

# Harris County



# Precinct One

**RODNEY ELLIS**  
*Commissioner*

**AGENDA ITEM**

April 27, 2021

County Judge Lina Hidalgo  
Members of Commissioners Court

**RE: Resolution in recognition of National Fair Housing Month.**

Precinct 1 requests approval of a resolution recognizing April as National Fair Housing Month.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney Ellis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Commissioner Rodney Ellis  
RE: JL

xc: Brandon Dudley



# *Resolution*

**WHEREAS**, the Month of April marks the 53rd anniversary of the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which sought to eliminate discrimination in housing opportunities and to affirmatively further housing choices for all Americans; and

**WHEREAS**, this Act made illegal, discrimination in the sale, rental and financing dwellings based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, family status or disability; and

**WHEREAS**, National Fair Housing month is a time to celebrate the progress we have made in the fight for fair housing, it is also time to double down our efforts to achieve housing equity; and

**WHEREAS**, redlining took place for nearly 30 years and legally excluded Black Americans from accessing homeownership by denying their mortgage applications. Between 1930 and 1950, only 2% of Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgages went to non-White families; and

**WHEREAS**, even though the Fair Housing Act of 1968 legally ended redlining, the effects still exist often placing people of color in racially segregated and high poverty areas. In Houston, a cluster of communities that were redlined - Sunnyside, Third Ward and Fifth Ward - have a higher percentage of individuals living in poverty compared to communities on the West side of Houston; and

**WHEREAS**, decades of these explicitly racist housing policies are directly tied to the current racial homeownership gap. Across the Houston three-county area, 72% of White residents are homeowners compared to just 41% of Black residents and 52% of Latinx residents. Only 31.2% of residents in Fifth Ward, which is a predominantly Black neighborhood, are homeowners compared to 48.1% of residents in the Museum District and 65.6% of residents in the Heights.

**WHEREAS**, the racial homeownership gap and racial wealth gap are directly linked—Americans' greatest asset is their home, and Black and Latinx median family wealth is less than 20% of White family wealth; and

**WHEREAS**, even when Black residents own their homes, they are undervalued by a racially biased appraisal industry. Even when controlling for home size and quality, houses in White neighborhoods are worth 2.5 times more than houses in Latinx neighborhoods, and 3.7 times more than in Black neighborhoods; and

**WHEREAS**, nationally, 83.75% of all fair housing allegations occurred in the rental market. People of color are predominantly renters, often due to homeownership barriers such as lack of funding for a down payment and credit availability, compared to their White counterparts who are predominantly homeowners; and

**WHEREAS**, disability discrimination also occurs and is often more overt and rampant than other forms of housing discrimination. In the City of Houston alone more than 40% of fair housing complaints filed with the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development were by people with disabilities. Many apartments do not meet accessibility requirements and landlords have been known to refuse reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities; and

**WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated housing inequalities in Black and Latinx neighborhoods that have experienced prolonged periods of under-investment, and Black and

Latinx neighborhoods in Harris County contracted COVID-19 at higher rates while simultaneously facing housing instability. Black renters in Greater Houston have been more likely to be evicted than other racial and ethnic groups during this period, and homeowners of color were three times more likely to have missed their last mortgage payments and twice as likely to struggle making next month's mortgage payment than White homeowners; and

**WHEREAS**, where a person lives determines their exposure to toxins and impacts from environmental and natural disasters. The overwhelming majority of hazard sites are in communities of color, while White neighborhoods are largely free of such hazards. And, after Hurricane Harvey, White residents of higher-income Houston neighborhoods received an average of \$60,000 in FEMA assistance, while Black residents in low-income neighborhoods received just \$84; and

**WHEREAS**, research has documented that children who are raised in neighborhoods with lower poverty rates and less residential segregation have higher levels of educational attainment and tend to have better economic and life outcomes as adults; and

**WHEREAS**, adults with children face more discrimination in the housing rental market when looking for homes. According to the National Fair Housing Alliance, more than 2,000 fair housing violations based on familial status were filed in 2020 alone. In Harris County, there is a clear demand for larger rental units for families, but the availability and price for larger units keeps many families living in smaller and overcrowded rental homes; and

**WHEREAS**, this country has historically treated housing as a privilege and not a right. Housing barriers and discrimination have contributed to the national homelessness crisis and a disproportionality of Black people experiencing homelessness, who make up over 50% of the homeless population in Harris County; and

**WHEREAS**, under President Biden, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has reinstated the heart of the original Fair Housing Act, the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule, which requires localities that receive federal funding to look for and analyze patterns of housing discrimination and then present a plan to address them if present. Yet, in the State of Texas there remains source of income discrimination and other impediments to fair Housing.

**THEREFORE**, Harris County recognizes fair housing disparities and supports local policies that promote access to safe, decent, and affordable housing for all members of our community; and

**BE IT RESOLVED** that Harris County Commissioners Court declares housing is a human right.

**ADOPTED** on this 27th day of April 2021 by Harris County Commissioners Court, Harris County, Texas.

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**LINA HIDALGO**, County Judge

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**RODNEY ELLIS**, Commissioner  
Precinct One

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**ADRIAN GARCIA**, Commissioner  
Precinct Two

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**TOM S. RAMSEY, P.E.**, Commissioner  
Precinct Three

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**R. JACK CAGLE**, Commissioner  
Precinct Four

ATTEST:

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Teneshia Hudspeth, County Clerk  
Harris County, T E X A S