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## HOUSING ISSUES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### ❑ **BUILDING CODE**

The Building Code should be amended to include Austin Visitability Code standards for all housing, not just publicly funded housing.

### ❑ **ENFORCEMENT**

The federal Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Texas Architectural Barriers Act all address requirements to make housing and related services accessible for people with disabilities. These laws are often times not followed; if there is no enforcement, this is true in housing programs as well as other city-funded programs as we found here in Austin.

### ❑ **AUSTIN TENANT'S COUNCIL**

The Austin Tenant's Council is a necessary component in the enforcement of the above-mentioned laws. The funds allocated to the Austin Tenants' Council allow people with disabilities a resource in the discrimination they face when the laws are not monitored and/or enforced. Over 50% of the ATC discrimination complaints from 2000 – 2002 were based on discrimination.

### ❑ **ARCHITECTURAL BARRIER REMOVAL PROGRAM**

There is an incredible need for assistance to people with disabilities who need access into their own homes. Inaccessible housing is substandard for people who need access. If you are a prisoner in your own home because you cannot get in or out independently due to lack of a ramp, railing, accessible fire alarm or other access accommodations, your housing is substandard. Support is needed to increase the number of units done by the architectural barrier removal programs. These programs must be consumer driven.

The funds allocated to the Architectural Barrier Removal Program will help people with disabilities remain an active part of the community. The removal of barriers allows people to retain their independence. This program must continue despite the contract issues recently encountered.

### ❑ **INTEGRATION**

People with disabilities need integrated housing opportunities that allow them to live as a normal part of their community. Disability only housing condemns people with disabilities to segregation. NHCD should not fund any segregated housing including 811 projects. Austin would not fund racially segregated housing and we should not do it for disability either. Austin should adopt an integration policy similar to the one TDHCA is adopting.



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□ **S.M.A.R.T. HOUSING**

The S.M.A.R.T. Housing Initiative passed by the Austin City Council in April 2000 was a creative housing concept. It stipulates that all single-family units meet accessibility standards reflected in the City's Visitability Ordinance. In addition, the criteria concerning multifamily units states that at least 25% must be adaptable and at least 10% must be accessible. The recent audit conducted on the S.M.A.R.T. Housing program indicates NHCD needs to monitor the development of individual projects more thoroughly in order to ensure the accessibility and adaptability standards are met, as well as affordability.

□ **AFFORDABILITY**

HUD designates people with disabilities among those with the 'Worst Housing Needs'. This is certainly true in Texas. NHCD should target housing development and programs that serve the needs of people at 30% and below of MFI. SSI, the disability social security payment, is about \$550 a month, which equates to around 15% of MFI, and this should be a target population for NHCD's low income housing planning and activities.

□ **VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE AGREEMENT (VCA)**

The City and its staff have assured ADAPT on numerous occasions of its commitment to compliance. One way to achieve this is to continually strive for the goals of the VCA. Current annual and future plans should explicitly address the city's commitment to compliance and how it plans to meet that commitment.

On October 9, 2002 the VCA expired. At the time 38 non-compliance reports for multi-family sites had been issued. ADAPT was assured monies would be allocated in the budget until the properties involved had achieved compliance. Therefore, ADAPT would like to see monies allocated for the continued monitoring of the individual properties to ensure compliance is achieved. ADAPT wants a commitment from the CDC and NHCD that the City will pursue enforcement of these projects until compliance is achieved.