

C Community Development Committee
Meeting date: December 7, 2009

ADVISORY INFORMATION	
Date:	November 30, 2009
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, Director, Housing and Livable Communities 651-602-1060
Division/Department:	Community Development

Proposed Action

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 fees or administrative fee reserve fund to support the nonprofit organization's regional affordable housing information and referral services in calendar year 2010.

Background

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. Additionally federal regulations require housing authorities to provide information related to neighboring housing authorities to assist families that chose to use their voucher to transfer to another program jurisdiction. 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 and safe housing that complies with federal housing quality standards and make timely use of their rental subsidy assistance.

The HousingLink, through its work on the Inventory of Assisted Rental Housing, the annual Housing Counts Report, and most recently the Mortgage Foreclosure Tracking, has built a very comprehensive database of housing information for the seven county metropolitan area. HousingLink has the ability to provide customized ad hoc reports needed by Council staff for purposes of determining community housing performance scores, numbers of affordable housing units within proximity of specific transit corridors, and other select purposes.

Rationale

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 Section 8 Program administrative fees and administrative fee reserve funds.

Funding

The HRA's 2010 budget incorporates this support to HousingLink using administrative fees earned in 2010 to cover the expense.

Known Support / Opposition

There is no known opposition to this action.