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St Louis County Establishes Affordable Housing Trust Fund

by Michael Anderson // 2020, Winter



In December 2019, the St. Louis County Council voted 4-3 on Bill 284, establishing an Affordable Housing Trust Fund for the county. The AHTF will be funded by a local sales tax on medical marijuana, estimated to generate anywhere from \$50,000 to \$300,000 annually.

Bill 284 identifies priority populations for the AHTF: (1) single-parent households in poverty with children; (2) households earning less than \$35,000 a year; (3) people 65 or older; (4) households experiencing homelessness, and (5) households experiencing evictions or foreclosures. Bill 284 also identifies renters as a priority and as well as North St. Louis County as a geographic priority, followed by areas with high vacancy rates.

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund Coalition and the Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis (CBN) were partners in a multi-year advocacy effort to establish the county housing trust fund. The [Affordable Housing Trust Fund Coalition](#) includes stakeholders from a variety of sectors—including education, development, health, housing, and human services—that actively support increased funding and a greater role for the AHTF in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County. [CBN](#) is an organization that connects and supports community building organizations in metro St. Louis with the goal to build engaged and equitable neighborhoods.

Leading up to the December passage of Bill 284, CBN and fellow coalition members presented at five public hearings. The coalition hosted a workshop “How To Speak at Public Hearings” to build the capacity of people wanting to engage in the civic process. Every person who attended the workshop went on to speak at a public hearing. The coalition was also invited to work with staff of the County Executive, Councilwoman Lisa Clancy, and the County’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund Task Force on the details of the bill.

The AHTF will receive funding from a portion of the local medical marijuana sales tax, which became legal Jan 1, 2020. Though the projections for the initial revenue generated for the AHTF are modest,

advocates have already identified the potential legalization of recreational marijuana as an additional revenue source for the AHTF, and are working with County leadership to identify other sources to fund the AHTF at a robust, sustainable level. The Affordable Housing Trust Fund Coalition supports the recommendation from the County Task Force for \$30 million annually for the AHTF to meet the housing needs in the county.

In addition to establishing the AHTF, Bill 284 expands the county's Housing Resources Commission from seven to nine members. The composition of the Commission will include four county residents, at least two of whom live in the county's most distressed areas, a real estate professional and three people who are experts in legal services, fair housing, homeless services, disabled services, lending or other related services. A primary duty of the Commission is to prepare and administer a comprehensive strategic plan summarizing St. Louis County's strategy for supporting the provision of affordable housing and homeless services.

To learn more about the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, contact the Housing Resource Commission through the St. Louis County Department of Human Services at 314-615-4453.



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