

C Community Development Committee

Meeting Date: December 3, 2007

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date:	November 21, 2007
Subject:	HousingLink Funding Request
District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	<i>Framework Policy 3: Encourage expanded choices in housing location and types, and improved access to jobs and opportunities; 24 CFR §§ 982.155 and 982.301(b)</i>
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Beth Reetz, Metro HRA Program Manager (651/602-1278)
Division/Department:	Community Development / Housing & Redevelopment Authority

Proposed Action/Motion

That the Metropolitan Council authorize its Regional Administrator to execute an amendment to its existing funding assistance agreement with the HousingLink to: (1) extend the agreement for an additional year; and (2) provide \$50,000 from its Section 8 program administrative fee reserve fund to support the nonprofit organization's regional affordable housing information and referral services in calendar year 2008

Issue(s)

Should the Metropolitan Council continue its support of the HousingLink in 2008 to help ensure regional clearinghouse functions performed by the organization are available to help families participating in the Council's federal Section 8 and other rent assistance programs locate and lease eligible rental units?

Overview and Funding

The HousingLink is a nonprofit organization that was created through the collaborative efforts of several private foundations and public agencies, including the Metropolitan Council. The organization was created to help provide a cost-effective centralized clearinghouse for housing information and related services. Since 1997, the HousingLink has provided affordable rental housing information, housing referrals and related services for prospective renters, rental unit owners/managers, and others within the region. The clearinghouse functions are funded by contributions from a number of public and private sources. The nonprofit has received funding assistance and other support from the Council since 1999.

Federal regulations governing the Section 8 tenant-based assistance program require housing agencies to provide participant families with certain information, including a list of landlords or other parties known to the housing agencies who may be willing to lease their units to the families, or otherwise help families find eligible rental housing units. If HousingLink did not provide many of its information, referral and related services, the Council would need to perform these functions in-house or otherwise ensure the information and related services required by federal housing assistance program regulations are provided by some other method. Using the HousingLink is the most cost-effective and efficient means of handling this responsibility.

Housing information and referral services are very important to the families who participate in the Council's housing programs because they increase the likelihood that participating families will find decent, safe and sanitary housing that complies with federal housing quality standards and make timely use of their rental subsidy assistance.

The Council has authorized the use of Section 8 administrative fee reserves for the support of HousingLink services since 1999. The services provided by the HousingLink are an eligible use of the reserve funds. If the Council allocates \$50,000 of its Section 8 program administrative fee reserves to support HousingLink services, the balance in the administrative fee reserve fund will not be significantly affected and will remain at a level sufficient to ensure financial integrity of the program operations.