



# HCCSD FAIR HOUSING



**VICTIM OF HOUSING  
DISCRIMINATION?  
TELL US!**

**Attorney General of Texas**  
(800) 252-8011  
**City of Houston, Dept. of Housing &  
Community Development**  
(713) 868-8400  
**Greater Houston Fair Housing Center**  
(713) 641-3247  
**Houston Apartment Association**  
(281) 933-2224  
**Houston Area Urban League Fair Housing**  
(713) 393-8735  
**Houston Center for Independent Living**  
(713) 974-4621  
**HUD Fair Housing Complaint**  
888-560-8913 or 817-978-5900  
**Hearing Impaired,**  
please call TTY (800) 927-9275  
**HUD Equal Housing Opportunity**  
1-800-669-9777  
**Houston Office State Bar of Texas**  
800) 204-2222 x2610  
**Tenants Council of Houston**  
(713) 982-1985  
**Texas Workforce - Civil Rights Division**  
(888) 452-4778



## HARRIS COUNTY CSD

Harris County Community Services Department (HCCSD)  
8410 Lantern Point Drive  
Houston, Texas 77054  
(713) 578-2000  
[www.csd.hctx.net/](http://www.csd.hctx.net/)



## APRIL IS FAIR HOUSING MONTH

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

April is Fair Housing Month! It serves as a reminder and a celebration of the Fair Housing Act, which makes it illegal to discriminate in housing based on race, color, sex, national origin, religion, familial status, or disability (physical or mental). These are also known as Protected Classes.

Fair housing means that every person has the freedom to choose where they live. This means that our communities are open and welcoming, free from discrimination, and hostility. But this also means that each one of us regardless of our Protected Class has access to Neighborhoods of Opportunity. These are communities where our children can attend quality schools, our environment allows us to be lead healthy lives, economic opportunities are accessible, and self-sufficiency can grow.

Today, any person who feels they may have experienced discrimination in their attempts to rent or purchase housing may call HUD Fair Housing Complaint at (888) 560-8913 to file a complaint or send an email directly to: [pihirc@firstpic.org](mailto:pihirc@firstpic.org). Complaints can also be sent to any organization listed in this newsletter to the left. All housing discrimination complaints are reviewed by Fair Housing Specialist to determine if it alleges acts that might violate the Fair Housing Act, and they will assist you in filing an official housing discrimination complaint.

HUD, along with state and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local governments, will celebrate April as Fair Housing Month through various seminars, educational programs, presentations, public outreach campaigns, and publications. For more information on how you can participate, please contact HCCSD.

# Fair Housing for Elected Officials and Local Governments

Article by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA)

The Fair Housing Act prohibits a broad range of practices that discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, and disability. The Act does not preempt local zoning laws; however, the Act applies to municipalities and other local government entities and prohibits them from making zoning or land use decisions or policies that exclude or discriminate against Protected Classes. The Fair Housing Act makes it unlawful –

- To utilize land use policies or actions that treat groups of persons with disabilities less favorably than groups of persons who are not disabled.
- For example: A city creates an ordinance prohibiting housing for persons with disabilities or a specific type of disability, such as mental illness, from locating in a particular area, while allowing other groups of unrelated individuals to live together in that area.
- To take action against, or deny a permit, for a home because of the disability of individuals who live or would live there.
- For example: A local government entity denies a building permit for a home because it was intended to provide housing for persons with mental disabilities.
- To refuse to make reasonable accommodations in land use and zoning policies and procedures where such accommodations may be necessary to afford persons or groups of persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing.



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## The Many Faces of Exclusionary Zoning

Article by Daniel Hertz of City Commentary

This excerpt was sourced from *The Many Faces of Exclusionary Zoning*, published online at the City Commentary January 12, 2016.

What exactly is the relationship between land use regulations and economic segregation? Previous research has shown that places with more restrictive land use regulations have higher housing costs and are more segregated by race, but now a new study from UCLA aims to give more detailed answers.

The paper, by Michael Lens and Paavo Monkkonen test many different kinds of regulations to get a better sense of the “specific pathways through which land use regulations affect income segregation.” To briefly summarize their analysis, Lens and Monkkonen make four important findings.



1. Density restrictions—think minimum lot sizes—are associated with more segregation of the rich, though not the poor.
2. More difficult building approval processes are associated with segregation of the poor.
3. More fragmented local governments are associated with high overall levels of segregation.
4. Greater state-level involvement in land use planning is associated with lower overall levels of segregation.

For us, there are at least two big takeaways. Though the authors claim their findings cast doubt on the widely believed connection between low-density zoning and segregation of the poor—the classic “exclusionary zoning” problem—we think it suggests something else. After all, exclusionary zoning works by preventing the construction of housing that might be more affordable to middle- or low-income people, like smaller houses or apartment buildings. Whether that’s done up front by explicitly banning those types of buildings (ie, low-density zoning) or more surreptitiously through an arduous approval process, the result—and the mechanism of exclusion—is the same.

So the issue is less that low-density zoning doesn’t matter for the segregation of the poor, and more that there are many different regulatory tools local governments can employ to get to exclusionary land use. If the way communities block low-income-friendly development is by smothering it in red tape, rather than openly disallowing it, it’s important to understand the distinction to combat it—but equally important to understand that the end result is the same. Read more [here](#).

## Coed sues after landlord banishes assistance dog

This excerpt was written by Jim Harger and published online at *MLive* on April 04, 2016, read more [here](#).

"The Fair Housing Act guarantees people with disabilities the right to choose a place to live free from housing discrimination," said Elizabeth Stoddard, director of advocacy for the Fair Housing Center. "When a housing provider denies a reasonable accommodation request for an assistance animal, it is no less discriminatory than prohibiting someone's use of a wheelchair," Stoddard said.



Photo courtesy of Fair Housing Center of West Michigan

"It is crucial to equal housing opportunity that housing providers properly understand and exercise their obligation to make reasonable accommodations for assistance animals," Stoddard said.

"Companies in the business of providing housing are in the business of complying with fair housing laws, and that includes making reasonable accommodations for assistance animals," said Nancy Haynes, executive director of the Fair Housing Center. Read more [here](#).

## What are Reasonable Accommodations?

This excerpt was written by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), Read More [here](#).

A reasonable accommodation is a change in rules, policies, or practices that may be necessary to afford a person with a disability an equal opportunity to use or enjoy a dwelling, such as assistance in filling out a rental application or allowing a unit transfer. This could also include reasonable structural modifications or changes like (but not limited to):

- Installing grab bars in the bathroom
- Widening doorways
- Removing under-the-counter cabinets
- Installing ramps

Requests can be made orally or in writing and are not required to be entered on specific forms, though management may

provide a form for this purpose.

It is a violation of fair housing law to discriminate against applicants or residents because of their disability or the disability of anyone associated with them and to treat persons with disabilities unfavorably as a result of their disability. Housing providers may not refuse residency to persons with a disability or place conditions on their residency because a person with disabilities may require a reasonable accommodation.

Reasonable accommodation requests may include (but are not limited to):

- Requesting to keep a service or companion animal despite a "no pets" policy

- Requesting a unit transfer from an upper floor to a ground floor unit because of a mobility disability
- Requesting that carpeting be removed from a unit or that maintenance staff not use certain chemicals inside a unit due to severe respiratory disabilities

View the HUD-DOJ Joint Memos on [Reasonable Accommodations](#) or [Reasonable Modifications](#). HUD and DOJ have also provided guidance on service animals through the release of [HUD Notice 13-060A](#) (hud.gov) and DOJ's ADA [Service Animal Fact Sheet](#). For training opportunities please click [here](#).

## Harris County Housing Resource Center (HCRC)

Harris County Community Services Department



The Harris County Housing and Community Resource Center (HCRC) is a one-stop-shop for finding rental property, opportunities for first time home buyers, financial assistance, and emergency shelter.

For live telephone help from one of our Resource Navigators, please call 713-696-1998 or email us at [HRC@csd.hctx.net](mailto:HRC@csd.hctx.net)

### Property Providers (Landlords)

We have information and resources available for landlords that include listing your property on our website, helpful resources, and training opportunities. For more information, please contact one of our Housing Coordinators at 713-578-2217 or

[www.housingandcommunityresources.net](http://www.housingandcommunityresources.net).

For highlights of Harris County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funded projects, please see our newsletter [here](#)

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## HARRISCOUNTY CSD



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