat III, the Habitat III Subcommittee on Connecting the U.S. to Global Conversations, chaired by the Woodrow Wilson International Center, convened a series of sessions from January through July 2016 to leverage Habitat III and relevant global conversations to elevate and inform discussion within the U.S. government policy community about sustainable urban development and its important global implications.

The series of discussions was designed to generate and expand interest in urban issues among decision makers, recognizing the opportunities offered by Habitat III to advance U.S. policy for an increasingly urbanized world. With the overarching objectives of stimulating informed debate, deepening engagement, and mutual exchange, these Washington, DC sessions linked Habitat III to global processes that are capturing the attention of policy makers, including the recently adopted 2030 Agenda and the upcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21). These sessions provided an interface for urban specialists and policymakers to share ideas, educate each other about pressing global urban challenges and solutions, and, where possible, harmonize efforts in the lead up Habitat III.

Session Highlights

- *Habitat III & Why Urbanization is Critical to U.S. Foreign Policy* was co-hosted by the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center on February 22, 2016. The first in a series, this discussion framed all future Habitat III discussions and their relevance for the foreign policy community.
- *Resilient and Sustainable Cities: From COP21 to Habitat III* was organized by Next City and Georgetown University on March 1, 2016 to draw the connections between the milestone global agreements signed in 2015 and Habitat III.
- *Localizing the SDGs: How Cities Can Help Achieve the 2030 Agenda* was co-hosted by USAID, the Urban Institute, and the Wilson Center to examine local strategies for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which are interrelated and require cities and local stakeholders to achieve, and which Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda also advance.
- *Cities in an Age of Insecurity* was held on June 22, 2016 by the Atlantic Council to discuss how the world's cities can be made more resilient to violence and insecurity in an age characterized by volatility.
- *After Quito: Implementation of the New Urban Agenda* was co-hosted on July 11, 2016 by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Citiscope, and the Wilson Center to finish out the series through discussions on the policies, tools, and resources necessary for implementing, financing, and monitoring the New Urban Agenda.

Education and Outreach Subcommittee

As part of the U.S. preparatory process for Habitat III, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) co-hosted regional convenings in Chicago, Illinois; Denver, Colorado; Miami, Florida; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and El Paso, Texas. Similarly, in the lead-up to Habitat II in 1996, a series of town hall meetings were held around the country. The goal of these events co-hosted with partners around the country is twofold—to raise awareness about the work underway to improve the nation's urban areas and to prepare our national delegation for their participation in Habitat.

Based on the framework of the U.S. 20/20 Habitat III Report, regional convenings were held between March and June, 2016 and covered topics including *Investing in People and Communities for Upward Mobility*, *Securing Housing Options for All* and *Responding to Change and Building Resilience*. Brief summaries of each convening follow, highlighting local examples, challenges, and issues that may be relevant in setting the stage for U.S. negotiators and delegation members, as well as educating the global urban development community about the U.S. urban development context.

Summaries and Best Practices from HUD co-hosted Regional Convenings

Learning from the City: The Midwest Regional Convening on Habitat III

Chicago, Illinois

March 31, 2016

Attended by over 200 participants with an additional 200 viewing the online webcast in real-time, *Learning from the City: The Midwest Regional Convening on Habitat III* took place on March 31, 2016 at the University of Chicago. A collaboration of HUD's Midwest Regional Office and University of Chicago Urban, along with other regional partners, the event provided practitioners and community leaders with a forum to share best practices and how they work together to address Midwest regional challenges with global implications in this "Century of Cities." Each of the four panels addressed three general themes: increasing access to opportunity, improving quality of life and the importance of place. The sessions also touched on how HUD's new Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule provides an opportunity for communities to think regionally and act locally to improve resident access to opportunity through housing, economic development, education and transportation planning—ultimately creating local opportunities for residents at the neighborhood level that impact and benefit the entire region. Unique to this event, a segment on the role of "Big Data" and its use to inform local decision making and to shape regional policy was added. The Midwest Regional Office also initiated an aggressive social media campaign that included the first ever [Thunderclap](#) reaching over 131,000 individuals and live tweets during the event generated more than 7.5 million impressions.

HUD Community Planning and Development Deputy Principal Assistant Secretary Harriet Tregoning's [keynote address](#) provided an excellent overview of how the Obama Administration is helping communities plan for change through investments that effectively address our rapid socio-demographic changes. She indicated that a century ago only two out of ten people lived in urban areas and the systems were set up accordingly. Today, more than 80 percent of the U.S. population resides in urban areas. That trend is expected to continue as about 90 percent of all U.S. population growth over the last decade is occurring within cities and metro areas.

Session Highlights

- The [Investing in People and Communities for Upward Mobility](#) panel emphasized the importance of place and place-making in a conscious effort to spur economic opportunity for all. Panelists identified the need for regional cooperation, underscored the importance of community engagement and planning to inform place-based economic development opportunities and strategies. Mayor Freeman-Wilson pointed out the Federal collaboration in Gary, Indiana's Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative was invaluable in helping to reshape the economic landscape in her city. The Cook County Bureau of Economic Development provided an overview of the "Plan for Progress" which seeks to leverage creative regional assets so that one initiative's growth does not impose negative impacts on any neighboring community.

- In [Securing Housing Options for All](#), panelists highlighted the need for regional collaboration as a best practice to effectively plan and develop housing options for residents. The Chicago Regional Housing Initiative was offered as an example of how housing authorities within the Chicago Metropolitan area cooperated to provide affordable housing for low-income residents utilizing housing choice vouchers in opportunity areas while also serving areas in need of revitalization. A fair housing discussion ensued raising the issue of the significant impact that fair housing laws in equitable housing opportunities in the U.S., versus globally where other countries may not have strong centralized laws prohibiting housing discrimination.
- In the [Responding to Shocks and Building Resilience](#) session, panelists discussed the importance of vision and long-term goal setting as important characteristics necessary for success in responding to unforeseen events. They addressed the need to make investments to be able to swiftly respond to both to natural and economic disasters and the need to plan ahead to effectively be prepared. Resilience, according to the panel, comes down to real quality of life issues in neighborhoods, not just reducing the carbon foot print and planning more resilient communities, but, in jobs, better schools and other opportunities for low income people.
- [The Role of Big Data in Shaping Regional Policy](#) panel emphasized the innovative use of large scale data to inform local decision making. Given that many jurisdictions and agencies are operating under significant budgetary constraints while facing increasingly complex problems, the effective use of “big data” can more precisely dissect the root causes of challenges faced by our cities today, and confirm what is working and guide investments accordingly. During this overview, a HUD representative shared the incredible impact and synergies created in demonstration linking federal datasets from HUD assisted households, the American Community Survey and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services data sets yielding a far more robust analysis and granular findings that would not otherwise be attained. This groundbreaking work can empower policy makers and researchers to better connect social, educational, and health outcomes tracked by federal agencies with demographic information to better target policies and programs taking into account the many factors that people face. For example, a few key findings that were shared from this analysis were:
 1. That there are approximately 290,000 veterans living in HUD-assisted housing;
 2. About 4 percent of HUD-assisted households are multigenerational, defined as three or more generations;
 3. Approximately 30 percent of HUD assisted adults smoke cigarettes.

Several local panelists also shared innovative ways they’re using data to improve people’s lives, including [Community Rx](#), which is part of a Department of Health & Human services demonstration utilizing student-sourced community data to help beneficiaries with health-related social needs better navigate access to community resources. A City of Chicago panelist also provided an overview of the new [OpenGrid](#) tool helping residents gain access to real-time neighborhood level data and available services.

The Learning from the City: Midwest Convening brought together a diverse set of governmental and civic stakeholders and provided a platform to share best practices and obtain feedback. The convening demonstrated that as we shape the new urban agenda stakeholders need to learn from the past, engage in collaborative efforts and develop regional approaches to local issues. The highlighted successes include active collaborations from Federal, State and local governments and the inclusion of private sector, non-profit and philanthropic partners to achieve success for the new urban agenda.

Key Partners

Many thanks to event partners including the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Habitat for Humanity Chicago, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, National Association of Housing, Metropolitan Planning Council, National League of Cities and the National Fair Housing Alliance and, to event supporters including The Kresge Foundation, The MacArthur Foundation, The Pierce Family Foundation, The Tom Owens Family Foundation, University of Chicago Kreisman Initiative on Housing Law and Policy and University of Chicago Urban.

To learn more about the Midwest regional convening co-hosted by HUD and UChicago Urban, the archived webcast can be accessed [by clicking here](#). Photos are also [available here](#).

The City We Want & Need: A Mid-Atlantic Regional Convening on Habitat III Philadelphia, Pennsylvania May 17, 2016

Nearly 150 individuals attended the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Philadelphia and New York Regional Offices and the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Institute for Urban Research and Perry World House co-hosted event, *The City We Want & Need: A Mid-Atlantic Regional Convening on Habitat III* held at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on May 17, 2016. The day included insightful discussions about best practices throughout the region that, if adopted in larger scale, may strengthen the nation's urban areas.

"Habitat III is an opportunity for the U.S. to leverage the collective expertise of those addressing sustainable development globally and develop shared priorities domestically," stated HUD Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Jane C.W. Vincent in her [welcoming remarks](#). Co-host and Co-director of the Penn Institute for Urban Research Eugenie Birch [framed the day with her talk](#) on the U.S. involvement in Habitat III. Dr. Birch made clear that the distinctions between Habitat III and the precedent Habitat conferences in Vancouver and Istanbul were the inclusiveness and integration of civil society and stakeholders discussions leading up to the conference and the focus on implementation, rather than planning. Implementation is the definitive ultimate goal of the Quito event.

In her [keynote address](#), Amy Liu, Metropolitan Policy Program Director at The Brookings Institution, provided her view on the importance of creating Pathways to Inclusive Prosperity, emphasizing the connection between cities and the larger economy. To successfully implement a new urban agenda, she argued, we must bridge economic strategies with those focused on people and place. We must align social mobility and community development with economic development to create meaningful pathways to quality jobs and neighborhoods by focusing on growth through economic expansion, prosperity by making people contributors to and beneficiaries of economic growth by investing in innovation and skills and inclusion. Even though nationally the U.S. has achieved strong economic growth since 2009, prosperity has lagged with lower median wages and inclusiveness regressing, with racial disparities in income widening. Some cities, like Philadelphia, are doing worse than others and metropolitan aspects of poverty and social mobility becoming more obvious. Cities that do the most to help workers adjust to the new realities of technology, globalization and demographic change, will endure and prosper. To address growth, prosperity, inclusion and these new realities, there must be strategic coordination. Systems, including the arenas of economic, educational, skills, community and infrastructure development must align with the players including public, nonprofit and private entities at regional and community levels that create growth and opportunity. As best practices for strategies, Dr. Liu cited Louisville/Lexington, Kentucky FAME and Michigan's Detroit Motor City Match that developed skilled local workers to fill industry needs and vacant properties. Chicago, Illinois' i.c. stars and Greater Chatham Initiative provided training and job placement. In Maryland, the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership provided low-income voucher holders with the tools needed to move to neighborhoods of higher opportunity.

Session Highlights

- Moderated by Next City's Tom Dallessio, the [opening session](#), *Investing in People and Communities for Social Mobility*, examined the issue of social mobility by offering strategies that have been employed to promote economic opportunity and achieve greater economic inclusion. Penn Institute for Urban Research's Susan Wachter opened with the epiphany that we are now a majority-minority nation, noting that over 50 percent of school-age children belong to a minority. The characteristics of neighborhoods, not of people, create social mobility for individuals. In Northern New Jersey, Jon Carnegie described how the Metropolitan Planning Association created its Access to Opportunity-themed regional sustainable development plan. Data driven by Fair Housing Equity Assessments from each jurisdiction reveal stark patterns of segregation, poverty concentrations and divergent educational opportunity. Philadelphia Works' Mark Edwards published a report on the City's economy dubbed a "Tale of Two Cities," and defined his agency's workforce development strategy through literacy programs, re-entry support to returning citizens and their employers, and work-based learning opportunities. Anne Fadullon, Director of Planning and Development for Philadelphia, a position created by Philadelphia Mayor Kenney to integrate and synthesize those functions, stated her goal is to make prosperity inclusive and become a tale of one city. Examining the Habitat III literature, she felt descriptions of third world slums described some Philadelphia neighborhoods and agreed with the UN's new emphasis on implementation.
- During the [luncheon panel discussion](#), *Securing Housing Options for All*, HUD's Bryan Greene provided an overview of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule—and

how the entire community participates in the process by looking at the demographic data to see if there are barriers to people living in the community. In the study of the Baltimore City and County region in Maryland, Dan Pontious described how The Opportunity Collaborative looked at housing needs and housing cost burdens before creating strategies to boost vulnerable communities and residents by providing intensive support, cracking down on gangs and non-taxpaying landowners. Fair Share Housing Center's Kevin Walsh shared the ongoing successes and challenges in enforcing "fair share" or regional need for affordable housing in New Jersey's state constitution. Despite home rule powers, 300 towns want to comply with the law. According to Rose Gray, Asociacion Puertorriquenos En Marcha (APM) was initially organized by Puerto Rican Vietnam War veterans who found themselves excluded from Philadelphia's social services. Forty-six years later, APM has leveraged \$140 million of public/private investment, created the City's first mixed-use, transit-oriented development and much more through the grassroots efforts of a strong Neighborhood Advisory Council.

- In the [final session](#), *Responding to Change & Building Resilience*, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's Barry Seymour described how significant social, economic, environmental and technological factors have emerged in recent years that will have a transformative impact on urban areas in the future. This session highlighted how cities have been in the forefront in addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation, demographic shifts and changing lifestyle preferences, and fluctuating employment and transportation paradigms while showcasing how different communities are responding to the challenges created by these future forces. City of Philadelphia's Sustainability Director Christine Knapp cited that climate change is real. Since 2010, the City has experienced the wettest years, the wettest day, the warmest summers, most days of 90 degrees, the snowiest winter on record. With climate records, sea level rise and the possibility of a storm surge, the City must prepare. City of Hoboken Planner Caleb Stratton, who also serves as a Rebuild by Design team member, illustrated how the City has responded to flooding by Hurricanes Irene and Sandy by marrying the City's efforts with coastal storm risk reduction. Urban Land Institute's local chair, Antonio Fiol-Silva, created a model for a neighborhood denser and greener by bridging two very different communities with North Central Philadelphia's Paseo Verde, while incorporating affordable and market-rate housing next to an active rail commuter line. This is the first LEED ND Platinum certification in the nation. Demonstrating the need for collaboration and partnerships, Sustainable Strategies DC's Matt Ward stated that communities are either shaped by choice or shaped by chance—we must make a choice to make them better places.

In her [closing remarks](#), U.S. Department of State's Special Representative for Habitat III Dr. Nancy Stetson added a full-circle perspective of why Habitat III is so important to our cities—and our nation. To learn more about the regional covening, visit the [online virtual *The City We Want & Need: A Mid-Atlantic Regional Convening on Habitat III*](#). For photographs, visit [Region III's Flickr photo collection](#).

Key Partners

In concert with issue experts from the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Institute for Urban Research and Perry World House, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, Middle Atlantic Regional Council of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (MARC NAHRO), Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, Next City, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, City of Philadelphia, William Penn Foundation, Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association, Urban Land Institute Philadelphia District Council, WHYY, Citiscope and others.

Rocky Mountain West Convening on Habitat III

Denver, Colorado

May 20, 2016

Attended by about 125 participants, the *Rocky Mountain West Convening on Habitat III* took place on May 20, 2016 at the University Colorado at Denver campus. A collaboration of HUD's Denver Regional Office and University of Colorado, along with other regional partners, this event brought together a diverse cadre of speakers from throughout the Rocky Mountain West whose policy practices have demonstrated successful outcomes addressing climate change, environmental challenges and the pressures of rapid population growth.

Session Highlights

- In the *Securing Housing Options for All* panel, speakers and participants examined the challenges that urban growth brings to cities in providing housing options, such as increased rental housing costs, high transportation costs, and the lack of affordability that often force families and individuals to live on the streets. Addressing these challenges begins with effective participation among all levels of government and civil society to create policies that enable people to connect to opportunities that can lead to a better quality of life.
- Panelists addressed how these challenges require us to think differently about addressing homelessness, affordable housing, and opportunities for jobs, quality schools, and places that promote activity and health. Housing is a right, and should be top priority for government leaders. Policy needs to take into consideration resident needs and must involve networks of governments, community organizations, foundations, businesses, and education institutions. Although often appearing antithetical, western cities have learned that transportation and housing are linked - this is a factor in every place around the world and examining housing and transportation issues together can be transformative and lead to more economic opportunity.
- *Economic Mobility and Social Equity* speakers defined these opportunities through neighborhood-specific lenses to analyze the importance of community participation in decision-making and planning processes to address poverty, management of local resources, economic inequality, and health. The focus was on the need to foster vibrant, people-centered communities that promote development, innovation, and cultural diversity. Speakers talked about ways to best approach economic growth, education, and

health on a local level, including the different challenges facing communities on Tribal lands. The discussion included examples of both urban and rural settings where active living and healthy eating do not evolve naturally. Live Well Colorado has enabled locally driven food growing, processing and selling strategies to eradicate former “food deserts” and with investment and innovation in culturally, economically, and socially diverse environments.

- Best policy practices emphasized groups coming together to allow the community to organize and decide how they want to be helped. Ask them what they want for their community and what they want for themselves. Very often, it is necessary to solve bigger community issues to get to specific factors that can improve individuals’ and families’ quality of life. Successful outcomes are to support community efforts and engage the citizenry in projects large and small, from infrastructure, housing, and education, to community agriculture and healthy living.
- Keynote Speaker Tjada D'Oyen McKenna from Habitat for Humanity International spoke about her experience and expertise in program implementation, strategy development and ways in which Habitat For Humanity is exploring innovative ways to alleviate poverty around the world. Habitat for Humanity is adjusting policy to improve the scale, quality and impact of their work around the world to better serve vulnerable urban communities, increase access to adequate and affordable shelter, and integrate efforts with other sectors. To date, 75 percent of land worldwide is not legally documented, leaving millions of people in developing countries vulnerable to eviction or displacement after a natural or man-made disaster or by gentrification. The New Urban Agenda will need to address land access and promote community-led development with sections that include development of policy environments that harness and enhance public, private and civil society participation. What is needed from here on out is accountability. If the New Urban Agenda is to live up to its full potential, it must provide detailed benchmarks and increased accountability that allow for advances in technology.
- The *Sustainable and Resilient Urban & Rural Development* panel speakers highlighted how significant social, economic, environmental, and technological factors have emerged that have left our cities and towns vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters. Panelists discussed ways communities are responding to disasters and the importance of working with neighborhoods to develop frameworks for effective planning and management that will take into account information, research, insight and analysis to build stronger, more resilient cities and economies. Panelists reinforced the importance of participatory planning for disasters which enables both urban and rural communities to resist, absorb, accommodate, and recover from the effects of a disaster in a timely and efficient manner, focusing on protecting the most vulnerable of our communities. To begin, we must understand the shocks, stresses, vulnerabilities, and risks that exist in our communities, including familiarity with the population demographics, culture, and geographic distribution. Using this community participation model, help develop process and performance standards that empower equitable, resilient, sustainable neighborhoods, districts, towns, cities for all.

Break-out Discussions

The day ended with three moderated group discussions focusing on policy and development activities. Each group emphasized the need for different approaches for different places, but many challenges in housing, transportation, equity, and sustainability are shared throughout the region and the world. In the future, we will need to focus on embracing different types of housing near transit, and making sure both housing and transportation are available, sustainable, affordable, and do not bisect communities. Change and development starts with communities; it has to come from the people. Efforts on the ground enable cities and rural towns to blend expertise – everyone is an expert at something and everyone has something to offer. We need effective governance and effective institutions, which means building local capacity to be empowered to make good decisions.

Rocky Mountain Habitat III Executive Committee

Paul Teske, Dean, School of Public Affairs, University of Colorado

Rick Garcia, Regional Administrator, Region VIII, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

Heather Lafferty, CEO, Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver

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Doug Linkhart, President, National Civic League

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Peter Kenney, Principal, Civic Results Metro Mayors Caucus

Sponsors

Colorado Housing Finance Authority, National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, Wells Fargo, The Denver Foundation, National Civic League, Denver Office of Economic Development, Metro Mayors Caucus, Urban Land Institute

Miami Convening on Habitat III

Miami, Florida

June 13, 2016

The Miami Convening on Habitat III took place at the University of Miami on June 13th, 2016. The event was sponsored by the AARP Foundation and was attended by 100 people who participated in discussions on building resilient communities, in urban settings across the globe. The main areas of discussion involved the following topics: Responding to Change and Building Resilience; Securing Housing Options for All; Turning High School Neighborhoods into Resilient Communities (a panel composed of local high school students); and finally, Investing in People and Communities for Upward Mobility. Here are the recurring themes that emerged from the discussions:

Session Highlights

- *Mitigate or adapt but do not deny or ignore:* The clear and supreme challenge to Florida with regard to building physical resilience is the projected sea level rise. The porous nature of our land makes building sea walls and levees a relatively fruitless enterprise. The seeping salt water from the ocean and gulf which threaten our fresh water system (so reliant on the Everglades) poses engineering puzzles which are difficult to solve. The water also bubbles up from the ground making inland flooding a major concern as well, particularly during the times of the year where we suffer King Tides. Efforts are underway to mitigate these effects, and models being developed and implemented by Miami Dade County and the City of Miami Beach were discussed by several experts on the panel. The flooding also poses many challenges for developers constructing buildings as many geographic areas in south Florida will be impacted by sea level rise that heretofore have considered themselves safe because they are located “inland”. This is especially acute for affordable housing developers who struggle to finance construction that will remain affordable to its residents, and also accessible for the disabled and elderly populations. It is also often difficult and costly to be compliant with local zoning requirements while attempting to design and construct facilities that are physically resilient. Competing local priorities complicate local resource allocation decisions; often times creating unintended obstacles and barriers which add time and cost to the development process that must be ameliorated with sound decisions. As an example, building codes and zoning requirements established to provide protections and resilience in the event of catastrophic events such as hurricanes, may create financial stresses to the economics of providing affordable housing opportunities for all.
- *Educate, educate, educate:* This theme was highlighted especially by the high school student panelists who focused attention on the behaviors of humans which exacerbate the impact of our natural resource abuse. Their contention was passionately delivered and reinforced by research indicating how the United States in particular wastes some of the planets most precious resources; such as fresh water. It is their firm belief that we must find ways to better inform the public, young and old, of the effect their accepted and normal behaviors have on their living environment. Raw data will only help change behaviors if that data is presented in a manner graphic enough that the stark destination at the end of the road upon which we are travelling is understandable to people, including to those elected officials making decisions about how we spend our money and enacting laws which govern our behaviors. Panelists also stressed that people in the general population need to be educated about how important green spaces are to the ecology, and simultaneously also to residents of communities as well. Biking and walking trails contained within open green spaces and parks enhance the quality of life for everyone. One of our panelists described this education process as convincing our leaders to embrace the “Urgency of Now” into the entire discussion of building resiliency.
- *Engage the voices of the voiceless:* Almost every panel indicated the need to include as a key element of successful local strategic planning, input from the local experts; otherwise known as existing residents and stakeholders of neighborhoods and communities. A unique aspect of the Miami convening was to include high school students in our

deliberations in a way that provided a venue and opportunity for their voices to be heard and incorporated into the information provided to the Secretary, who is scheduled to lead the U.S. Delegation in Quito. As the world looks forward to the year 2050 in what the Secretary refers to as the Century of Cities, those of high school age today will be the decision makers of tomorrow. Engaging them and inspiring them to believe they can make a difference in shaping their future world is an important piece of the puzzle. A puzzle that we hope will be solved by people of their generation. The students were engaged first in a charrette hosted and sponsored by the same generous entities that made the convening possible, and included 80 high school students in a full school day session on the UM campus. The students and other panelists stressed that even in a data driven society, local participation that helps to inform the data, turning it into usable knowledge is a vitally important piece of solving that puzzle. An environment that values community participation and engagement, is an empowering element that leads to more accurate problem identification, and produces more impactful results. The people who know best are often those who are impacted directly by the conditions under which they are living; and they are often not included in the conversations that inform decision makers about potential options for mitigation and/or adaptation.

- *Equitable distribution of assets and opportunities is a must:* While the provision of affordable housing options for all was universally expressed as a baseline requirement of resiliency, it was also emphatically stressed that housing alone is not sufficient. Truly resilient communities have to provide opportunities for upward mobility for its residents. Strategies for developing mixed-income housing opportunities were discussed and best practices were shared with regard to building in adaptive ways to account for the present and projected environment. The realities of the costs associated with building in that fashion were also shared and solutions such as the inclusionary zoning ordinance being considered by Miami Dade County were raised as well. The key to being successful in resiliency efforts however, as expressed by several panelists, is for policy makers and resource allocators to place the word “equitable” in front of every desired outcome and objective. So localities should think in terms of equitable housing and community development; equitable access to jobs and health care; equitable consideration of transportation options and their connectivity to general affordability and essential services; equitable distribution of available assets for those populations that are most vulnerable, including the elderly; equitable access to technology and information; and most of all, equitable access to the process of decision making regarding the futures of the communities in which people reside.

Many more topics were discussed throughout the day but these themes were the ones that seemed to resonate the most with the assembly. The message to everyone, as expressed by the President of the AARP Foundation, was that we should strive to become Agents of Opportunity; in words and deeds!

Southwest Border Colonias: Housing and Sustainable Development In The 21st Century

El Paso, Texas
June 22-23, 2016

Taking place at the University of Texas at El Paso on June 22-23, 2016, the Southwest Border HUD co-hosted convening on Habitat III was a remarkable and effective gathering, which wisely recognized the need for input across the spectrum of housing issues. Those in attendance represented housing advocates, non-profit developers, academia, local and state governments, as well as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Most importantly, residents of Colonias were present to add their direct and invaluable perspective into the challenges they face in daily life. This convening provided a complete picture of issues facing the Southwest Border area in regards to housing and community development, which may be of relevance in other border areas around the world.

Sessions Highlights

- *Colonias/Model Home Communities:* In the United States, soon nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the nation's population will live in cities. On the border, a Colonia is an unincorporated settlement, usually developed on plots sold by private developers, typically without access to basic utilities such as running water, electricity, sewage, and even basic infrastructure such as paved roads and designed drainage. A Model Home Community usually provides access to basic services, but again with minimum building codes and with a lack of infrastructure. Both such substandard communities are usually located close to larger urban environments but outside city limits, therefore avoiding zoning requirements or building codes that city centers typically enforce. Thus, costs are lowered for obtaining ownership. Being close to those urban areas further allows access to job markets. So immigrant and low income families often see Colonia communities as a way to participate in the American Dream of homeownership and economic opportunity. In Texas alone, it is estimated that 500,000 people reside in Colonia communities, with homeownership rates well above national averages at 77%.
- *Economic Consequences:* Analysis has shown that a minimum of 60% of Colonia residents in the El Paso area, for instance, live in extreme poverty, as the stated conditions in those communities bare out. Furthermore, only 11% of Colonia homes or lots were purchased through banks. So, the conventional benefits of homeownership, such as wealth building, often do not materialize as subprime lending instruments and contracts of deed, often with interest rates between 15 and 18%, dominate the market. And with families living paycheck to paycheck, the loss of a job, or even the short term lack of pay due to an illness, can be devastating with the ripple effect of unpaid bills and housing payments. Without access to conventional banking, often immigrant families turn to payday loans in desperation. But, with rates in New Mexico, for instance, of up to 300% interest, those loans often end up merely spurring on a spiral of untenable economic burden that leads to ruin.
- *Lack of Educational Opportunities:* Along with the basic infrastructure that most neighborhoods and communities take for granted, access to educational opportunities is likewise abridge in many unincorporated communities. While children of those communities usually have access to schooling, they often unable to take full advantage.

Very often students participate with English as a second language, with Spanish language classes not universally available, placing a burden on both student and school. And in modern classrooms, access to the internet is often required and necessary to interface with teachers, receive grades, homework assignments, to apply for special programs, scholarships, and even colleges and trade schools. Those systems regularly require a computer and will not work with other mobile devices. Families without access to either computers or high speed internet are forced to improvise. In some more fortunate communities, children share computer and internet access at local libraries or community centers. In Texas, around 50% of border communities have no access to broadband internet services. Less fortunate families struggle with absence of needed access, which inhibits the abilities of Colonia students to learn and keep pace at school and creates ongoing disadvantage that follows generations. It has been said that disadvantage is inherited as surely as advantage, and lack of education only stiffens the negative condition for struggling families.

- *Fair Housing:* While it is important to note that residents of Colonia and model home communities participate by choice, it is impossible to escape that fact that the consequences of failure greatly impact Hispanic populations. And those families often make the choice to live in a Colonia because other avenues for affordable housing are lacking. Regardless, it is impossible to separate the fact that the negative consequences of substandard communities adversely impact minorities and communities of color. HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing Gustavo Velasquez provided the Conference's keynote address, emphasizing the importance of fair housing, the recent court rulings that have substantiated Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing and disparate impact. But on a more basic level, he spoke of doing the right thing in addressing these substandard communities - Colonia residents are overwhelmingly Hispanic.

Anna Alvarez Boyd, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, succinctly summarized the focus of the Southwest Border Conference with the mission to collectively assess the state of border communities, focusing on a better life for all citizens with an inclusive approach to housing and community development. Conclusions reached focused on the enforcement of fair housing laws and access to federal funding, with specific mention of HUD's 15% set aside in local CDBG funding that communities can use to improve Colonia and other substandard communities. Encouraging cooperation between city and county governments was another emphasis. Different zoning and building code requirements encourage often Colonia type communities in County jurisdictions, but residents usually funnel into city jobs markets, so the two are connected. Attendees also suggested that county governments be held accountable for conditions in communities lacking infrastructure and services. A massive public education campaign to inform the public on Colonia communities and to provide Colonia residents with the information and tools needed to make good financial decisions was also proposed along with greater access to conventional mortgage instruments.

Key Partners

Thanks to all who attended the Southwest Border Communities Conference for highlighting issues, tools, and strategies for advancing the human condition in border communities. The Federal Reserve, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Texas Department

of Communities Affairs, the cities of Brownsville and El Paso, and Dona Anna County in New Mexico all participated along with the University of Texas at El Paso, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Texas A&M University, and El Paso Community College. Representative from many other institutions contributed including the Bank of American/Compass Bank, CareMessage, the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville, CTC Technology and Energy, the Lift Fund, the Lower Valley Housing Corporations, Project Vida, Proyecto Azteca, Texas Low Income Housing Services, and Rising Barn among others.