

THE INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ANTIRACISM (IDEA) INITIATIVE REPORT

In 2020, the Ferndale Housing Commission committed to taking meaningful action to ensure its core values of inclusion, diversity, equity and anti-racism were embodied within its policies, programs and operations. In order to do so, it initiated a process of gathering and analyzing perspectives from program participants, and coordinating and facilitating an IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and antiracism) Task Force for the purpose of producing a resident-driven assessment of its organizational policies and practices and to identify issues that undermine its commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and antiracism. The project included a data collection phase, the creation of an IDEA Task Force made up of housing program participants, a period of policy and process review through the Task Force, and generation of recommendations for action. The data collection phase spanned September-November of 2020 and the work of the Task Force took place from January-June of 2021. Completed recommendations were presented to the Board of Commissioners on June 23, 2021.

Prepared by LaTosch Consulting, July 2021



Acknowledgements

Many individuals expended hours of time and dedication to the process of generating these recommendations. The IDEA Task Force met virtually over Zoom for two-hour meetings seven times over the course of five months and reviewed hundreds of pages of documentation, making important recommendations for change. The Task Force included housing program participants as well as community advocates for local LGBTQ communities and those living with disabilities.

Task Force Members included: Sheila Golly, Mark Hopkins, Tamika Hudson, Will Johnson, Nina Kelly, Kathleen Redmon, Lee Rudolph, Darlene Shanks, and Reggie Sutherland. The Task Force members were selected by a group of well-respected local community members that reflected the population served. These volunteers included: Ann Heler, Raylon Leaks-May, Joel Milliner, and Reggie Sutherland.

Staff supported the initiative through participation in monthly planning meetings, assisting in ensuring the logistics of data collection were carried out, and that Task Force members received support when needed with document copies, equipment and technology training. Staff support primarily included: Jennifer Mondy, Emily Tong, and Heather Van Poucker.

The process was facilitated by Kathleen LaTosch and Crecendra Brown of LaTosch Consulting. Additional information on the history of the low-income housing system and its connection to institutional racism provided by Afton Branche-Wilson.



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Executive Summary

In the summer of 2020, the Ferndale Housing Commission initiated a process of gathering and analyzing perspectives from program participants, and coordinating and facilitating an IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and antiracism) Task Force for the purpose of producing a resident-driven assessment of its organizational policies and practices to identify issues that undermine its commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and antiracism. The project included a data collection phase, the creation of an IDEA Task Force made up of housing program participants, a period of policy and process review through the Task Force, and generation of recommendations for action. The data collection phase spanned the fall of 2020 and the work of the Task Force began in January 2021 and completed with recommendations issued to the Board of Commissioners on June 23, 2021.

During its time, the IDEA Task Force met in a series of eight two-hour meetings. Throughout this process, they learned about: the core concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism; the low-income housing system and the impact of systemic racism; Ferndale Housing Commission policies and practices; resident and program participant experiences and perspectives. The Task Force took regular pauses to integrate learnings into emerging recommendations which were reviewed at various junctures throughout the process for refinement and prioritization. This report details the 85 key recommendations that emerged during this process. An appendix includes survey reports and the full recommendations with discussion.

Definitions & Guiding Principles

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this initiative, we offer the following definitions of important words and concepts used in this report.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Antiracism (IDEA):

- **Inclusion**, when viewed from a diversity-affirming perspective, includes the processes that lift up, amplify, and maximize our diverse qualities, characteristics, experiences, and thinking.
- **Diversity** is the existence of variation within and among any group of people.



- **Equity** is a structural and systemic concept that also manifests at the individual level. Equity work entails understanding and addressing the root causes of existing disparities and barriers to access within our society's institutions and systems.
- **Antiracism** is an approach that intentionally examines behaviors, practices and policies and seeks to root out those which are unjust and/or which perpetuate disparate outcomes for people based on race.

Housing Choice Voucher Program. Known historically as section 8 housing, the "Housing Choice Voucher Program" is a rent subsidy program to assist families in securing housing in the private marketplace and serves families throughout Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. Participants secure their own residence, working with a private landlord, and the FHC provides a voucher to the landlord as a portion of the rent. This program includes 880 families through the FHC.

Public Housing Program. "Public Housing" is affordable housing provided by the Ferndale Housing Commission (FHC). The FHC owns the property (two apartment buildings and a selection of single-family homes) and participants pay rent to the FHC, subsidized by government support. All properties within this program are situated within the City of Ferndale. This program includes 157 families through the FHC.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The process of applying the core concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism to the development of key recommendations is rooted in a number of understandings and guiding principles:

1. **Participants in government subsidized housing are closest to and best know what is and isn't working for them and have valid recommendations and suggestions for change.** Task Force members were charged with reviewing all information presented and for making recommendations based on that review and rooted in their own lived experience. Some recommendations grew directly from survey results, others from an analysis of the low-income housing system, some from topic-focused sub-committee work, still others from Task Force conversations regarding broader challenges. The process was exploratory and developmental. In cases where recommendations point to differences between resident and staff experiences, care should be taken to fully understand resident experiences in the process of determining next steps.
2. **Historic and current institutionalized racism in employment, housing, banking, education and the criminal justice system has resulted in people of color being much**

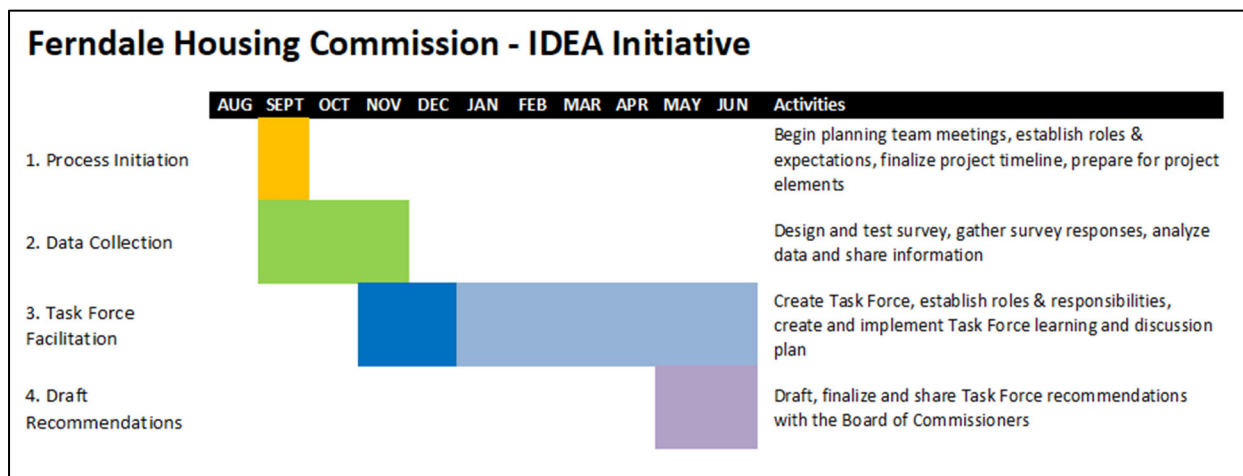


more likely to live in low-income housing. Some of these same institutional policies and practices currently prevent people in need from accessing low-income housing or in successfully finding and/or keeping their housing. The Task Force and its recommendations included suggestions to that the Ferndale Housing Commission both: 1) advocate to strike problematic policies from the law at the city, state and federal levels, and 2) work to reduce their disparate impact, to the extent legally possible, within its own programming and services.

3. **Unconscious/implicit bias is real and all people experience it, including staff and residents.** Efforts at reducing implicit bias at the individual level have shown to have nominal results. Research shows that the best bias-reducing strategies include a combination of awareness building through education combined with putting practices in place that reduce the opportunity for implicit bias to have effect. This requires intentional and proactive efforts to identify points for potential bias and put practices into place to prevent its influence.

Process Overview

In 2020, the Ferndale Housing Commission committed to taking meaningful action to ensure its core values of inclusion, diversity, equity and anti-racism were embodied within its policies, programs and operations. In order to do so, it initiated a process of gathering and analyzing perspectives from program participants, and coordinating and facilitating an IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and antiracism) Task Force for the purpose of producing a resident-driven



assessment of its organizational policies and practices. The project included a data collection phase, the creation of an IDEA Task Force made up of housing program participants, a period of policy and process review through the Task Force, and generation of recommendations for action.

Process Initiation - The Planning Team

The process began in September of 2020 with the formation of an internal planning team which included several full-time staff members and one Board member. Planning meetings were designed to lend input on the process and assisted in:

- establishing and adjusting timelines for each part of the work
- all communications to program participants, including invitations to participate in the survey and on the Task Force and providing contact information to consultants as needed for interview invitations
- designing and testing the survey
- sharing all program documentation, policies and procedures for review by the Task Force
- providing answers to questions that arose throughout the process and regular input on the developing recommendations
- presenting an overview of the housing system to Task Force members during one of their meetings

The Planning Team met at least monthly throughout the process to lend this assistance and set the stage for data collection efforts and the formation and support of a functioning Task Force that developed, refined and finalized recommendations. The final recommendations were presented to the Board of Commissioners for review on June 23, 2021.

Survey Methodology

Two surveys were developed with input from the Planning Team to gather perspectives from program participants: one survey focused on public housing residents and one focused on voucher program participants.



Each survey sought to measure three core elements related to participant experiences, including:

- Sense of safety, well-being and belonging within home, neighborhood, and program
- Involvement in decision-making (public housing only – related to apartment buildings)
- Experiences of discrimination, mistreatment, and/or fairness

The surveys further gathered information about the following individual characteristics: Length of time in the program, housing type, age, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, number of people in household, number of children in household. This information was gathered in order to cross-reference responses to survey questions to explore group-based differences in responses.

The surveys were administered anonymously with an email invitation to take the survey online sent to all residents for whom email addresses were on file. Paper copies (with a seal-able return envelope) were dropped off at apartments and mailed to those without email addresses. A collection box was posted at both public housing apartments to collect hard-copy surveys which were kept sealed and turned over to the consultant for hand entry. A newsletter announcement helped to promote the survey and an incentive of the opportunity to be entered into a drawing for one of four \$50 gift cards was provided.

Housing Choice Voucher Program Survey. This survey included 30 questions. A total of 202 surveys were completed out of all 880 Voucher Program participants for a response rate of 23%. Of these, 181 were collected directly online from participants and 27 were hand-entered from paper copy surveys. In terms of demographics, survey respondents were more likely to be aged 24-44, Black, living with a disability, living with multiple household members (including more with children) as compared to all voucher program participants. The gender of respondents was within 1-2 percentage points of the program participants overall.

- On age, 61% of survey respondents were ages 25-44, as compared to all program members, of which 47% were in the same age bracket. Fewer people in the upper age ranges were present among respondents.
- On race, Black/African American people made up 90% of respondents as compared to 84% of all voucher program participants.
- On disability, those with disabilities were more likely to respond with 1% indicating they currently live with a disability as compared with 23% of the total voucher program population.



- On household size, people living alone were less likely to take the survey at 31%, as compared to 45% of those in the voucher program overall. Also 34% indicated there were no children living in the home, as compared to 52% of those overall.

Public Housing Survey. This survey included 33 questions. A total of 61 surveys were completed out of all 157 public housing residents for a response rate of 39%. Of these, 23 were collected directly online from participants and 38 were hand-entered from paper copy surveys. In terms of demographics, respondents were more likely to be living in an apartment, in their middle years (45-69), white, male, single and living with a disability as compared to all public housing residents.

- 90% of survey respondents live in apartments as compared to 84% of all public housing residents.
- On age, 34% of survey respondents were ages 45-59 and 38% in their 60's, as compared to all residents which are 27% and 28% respectively. Consistent with this, there are fewer respondents in the 25-44 and over 70 age ranges as compared to all residents.
- On race, Black/African American people made up 66% of respondents as compared to 74% of all residents.
- On gender, men made up 35% of respondents as compared to 28% of resident heads of household overall.
- On disability, those with disabilities were much more likely to respond with 79% indicating they currently live with a disability as compared with 45% of the total residential population.
- On household size, people living alone were more likely to take the survey at 83%, as compared to 68% of those in public housing overall. 91% indicated there were no children living in the home, as compared to 80% of those overall.

Survey Findings

Key findings are presented in three sections – findings that related to both the Housing Choice Voucher Program and the Public Housing Program, and two separate sections that are relevant only to specific programs. A few highlights from each are provided below, with a full report on each available in the Appendix.



HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) & PUBLIC HOUSING (PH) PROGRAMS COMPARED

- Most respondents reported generally feeling welcome and respected in their neighborhoods with over 75% of respondents in both groups feeling somewhat or very welcome, respected, safe, comfortable and a sense of belonging in their neighborhoods.
- Most respondents reported feeling safe in their current home/apartment – over 65% in each group.
- Twice as many public housing respondents have shared a housing complaint with staff as compared to housing choice voucher program respondents [47% (n=28), 22% (n=47), respectively].
- HCV participants were more likely to view FHC rules as fair for all people (89%) as compared to PH residents (75%), with another 87% of HCV participants finding rules implemented fairly and consistently, as compared to PH residents (64%).
- When asked if there were areas where fairness could be improved, about half of each group were not sure and three times as many PH residents (36%) believe there are areas where fairness could be improved (as compared to 13% for HCV participants).
- On preventing discrimination, 58% of HCV participants believe FHC works to prevent this a lot, as compared to 44% of PH residents.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM

- More than 77% of respondents feel welcome, respected, safe, comfortable and a sense of belonging.
 - People with disabilities are more likely to feel welcome, safe, comfortable, respected and a sense of belonging than those without disabilities.
 - Those with children are more likely to feel unwelcome than those without children. This effect increases as the number of children increases. Likewise, those with children are least likely to feel safe and this effect also increases with the number of children in the household.
- 29% of respondents indicated they had felt unsafe in their home/neighborhood. When asked what made them feel unsafe, top response themes included: crime (23%), conflicts with neighbors (23%), and general neighborhood safety (20%).
- 56% of HCV participants had shared a concern with their landlord. People with disabilities are more likely to share concerns (60%) and also more likely to feel their concerns were



taken seriously. Of the concerns shared, the top themes were: the landlord him/herself (54%) and housing issues (20%). On landlord concerns, they included such issues as lack of timeliness with repairs, lack of confidentiality about income status, lack of responsiveness to concerns, and harassment.

- 57% of respondents had shared concerns/complaints with their landlord. Of those who had filed a complaint just over half felt their concerns were taken seriously, thought action was taken and were satisfied with the outcome.
- When asked if there were areas in fairness that Ferndale Housing Commission policies and practices could be improved, 13% responded yes (n=26). Top areas cited for improvement included:
 - finances (31%)
 - equity (19%)
 - housing issues (15%)

PUBLIC HOUSING (PH) PROGRAM

- More than 80% of respondents feel welcome, respected, safe, comfortable and a sense of belonging.
 - People with disabilities are less likely to feel welcome, respected, safe and a sense of belonging in their homes and neighborhood than those without disabilities.
 - White people felt slightly less safe in their homes and less likely to feel a sense of welcome, safety, belonging and respect in their neighborhoods than Black respondents.
- When asked what made people feel unsafe, building safety, violence and door safety were top concerns.
 - Building safety (28%) top concerns included: *fire/bomb threats, strangers and unwelcome behavior, lack of general building security.*
 - Violence (23%) top concerns included: *shooting/stabbing incidents and threats to commit violence.*
- 75% of respondents report that the Ferndale Housing Commission provides a lot or some opportunities for involvement in decision-making. *People with disabilities are less likely to feel invited to help in decision-making (72% as compared to 83% of those without disabilities).*



- When they participate, 68% report feeling heard a lot or somewhat and 70% report feeling taken seriously a lot or somewhat.
- Half of respondents feel that diverse perspectives are considered a lot or somewhat in decision-making, another 23% are unsure. Disability (49%), racial diversity (41%), and age (35%) were cited most frequently lacking in decision making input.
- 32% of respondents (n=20) indicated they had a negative experience with staff, had witnessed it or both.
 - 13% of people with disabilities indicated personal experience (n=6) and 18% indicated they had witnessing it (n=8).
 - On race, 16% of Black respondents (n=6) indicated personal experience compared to 5% of white people (n=1); 8% of Black respondents witnessed only (n=3) and 28% of white people (n=5) witnessed only.
- 34% of respondents indicated they had personally experienced negative treatment by other residents or neighbors, had witnessed it, or had experienced both. Disrespectful behavior and gossip rose as two top complaints about neighbors.
- When asked about negative experiences with other residents, respondents shared concerns of: disrespectful behavior (12), and gossip (5) with visitor issues and arguments (3) following.
- When asked what areas of fairness could be improved, equity (21%), resident concerns (17%) and 'all areas' were cited most.

Interview Methodology

A second source of information consisted of individual interviews conducted with both public housing participants and section 8 voucher holders. Original plans included hosting focus groups with target populations, however both feedback from individuals who preferred one-on-one interviews and complications from the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in replacing focus groups with individual interviews conducted via telephone. In the Public Housing program, 18 people were randomly contacted, five agreed to participate in an interview. In the Housing Choice Voucher Program, 12 people were randomly contacted and four agreed to participate. In all, a total of nine individual 30-45 minutes interviews were completed with program participants to



gather additional, contextual information regarding their experiences. Interviews were conducted and analyzed in April of 2021.

Interview Findings

Interview findings largely mirrored the survey findings in each group with some additional information that provided detail and context, particularly in the case of public housing residents.

PUBLIC HOUSING INTERVIEW SUMMARY

- **Reluctance to participate.** Out of 18 calls, only five participated. Nine did not return calls and three stated they would prefer not to participate (one number was disconnected). Of the five who did participate, conversation started out slowly and cautiously with reluctance to provide detail. Only after several affirmations of confidentiality did speakers provide more information. Some stated they didn't think what they had to say would make any difference, others stated they feared repercussions from other residents or staff.
- **Repairs are slow.** Several interviewees commented on the slowness of repairs and fulfillment of maintenance requests. Ferndale Housing Commission staff agreed that repairs had been slower in the last year and that this was due mainly to ripple effects from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Complaint process is frustrating.** Some reported they didn't think hearings were being scheduled in a timely manner or at all, others were concerned that they would complain and never know what happened. Still others are concerned that if they complain, staff will think negatively of them as a "complainer" and there will be other repercussions in the future.
- **Consistency / information about following policies.** Concerns arose regarding eviction process and consistency in following the procedure with all residents. There was surprise/lack of knowledge cited regarding some policies. Better communication was suggested.
- **Location-specific concerns.**
 - Autumn House. Several tenants cited tenuous relationships with other tenants and with the resident committee. This included a reluctance to engage with



neighbors and tendency to keep to oneself; to avoid conversation for fear of gossip and avoidance of sharing concerns for fear the resident committee members would make living there harder.

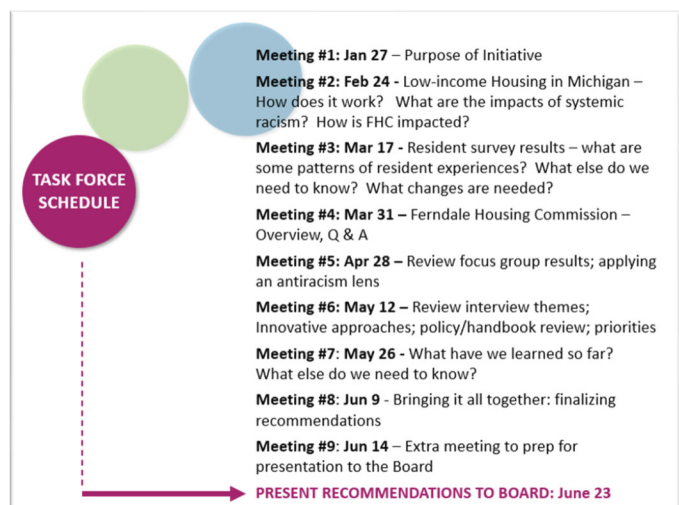
- Withington West. Concerns here included those about residents and about staff. On concerns with residents, interviewees said there are gossip issues and that they don't like going to meetings because they are all "don't do this; don't do that." Concerns about staff included a difficulty in getting staff attention, a lack of perceived care and compassion and a feeling that some staff tend to take the side of white residents when disagreements arise.

Task Force Formation and Process

The Task Force Formation

A Task Force comprised of program participants was an integral part of this process. The entire initiative hinged on the engagement of the people most affected by policies and procedures and having important input in and guiding the development of recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. Development and confirmation of the Task Force members took about two months, during November and December, with a formal kick-off meeting taking place near the end of January 2021.

All program participants were extended an invitation to join the Task Force through email and direct mail invitations that arrived with their survey. Interested parties could also sign-up online. In all, a total of 34 people applied to be on the Task Force. The Planning Team set the target participation of at least 6 and no more than 14 and including a diversity of: age, race, gender, gender identity, ability, type of housing, sexual orientation, diversity of length of residency. A small group of community leaders were identified to help make the selections. This

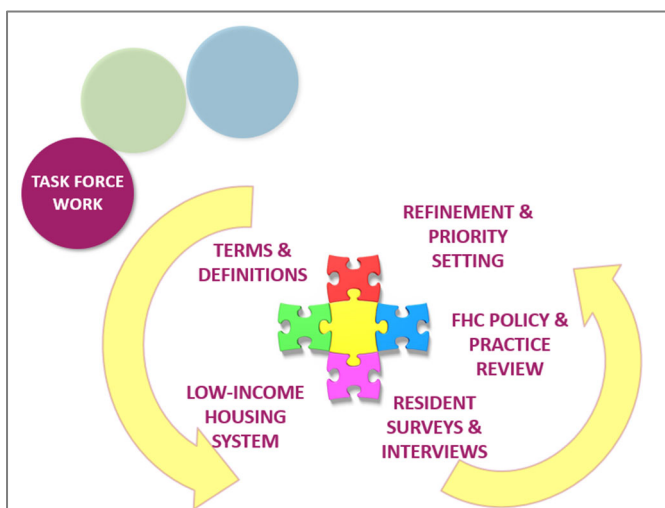


committee ended up choosing 12 people and four alternates. A member of the Board of Commissioners and one person each from the Ferndale Accessibility and Inclusion Commission and Affirmations (Ferndale's LGBTQ community center) were also invited to participate. Of the total invited, nine ended up being regular participants in the process and reflected the racial makeup of the resident demographics at large.

Task Force Process

The IDEA Task Force met in a series of eight two-hour meetings over Zoom and added a ninth meeting prior to prepping for their Board presentation. Prior to launching, all participants were asked about their access to technology and their knowledge of using Zoom software. Thanks to a generous donation from the Ferndale Public Schools, five Chromebooks and wireless hotspots were borrowed and shared with participants who did not have equipment. Further, two live group Zoom tutorial sessions were offered and at least 3 individual Zoom tutorials were offered to ensure the process could move along smoothly in a virtual context.

The first official meeting kicked off on January 27th. Throughout the process, they learned about: the core concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism; the low-income housing system and the impact of systemic racism on it; Ferndale Housing Commission policies and practices; resident and program participant experiences and perspectives. The Task Force took regular pauses to integrate learnings into emerging recommendations which were reviewed at various junctures throughout the process for refinement and prioritization. They generated a report which summarized their key recommendations and included sections to highlight – both items that were a priority and those that were considered potentially easy to implement.



Task Force Recommendations Summary

Note: Participation in the IDEA Initiative and the development of the recommendations was limited. This was a time-limited engagement that should be viewed as a first step upon which to build over time. To that end:

- 1) The public housing and housing choice voucher programs have distinct differences that would each benefit from deeper and separate evaluation.
- 2) Acknowledging best efforts, a first-time survey will inherently leave out important questions that are only identified in hindsight, after a survey is completed, based on the responses and results. Follow-up surveys and additional information gathering may be required to give greater depth, context and specificity to some of the recommendations. Repeating surveys periodically can allow the Ferndale Housing Commission to track changes in program participant experiences over time.
- 3) It was outside the scope of this initiative to review models from outside Ferndale for example practices and solutions, however the Task Force did include some examples as came to attention. Learning about successful models from around the country would be a fruitful endeavor and useful investment of resources in the goal toward making positive changes for the Ferndale Housing Commission programs and living out its values of diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism.

The recommendations were broken down into 14 categories. Consultant recommendations based on best practices are distributed through the sections. In sum, the report includes 85 distinct recommendations in the following areas: An expanded version of the recommendations are included in the appendix.



Abbreviated IDEA Task Force Recommendations

1.0 Federal Policy Changes

- 1.1 Advocate for vouchers to be permitted to cover additional expenses beyond rent.
- 1.2 Advocate that vouchers be permitted to cover transitional housing costs while an approved participant is seeking housing, including temporary hotel stays.
- 1.3 Advocate that the rent cap definition for the region be expanded to accommodate greater nuance in rental housing costs within the various geographic regions of the tri-county area.
- 1.4 Advocate that low-income housing ban-for-life be removed for those convicted of methamphetamine production on the premises of federally funded housing.

2.0 Regional / State Policy Changes

- 2.1 Advocate that “source of income” be included in the discrimination prohibitions for landlords and rental property managers in the City of Ferndale, and all counties and municipalities where FHC participants may look for housing, in order to reduce the discrimination that Section 8 Voucher Program holders face in securing rental homes.
- 2.2 Advocate with the Michigan legislature for the legalization of rent control policies in Michigan.
- 2.3 Advocate that area counties review landlord policies and consider ways to increase landlord participation in housing authority programs.

3.0 City of Ferndale Advocacy

- 3.1 Identify current COVID-related funding which could benefit FHC program participants with financial assistance and other supports and provide information and support for people to access those supports.
- 3.2 Advocate that the city create a subsidy program to assist low-income families, including the following.
- 3.3 Seek out supports and resources for people/families to move from renting to home ownership (include expanding rent-to-own options); consider potential of building community of tiny house as strategy toward growing home ownership.

4.0 Voucher Program Policies/Practices

- 4.1 Review and maintain an updated list of potential regional rentals to ensure that those on the list accept vouchers for payment and that there is a spread within high-opportunity neighborhoods.



- 4.2 Effective immediately, roll-back time requirement to find housing due to COVID impact.
- 4.3 Effective January 2022 at the latest, expand the time requirement to find housing from 90 days to six months as standard.
- 4.4 Improve oversight of landlords.
- 4.5 Gather, assemble and make information about federal protections readily and easily available/accessible to program participants.
- 4.6 Revise and update description of housing inspection process for clarity and understanding; ensure tenants have full access to being present at inspections.

5.0 Public Housing Program Policies/Practices

- 5.1 Improve communications to residents.
- 5.2 Clarify rules regarding living arrangement rules in units, ensure that policies regarding living requirements (who, how many) are implemented consistently and consider options and alternative referrals for those not abiding by the policies.
- 5.3 The Board should annually review a report of lease violations and terminations broken down by race, gender and disability demographics to assess fairness and equity.
- 5.4 Review and expand the ways in which residents are engaged in group decision-making; apply core values to inform how resident committees operate.
- 5.5 Expand the options for residents to resolve concerns.
- 5.6 Provide resident anti-bias education and learning opportunities.
- 5.7 Further explore differential treatment by staff based on identity characteristics; consider identifying a third part ombudsman to whom residents can safely share concerns.
- 5.8 Update Resident orientation
- 5.9 Gather, assemble and make information about federal protections readily and easily available/accessible to program participants.
- 5.10 Invite domestic violence and sexual assault treatment professionals to review policy on terminating perpetrators of domestic violence / sexual assault to ensure best protection for victims (ACOP, pg. 13-25).

6.0 Ferndale Housing Commission By-laws

- 6.1 Update composition.
- 6.2 Require annual training for Commissioners to include diversity, equity, inclusion, antiracism, antibias, and anti-ableism topics; include a discussion of what the Board thinks its responsibilities to the City's antiracism statement are.



6.3 Review and expand communications regarding notifying residents of Commission meeting schedule. *For improved participant awareness and participation.*

6.4 Consider adding “Open call” in commission meetings before old business and new business to that residents/public can share on items prior to vote. *To allow participants greater levels of participation.*

Additional Consultant Recommendations

6.5 Revisit existing core values¹ to clearly define what each means and/or establish a new set of 3-7 core values by which the FHC will make key policy and practice decisions. Core values should be used as a lens through which to make decisions governing commissioners, staffing, policies and practices and programs. Involve staff and advisory councils from both public housing and the voucher program to develop/refine these values.

6.6 Develop clause describing under what circumstances a commissioner can be removed. *For added accountability.*

7.0 Personnel Policies & Practices

7.1 Do an audit of staff trainings and identify gaps. Offer anti-bias and inclusion training annually to all staff and during orientation for all new staff.

7.2 Update Policy Language

7.3 Gather resident input on the current policy granting permission for staff to carry firearms while on duty; and revise as necessary.

7.4 Add “or the Board Chair” to the list of people an employee can contact with questions regarding the whistleblower policy.

Additional Consultant Recommendations

7.5 Consider criminal record convictions policy in personnel decisions through antiracism lens², seeking to reduce barriers to economic security for those with a criminal background record in light of significant evidence that the U.S. criminal justice system has unfairly targeted black and brown people for arrests, prosecutions and sentencing. Further, to hold this understanding of current and historic dynamics while also maintaining a safe a secure physical space for program participants.

7.6 Identify which parts of the Personnel Policy are required by law, revise all other policies.

¹ Personnel Policies, pg. 4

² Ban the Box and Beyond: Ensuring Individuals with a Criminal Record Have Access to the Labor Market (Center for American Progress). <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2017/07/27/436756/ban-box-beyond/>



7.7 Review LaTosch Consulting Hiring and Recruiting tip list and update relevant practices.

7.8 Remove list of qualities and replace with expanded core values when developed.

8.0 Code of Ethics

8.1 Revise Code of Ethics:

8.2 Post Code of Ethics on website.

8.3 Provide all contractors with the Code of Ethics; hold them to it.

8.4 Add information with anti-discrimination and interpersonal codes of conduct sections to the Code; reference the Code in both the Personnel Policy Manual and the Resident Handbook.

8.5 Reframe overall tone from a place of positive expectations with less emphasis on rule-breaking and consequences.

9.0 Resident Handbook

9.1 Include more graphics/less text.

9.2 Include information about what makes a unit accessible and how many accessible units there are per building that are available.

9.3 Include timeframe by which a resident should expect to hear follow-up from staff after sharing a general complaint (Pg. 27).

9.4 Describe what is meant by criminal or suspicious activity in order to lessen the chance that the police may be called as a result of personal biases.

9.5 Compare Grievance and complaint language to Grievance policy in ACOP – ensure names of processes match and are consistent (Ex: general complaint, grievance, informal hearing, etc. - Pg. 27).

9.6 Increase request times to 30 days instead of 10 days (Pg. 28).

9.7 Consider installing an ATM in the lobby that allows people to pay their bills easily and electronically (utilities, rent, etc.)

Additional Consultant Recommendations

9.8 Consider offering restorative practice training to residents and offer residents options to solve their neighbor concerns: direct, restorative circle, mediation, staff intervention, etc.

9.9 Include a list of items in the handbook that are also included in the lease agreement (Pg. 2).

9.10 Specify how and when FHC will notify residents of changes in policies, handbook, lease, ACOP, etc. (Pg. 2).



- 9.11 Record and share recordings (with closed captioning) of Board and resident committee meetings; save in an accessible online library (Pg. 3).
- 9.12 Include information about what special protections are offered to all victims of domestic violence (Pg. 5).
- 9.13 Include more exhaustive list of what is included in “other debts” that might be owed to FHC (Pg. 8).
- 9.14 Include information about remedies / resources for families who cannot afford their rent in the section on payment extensions (Pg. 10).
- 9.15 Revise section on “if you see people who do not belong here.” Update to include information about notifying staff first and checking on whether or not someone belongs there before calling the police (Pg. 12).
- 9.16 Neutralize the language in physical altercations and make consistent with all other illegal activity (Pg. 15).
- 9.17 Include a map of on-street parking locations (Pg. 24).
- 9.18 Update description to inform residents that utility requirement is a HUD requirement and provide information on utility support and how much time they have in order to avoid the circumstance (Pg. 30).
- 9.19 Provide access to lobby kiosk to electronically file complaints, access policies and procedures, forms, etc.
- 10.0 Procurement Policy
 - 10.1 Establish criteria for selecting contractors/partners based on established core values.
- 11.0 Fair Housing Policy
 - 11.1 Add transportation assistance and staff support in looking for housing and/or communicating with landlords (Admin, Pg. 2-8).
 - 11.2 Provide sign-language interpretation and/or closed captioning for public meetings.
 - 11.3 Form ongoing partnership with the Ferndale Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Commission to assist and advise on physical space upgrades and changes.
 - 11.4 Add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes from discrimination (Admin, pg. 5).
 - 11.5 Check to ensure that all posted placards with important information is posted at wheelchair-reading height to ensure readability for all.



11.6 Replace all instances of the word “handicap or handicapped” to people with disabilities; replace “handicap parking” with “accessible parking”.

Additional Consultant Recommendation

11.7 Include location of access to “PIH 2010-26” document which summarizes information about pertinent laws and implementing regulations related to nondiscrimination and accessibility in federally-funded housing programs. (ACOP, Pg. 2-13).

12.0 Eligibility

12.1 Reduce time requirement from five years to three years for financial-related convictions.

12.2 Add sexual orientation and gender identity/expression to groups protected from discrimination.

12.3 Remove ACOP/Admin plan inconsistency regarding 5 year / 1 year eviction history.

Additional Consultant Recommendations.

12.4 Reduce time requirement from five years to three years for “drug-related criminal activity.”

12.5 Remove “regardless of whether or not the activity took place on the premises of federally assisted housing” clause out of PHA policy on automatic denial of admission.

12.6 Remove the clause describing “drug-related criminal activity” under the PHA description from ACOP 3-IIIC “Other Permitted Reasons for Denial of Admission.”

12.7 Remove “Has a pattern of unsuitable past performance in meeting financial obligations, including rent, within the past five years” (ACOP, Pg. 3-22).

12.8 Remove “Has a pattern of eviction from housing or termination from residential programs within the past five years” (ACOP, Pg. 3-22).

13.0 Grievance Policy

13.1 Issue annual report that details grievances and resolutions, including information about demographics (of both complainers and complainees) on race, gender and disability, to assess equity and fairness.

Additional Consultant Recommendations

13.2 Provide second chance language for failure to appear for informal hearing, allowing for a reschedule. (ACOP, Pg. 14-4).

13.3 Invite Immigration advocacy group to review immigration section and provide additional recommendations (ACOP pg. 14-6).



14.0 Trauma-Informed Practices

14.1 Provide training to staff on Unconscious bias / bias-reduction strategies; Experiences of systemic oppression, individual and compounded; Trauma-informed engagement practices

14.2 Use trauma-informed approaches to regularly engage and involve residents in multiple ways, including discussions and planning around safety, maintenance requests, and addressing concerns and complaints.

Next Steps

Members of the IDEA Task Force presented their recommendations to the Ferndale Housing Board of Commissioners on June 23, 2021. The Board appointed a sub-committee to review the recommendations. Once complete, the committee is expected to return to the full Board of Commissioners for discussion on an action plan. This plan will then be shared with both the Task Force and the City of Ferndale.

Once approved, staff will begin formal implementation of the plan.



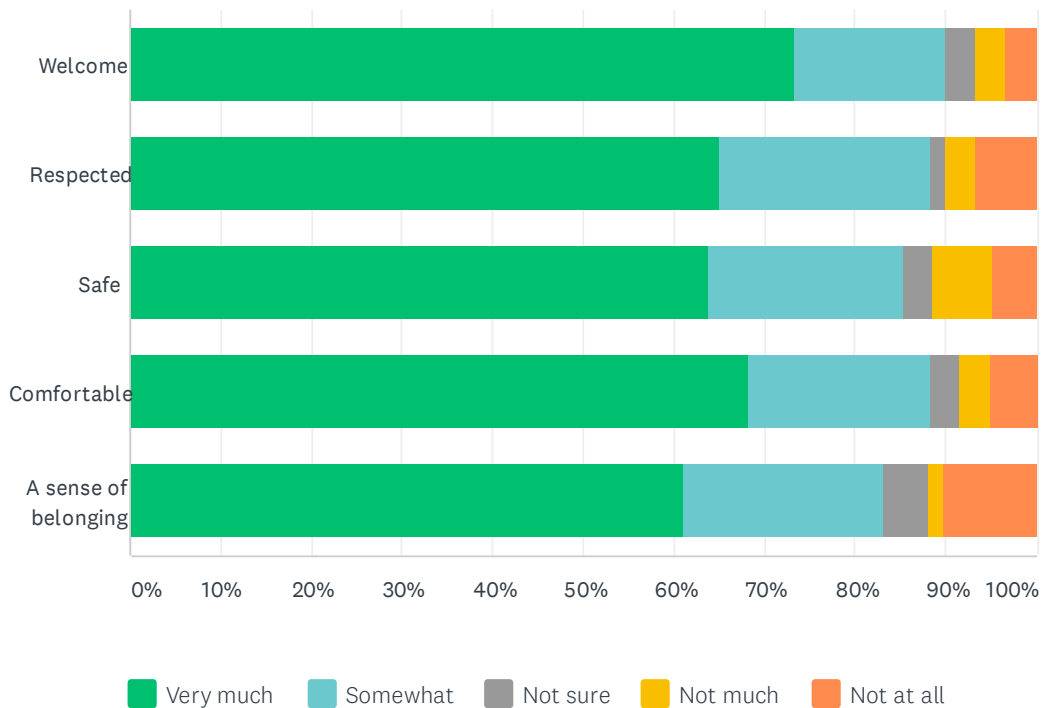
Appendices

- A. Public Housing Survey Report
- B. Housing Choice Voucher Survey Report
- C. Task Force Recommendations



Q1 In your home or apartment building, to what extent do you feel:

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

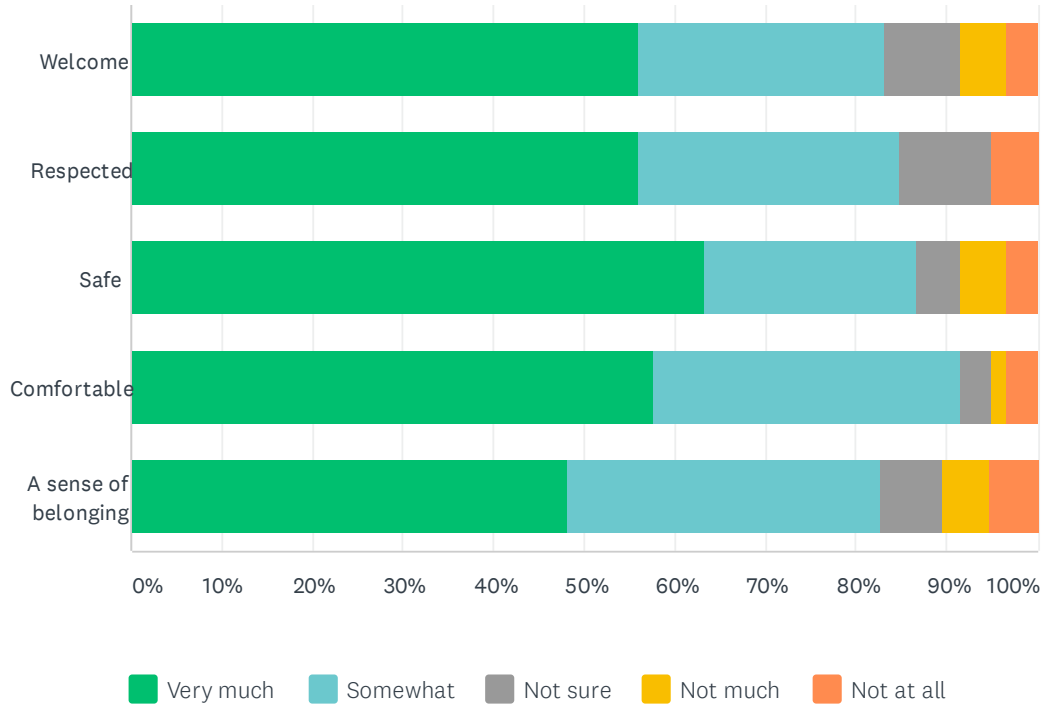


	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Welcome	73% 44	17% 10	3% 2	3% 2	3% 2	60
Respected	65% 39	23% 14	2% 1	3% 2	7% 4	60
Safe	64% 39	21% 13	3% 2	7% 4	5% 3	61
Comfortable	68% 41	20% 12	3% 2	3% 2	5% 3	60
A sense of belonging	61% 36	22% 13	5% 3	2% 1	10% 6	59

Q2 In your neighborhood, to what extent do you feel:

Answered: 60 Skipped: 1

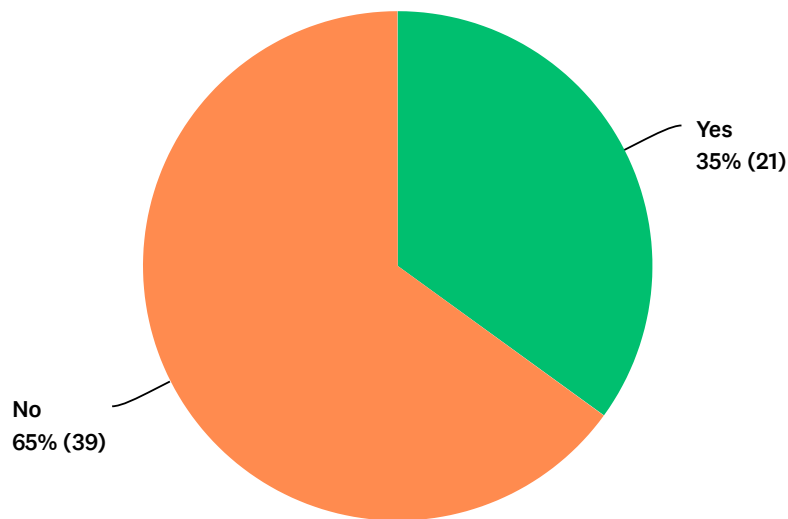
Ferndale Housing Commission - Public Housing Resident Survey



	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Welcome	56% 33	27% 16	8% 5	5% 3	3% 2	59
Respected	56% 33	29% 17	10% 6	0% 0	5% 3	59
Safe	63% 38	23% 14	5% 3	5% 3	3% 2	60
Comfortable	58% 34	34% 20	3% 2	2% 1	3% 2	59
A sense of belonging	48% 28	34% 20	7% 4	5% 3	5% 3	58

Q3 Have you ever felt unsafe in your current home/apartment?

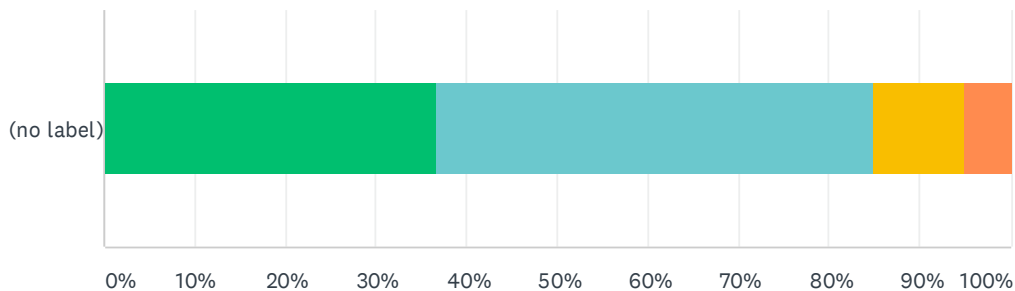
Answered: 60 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	35%	21
No	65%	39
TOTAL		60

Q5 To what extent do you have close relationships with people in your apartment building or neighborhood?

Answered: 60 Skipped: 1



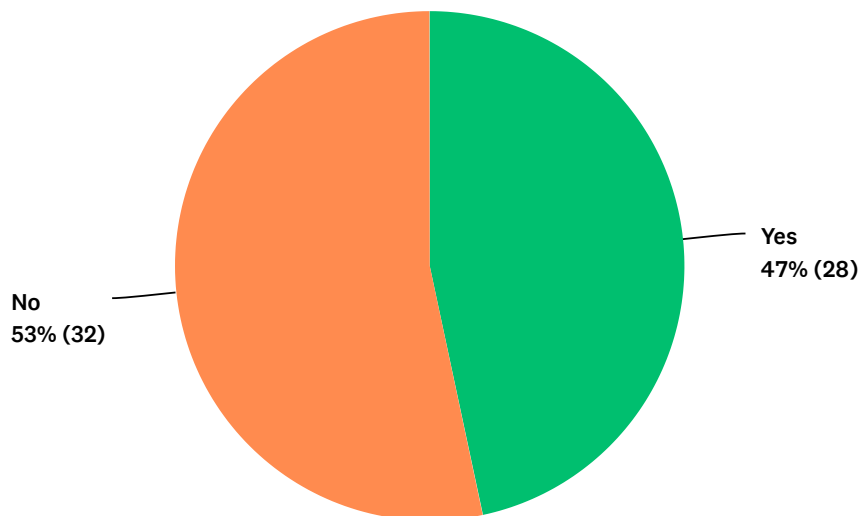
■ I feel very close to some
 ■ I feel somewhat close to some
 ■ I don't feel especially close to anyone
 ■ I feel pretty distant from everyone

	I FEEL VERY CLOSE TO SOME	I FEEL SOMEWHAT CLOSE TO SOME	I DON'T FEEL ESPECIALLY CLOSE TO ANYONE	I FEEL PRETTY DISTANT FROM EVERYONE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	37% 22	48% 29	10% 6	5% 3	60	1.83

Q6 Have you ever shared an official concern/complaint with the Ferndale Housing Commission staff?

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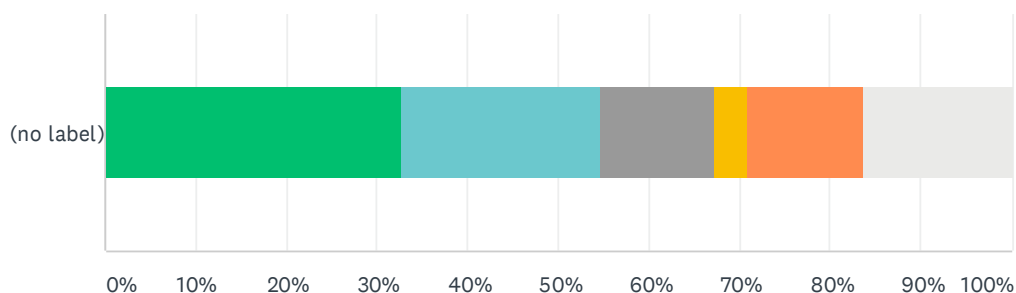
Answered: 60 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	47%	28
No	53%	32
TOTAL		60

Q7 How seriously did you feel the Ferndale Housing Commission staff took your concern(s)?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 6



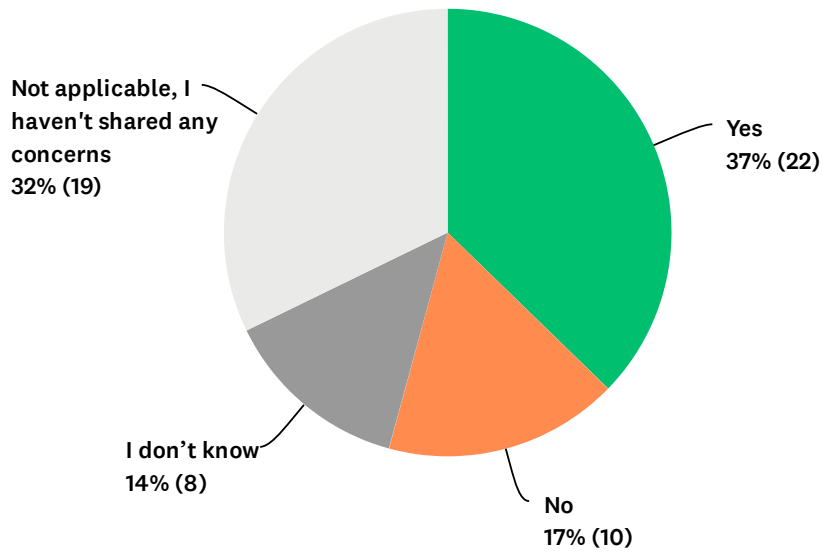
■ Very seriously
 ■ Somewhat seriously
 ■ Not sure
 ■ Not too seriously
 ■ Not seriously at all
 ■ Not applicable, I have not shared any concerns

	VERY SERIOUSLY	SOMEWHAT SERIOUSLY	NOT SURE	NOT TOO SERIOUSLY	NOT SERIOUSLY AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE, I HAVE NOT SHARED ANY CONCERNS	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	33% 18	22% 12	13% 7	4% 2	13% 7	16% 9	55	2.91

Q8 If you shared a concern, was action taken?

Ferndale Housing Commission - Public Housing Resident Survey

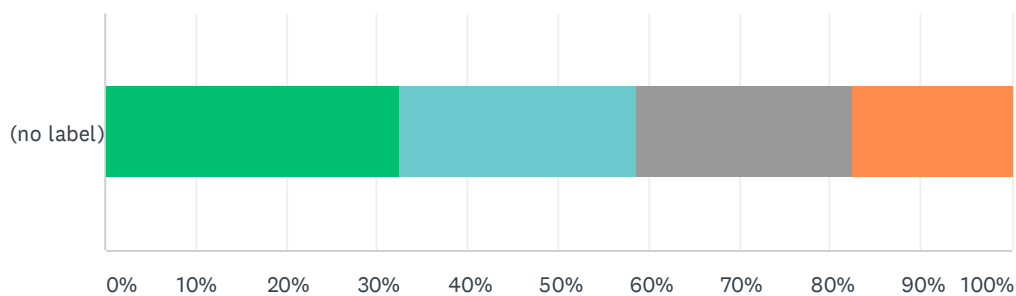
Answered: 59 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	37%	22
No	17%	10
I don't know	14%	8
Not applicable, I haven't shared any concerns	32%	19
TOTAL		59

Q9 How satisfied were you with the outcome?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 15

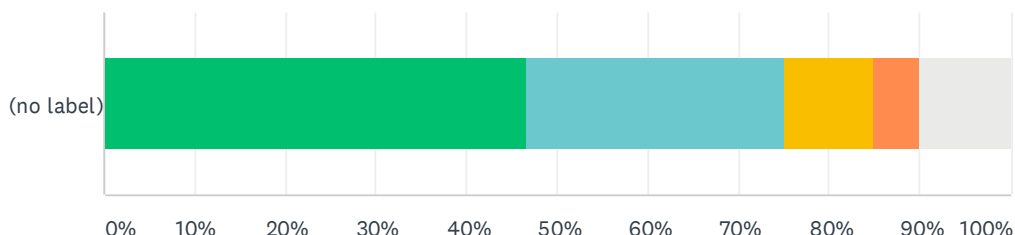


■ Very satisfied
 ■ Somewhat satisfied
 ■ Not sure
 ■ Very dissatisfied
 ■ Somewhat dissatisfied

	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NOT SURE	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	33% 15	26% 12	24% 11	0% 0	17% 8	46	2.43

Q10 How often does the Ferndale Housing Commission provide opportunities for you to participate in the decision-making of the Ferndale Housing Commission (through notices, newsletter announcements, invitations, staff encouragements, emails, etc.)?

Answered: 60 Skipped: 1

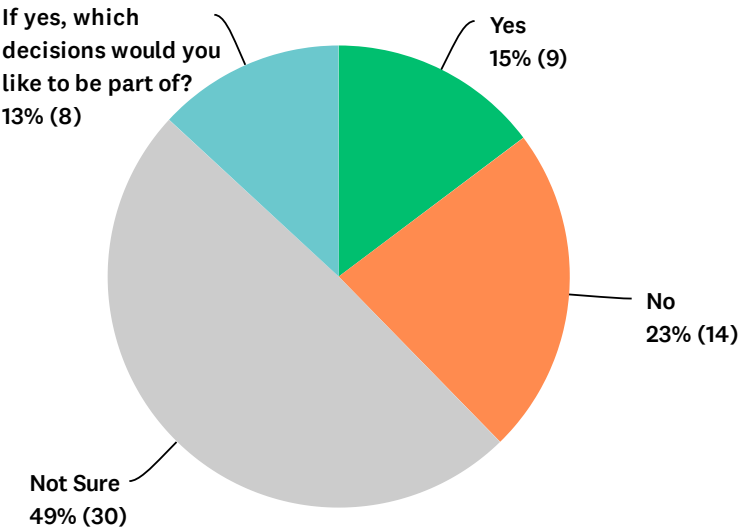


- A lot - the FHC is always providing opportunities for me to lend input
- Sometimes - I remember a fair number of times where they provide opportunities for
- A little - not a lot, but there have been times when I'm given the opportunity to pro...
- Not at all - I don't remember any times they've asked for resident input
- I don't know or can't remember if I've had an opportunity to do this

	A LOT - THE FHC IS ALWAYS PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ME TO LEND INPUT	SOMETIMES - I REMEMBER A FAIR NUMBER OF TIMES WHERE THEY PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENT INPUT	A LITTLE - NOT A LOT, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN I'M GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE INPUT	NOT AT ALL - I DON'T REMEMBER ANY TIMES THEY'VE ASKED FOR RESIDENT INPUT	I DON'T KNOW OR CAN'T REMEMBER IF I'VE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO THIS	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	47% 28	28% 17	10% 6	5% 3	10% 6	60	2.03

Q11 Would you like to be more involved in decision-making?

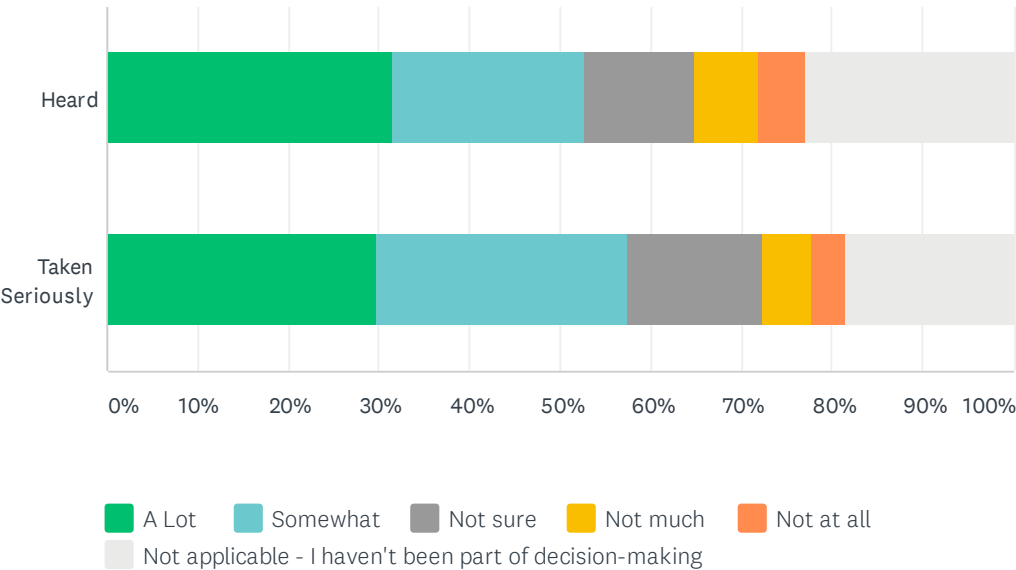
Answered: 61 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	15%	9
No	23%	14
Not Sure	49%	30
If yes, which decisions would you like to be part of?	13%	8
TOTAL		61

Q12 When you do participate, how much do you feel you are:

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

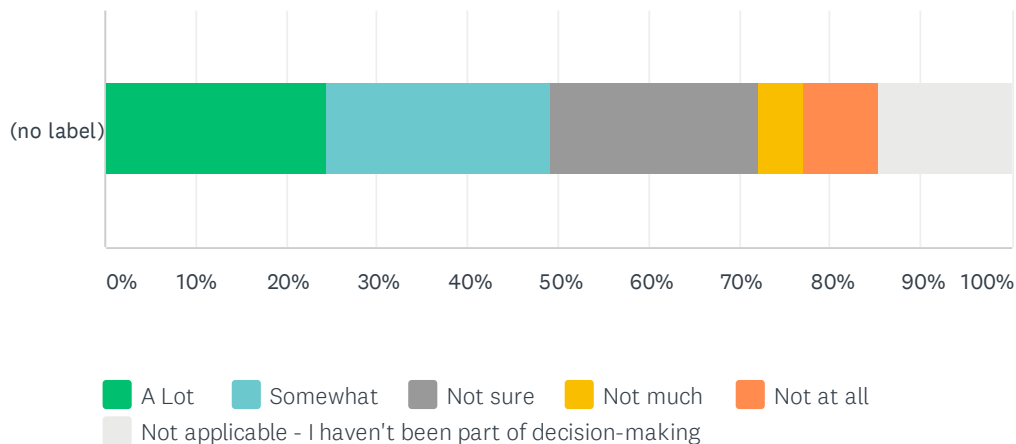


Ferndale Housing Commission - Public Housing Resident Survey

	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE - I HAVEN'T BEEN PART OF DECISION-MAKING	TOTAL
Heard	32% 18	21% 12	12% 7	7% 4	5% 3	23% 13	57
Taken Seriously	30% 16	28% 15	15% 8	6% 3	4% 2	19% 10	54

Q13 How much do you feel that diverse perspectives are involved in decision-making?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

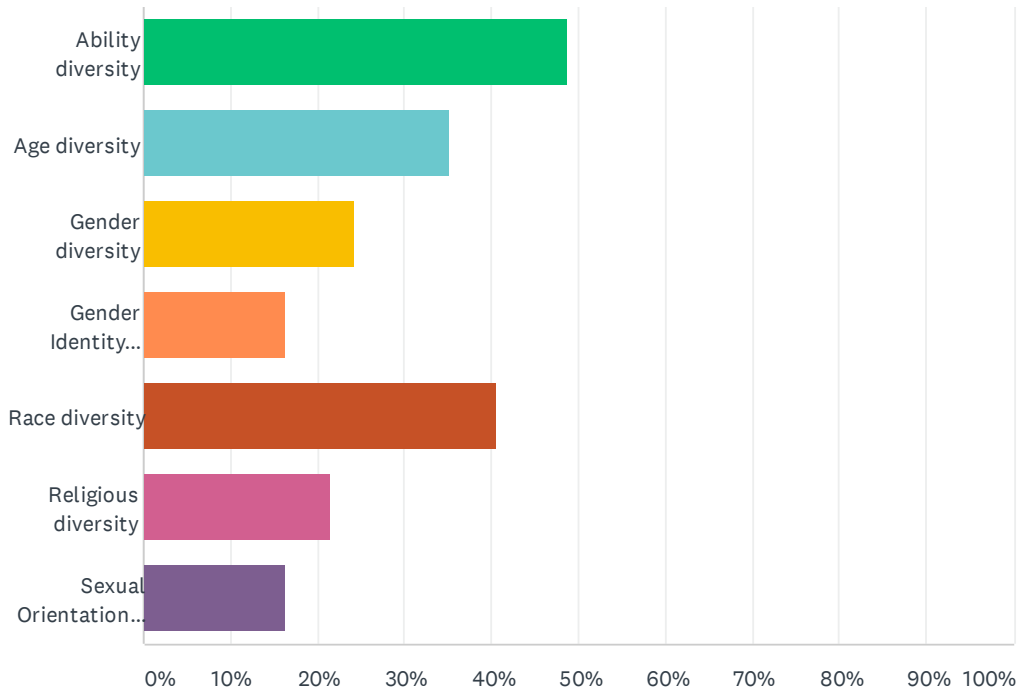


	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE - I HAVEN'T BEEN PART OF DECISION-MAKING	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	25% 15	25% 15	23% 14	5% 3	8% 5	15% 9	61	2.92

Q14 What kind of diversity is lacking among those making decisions (check all that apply)?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 24

Ferndale Housing Commission - Public Housing Resident Survey

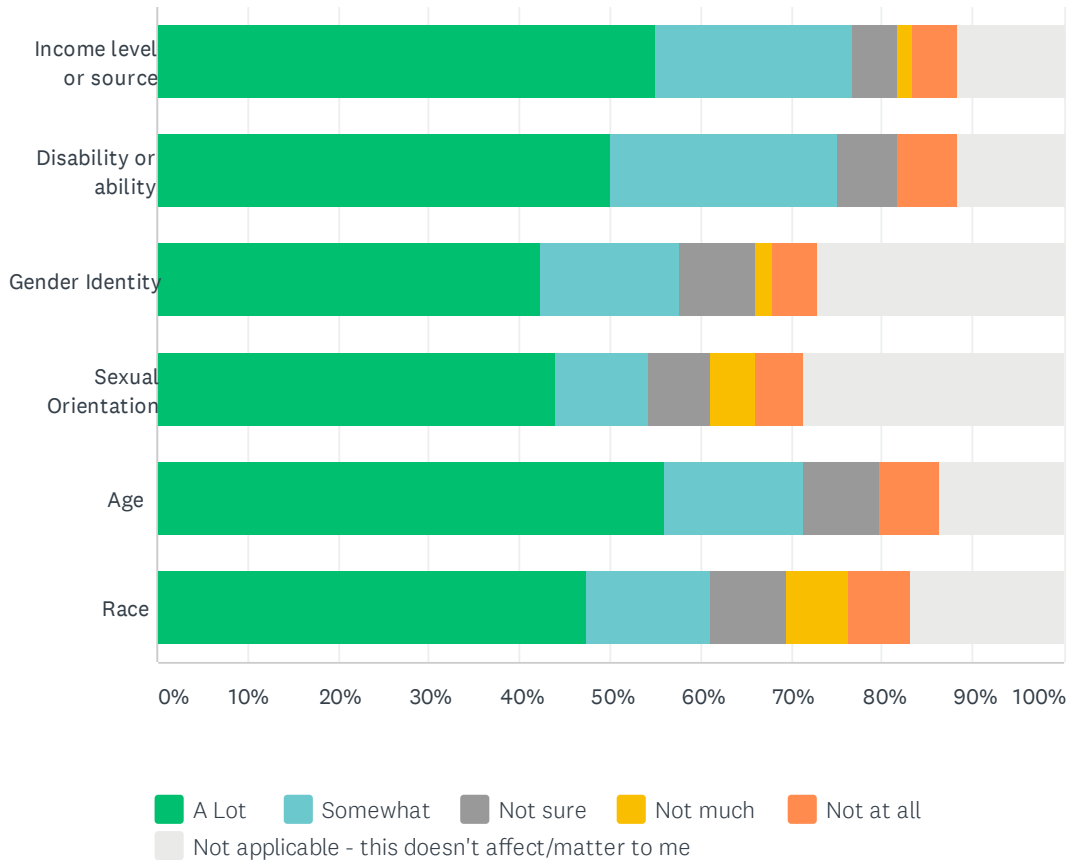


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Ability diversity	49%	18
Age diversity	35%	13
Gender diversity	24%	9
Gender Identity diversity	16%	6
Race diversity	41%	15
Religious diversity	22%	8
Sexual Orientation diversity	16%	6
Total Respondents: 37		

Q15 To what extent do you feel staff treat you with respect regarding your:

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

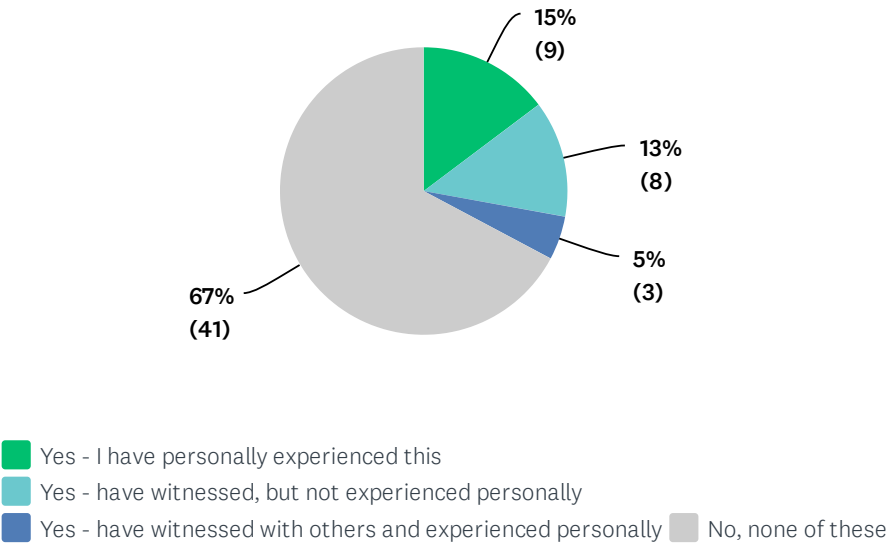
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	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE - THIS DOESN'T AFFECT/MATTER TO ME	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Income level or source	55% 33	22% 13	5% 3	2% 1	5% 3	12% 7	60	2.15
Disability or ability	50% 30	25% 15	7% 4	0% 0	7% 4	12% 7	60	2.23
Gender Identity	42% 25	15% 9	8% 5	2% 1	5% 3	27% 16	59	2.93
Sexual Orientation	44% 26	10% 6	7% 4	5% 3	5% 3	29% 17	59	3.03
Age	56% 33	15% 9	8% 5	0% 0	7% 4	14% 8	59	2.27
Race	47% 28	14% 8	8% 5	7% 4	7% 4	17% 10	59	2.63

Q16 Have you experienced or noticed any negative experiences based on any of the areas listed above?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

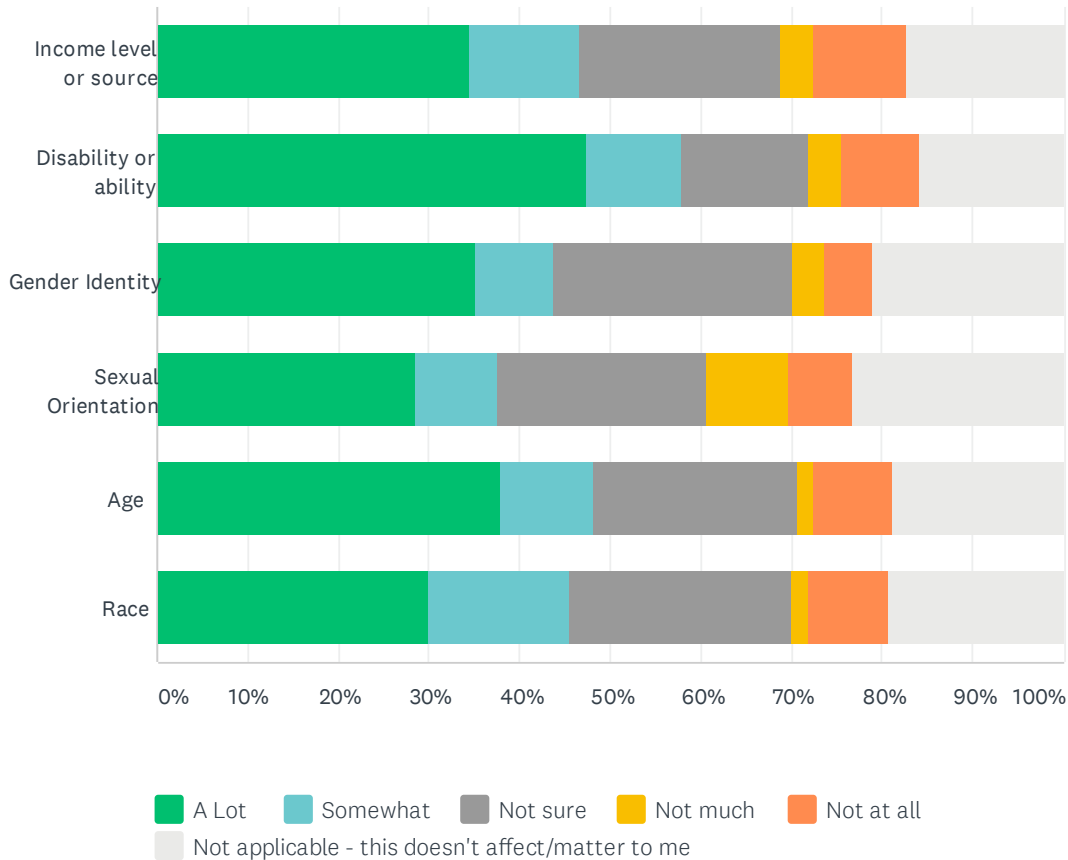


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes - I have personally experienced this	15%	9
Yes - have witnessed, but not experienced personally	13%	8
Yes - have witnessed with others and experienced personally	5%	3
No, none of these	67%	41
TOTAL		61

Q18 To what extent do residents treat other residents with respect regarding their:

Answered: 59 Skipped: 2

Ferndale Housing Commission - Public Housing Resident Survey

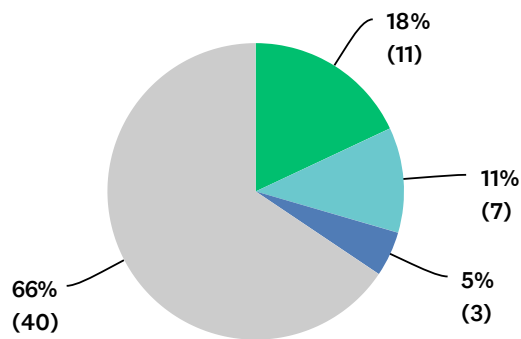


	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE - THIS DOESN'T AFFECT/MATTER TO ME	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Income level or source	34% 20	12% 7	22% 13	3% 2	10% 6	17% 10	58	2.95
Disability or ability	47% 27	11% 6	14% 8	4% 2	9% 5	16% 9	57	2.63
Gender Identity	35% 20	9% 5	26% 15	4% 2	5% 3	21% 12	57	2.98
Sexual Orientation	29% 16	9% 5	23% 13	9% 5	7% 4	23% 13	56	3.27
Age	38% 22	10% 6	22% 13	2% 1	9% 5	19% 11	58	2.90
Race	30% 17	16% 9	25% 14	2% 1	9% 5	19% 11	57	3.02

Q19 Have you experienced or noticed any negative experiences with other residents or neighbors based on any of the areas listed above?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

Ferndale Housing Commission - Public Housing Resident Survey

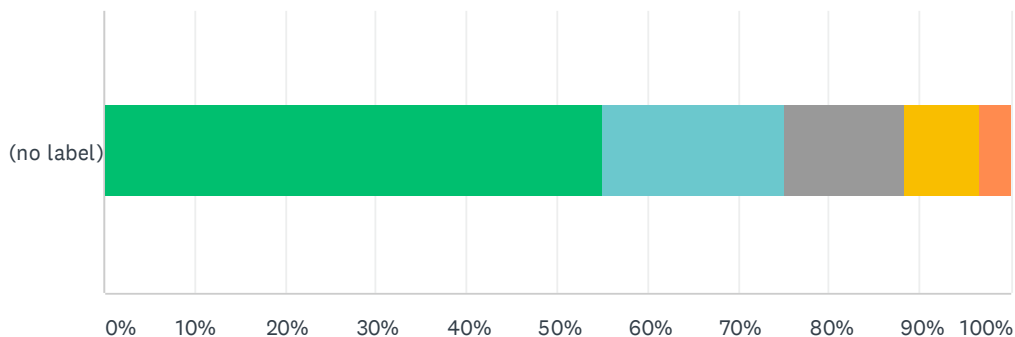


- Yes - I have personally experienced this
- Yes - have witnessed, but not experienced personally
- Yes - have witnessed with others and experienced personally
- No, none of these

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes - I have personally experienced this	18%	11
Yes - have witnessed, but not experienced personally	11%	7
Yes - have witnessed with others and experienced personally	5%	3
No, none of these	66%	40
TOTAL		61

Q21 To what extent do you think the Ferndale Housing Commission rules are fair for all people?

Answered: 60 Skipped: 1

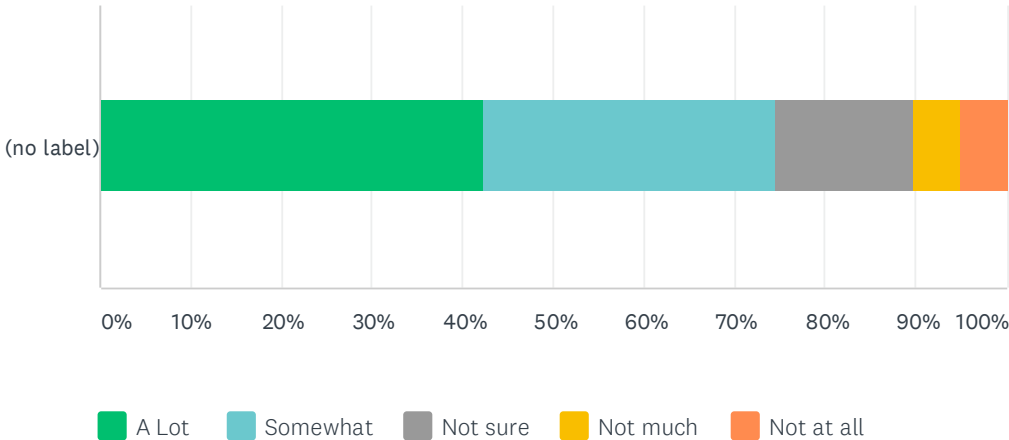


- A Lot
- Somewhat
- Not sure
- Not much
- Not at all

	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	55% 33	20% 12	13% 8	8% 5	3% 2	60	1.85

Q22 To what extent do you think the Ferndale Housing Commission's rules are implemented fairly and consistently?

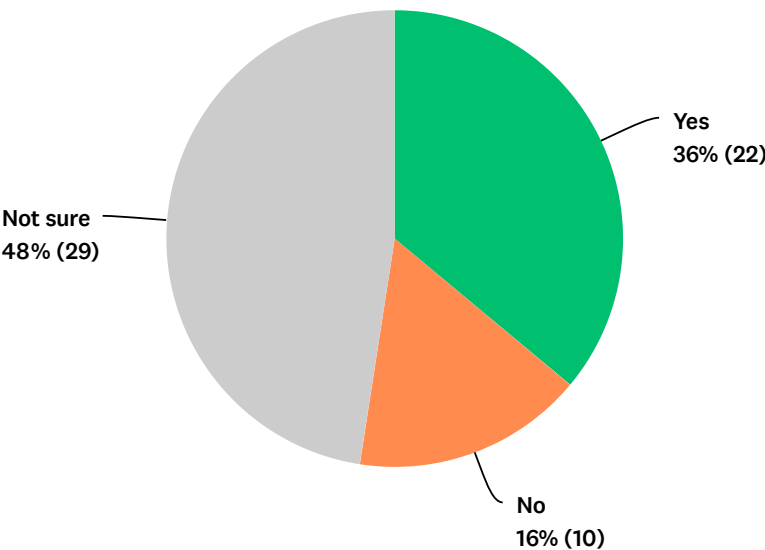
Answered: 59 Skipped: 2



	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	42% 25	32% 19	15% 9	5% 3	5% 3	59	1.98

Q23 Are there some areas where fairness could be improved?

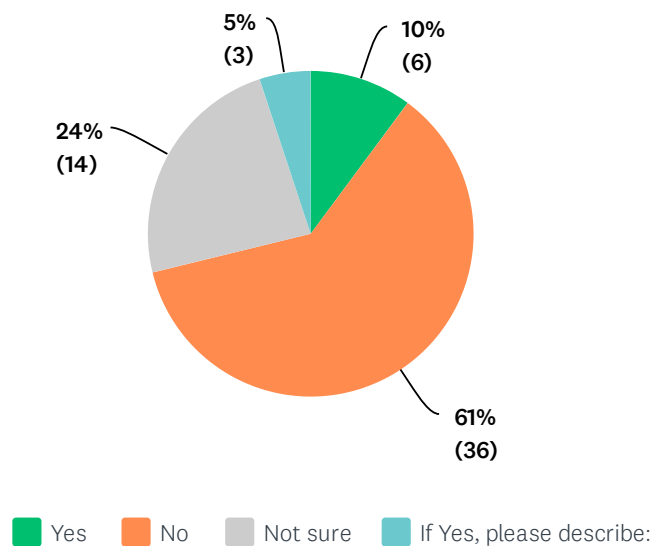
Answered: 61 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	36%	22
No	16%	10
Not sure	48%	29
TOTAL		61

Q24 Sometimes rules that are equal for all don't meet everyone's needs and could be harmful. For example, providing a peanut butter sandwich to everyone (equal) even though some are allergic to peanuts (harmful). Have you noticed or experienced situations where the Ferndale Housing Commission's rules or practices don't meet someone's needs or are harmful?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 2

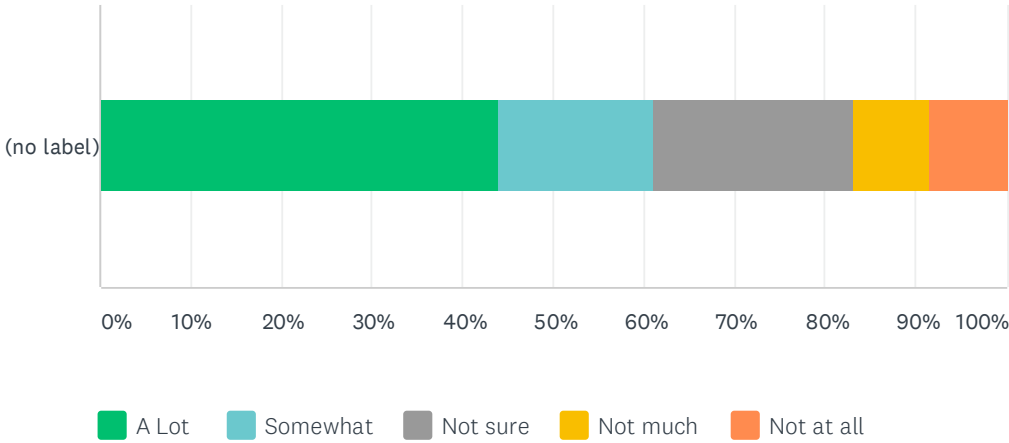


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	10%	6
No	61%	36
Not sure	24%	14
If Yes, please describe:	5%	3
TOTAL		59

Q25 To what extent do you think the Ferndale Housing Commission works to prevent racism and other forms of discrimination?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 2

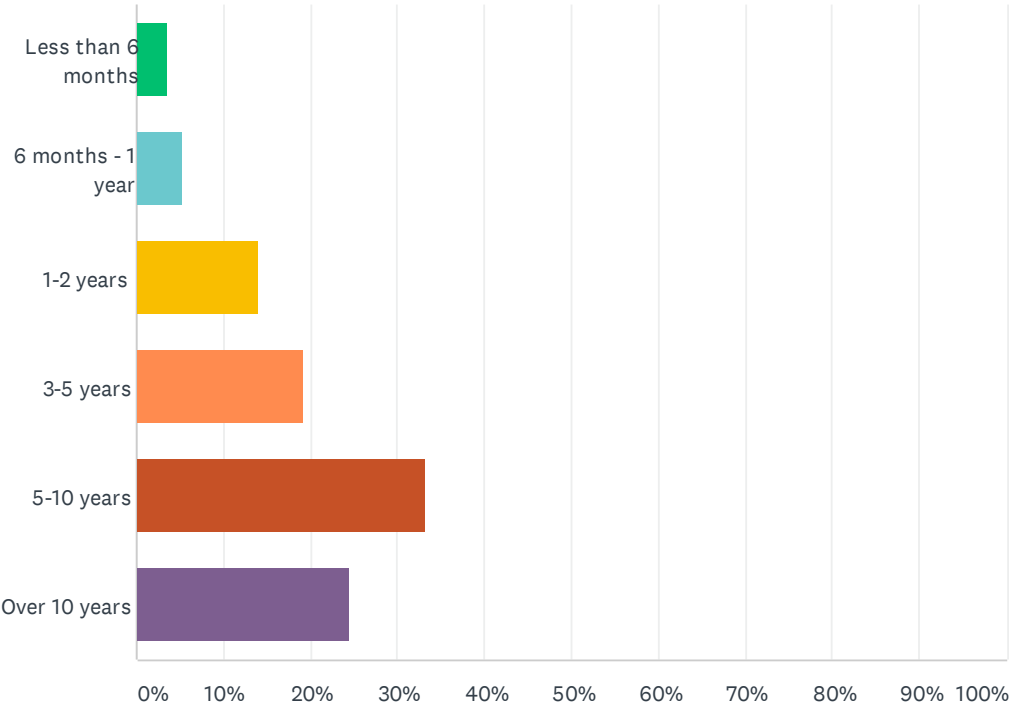
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	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	44% 26	17% 10	22% 13	8% 5	8% 5	59	2.20

Q26 How long have you been in the Ferndale Public Housing Program?

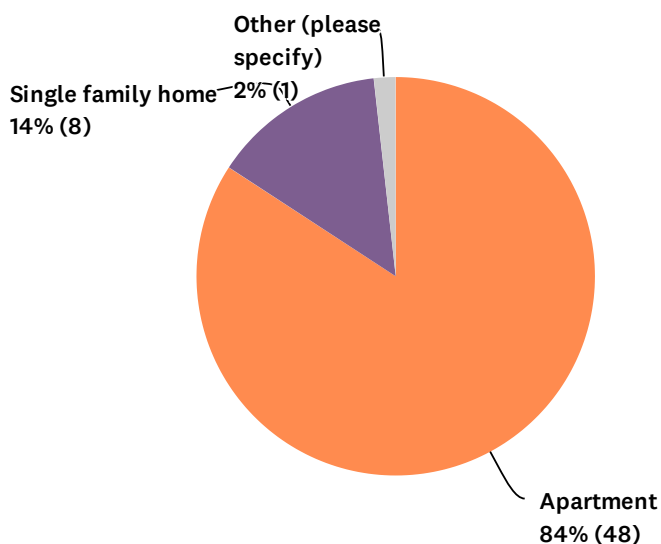
Answered: 57 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 6 months	4%	2
6 months - 1 year	5%	3
1-2 years	14%	8
3-5 years	19%	11
5-10 years	33%	19
Over 10 years	25%	14
TOTAL		57

Q27 What best describes your housing type?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4

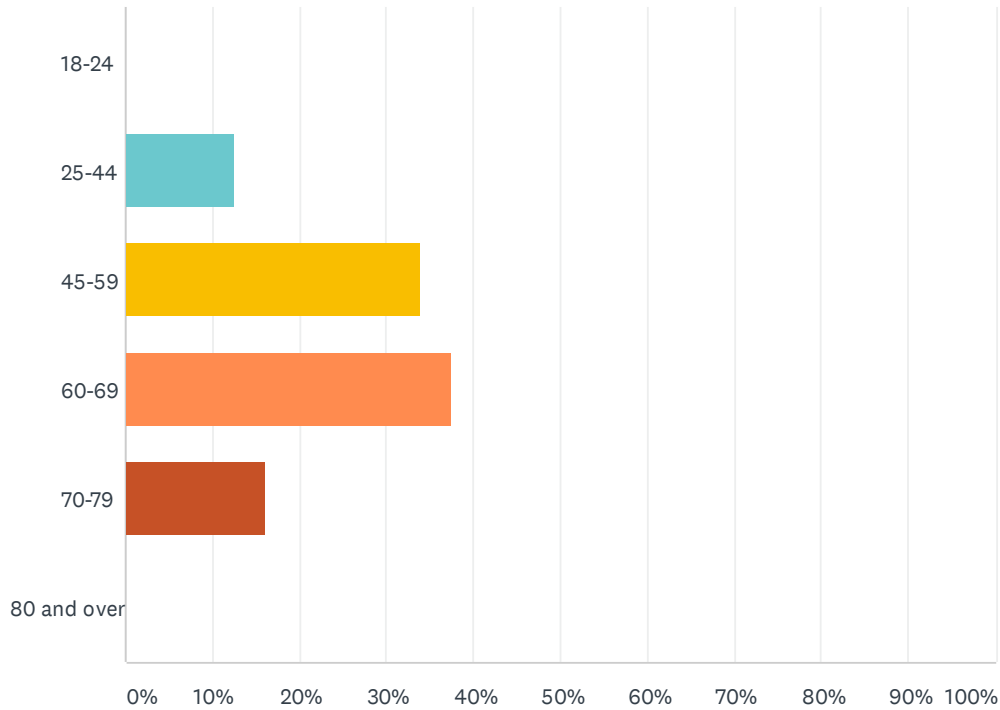


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Apartment	84%	48
Single family home	14%	8
Other (please specify)	2%	1
TOTAL		57

Q28 How old are you?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 5

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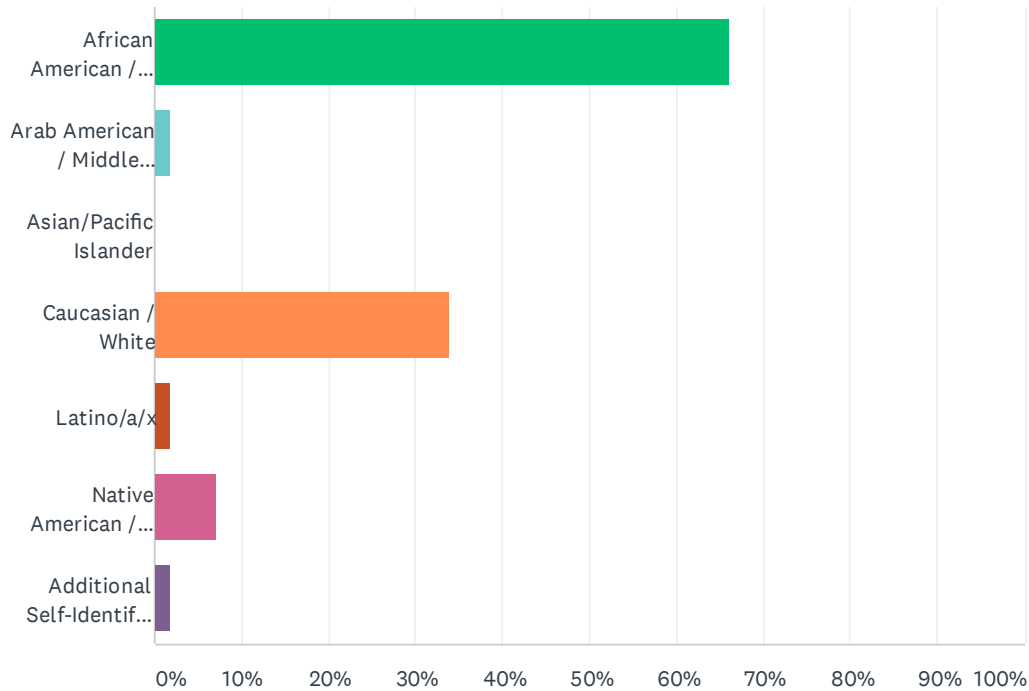


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
18-24	0% 0
25-44	13% 7
45-59	34% 19
60-69	38% 21
70-79	16% 9
80 and over	0% 0
TOTAL	56

Q29 What is/are your race(s)/ethnicities? (check all that apply):

Answered: 56 Skipped: 5

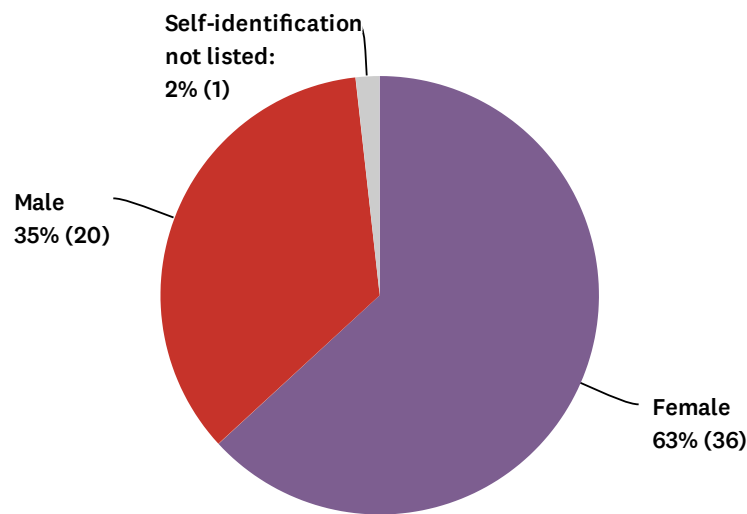
Ferndale Housing Commission - Public Housing Resident Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
African American / Black	66%	37
Arab American / Middle Eastern Descent	2%	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	0%	0
Caucasian / White	34%	19
Latino/a/x	2%	1
Native American / American Indian	7%	4
Additional Self-Identification:	2%	1
Total Respondents: 56		

Q30 What is your gender?

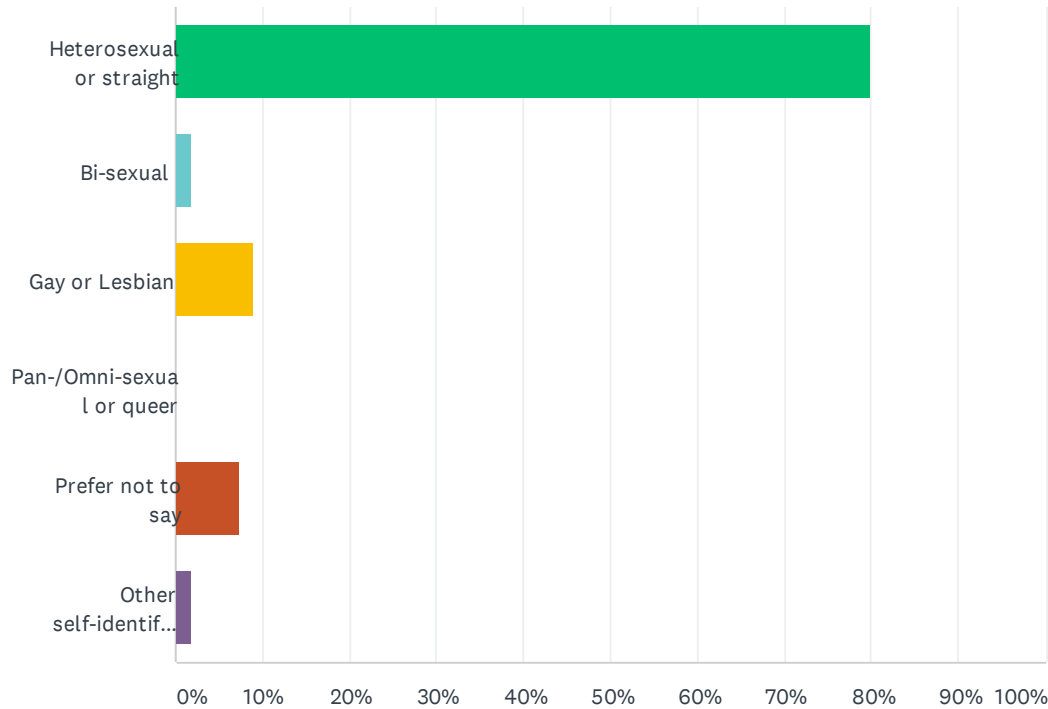
Answered: 57 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	63%	36
Gender non-binary	0%	0
Male	35%	20
Self-identification not listed:	2%	1
TOTAL		57

Q31 How do you describe your sexual orientation?

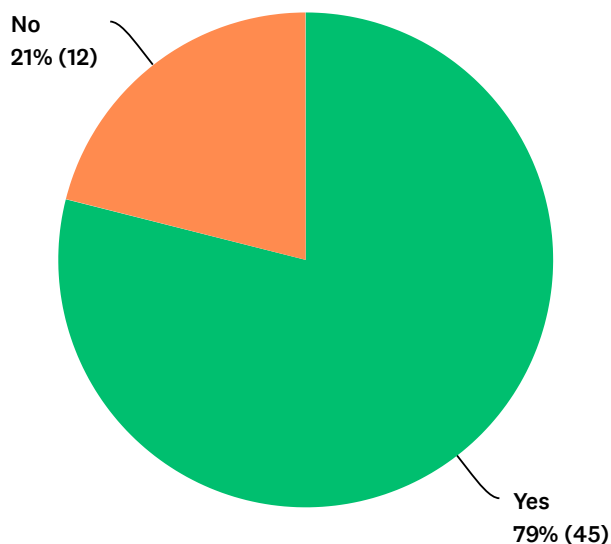
Answered: 55 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Heterosexual or straight	80%	44
Bi-sexual	2%	1
Gay or Lesbian	9%	5
Pan-/Omni-sexual or queer	0%	0
Prefer not to say	7%	4
Other self-identification:	2%	1
TOTAL		55

Q32 Do you live with a disability?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4

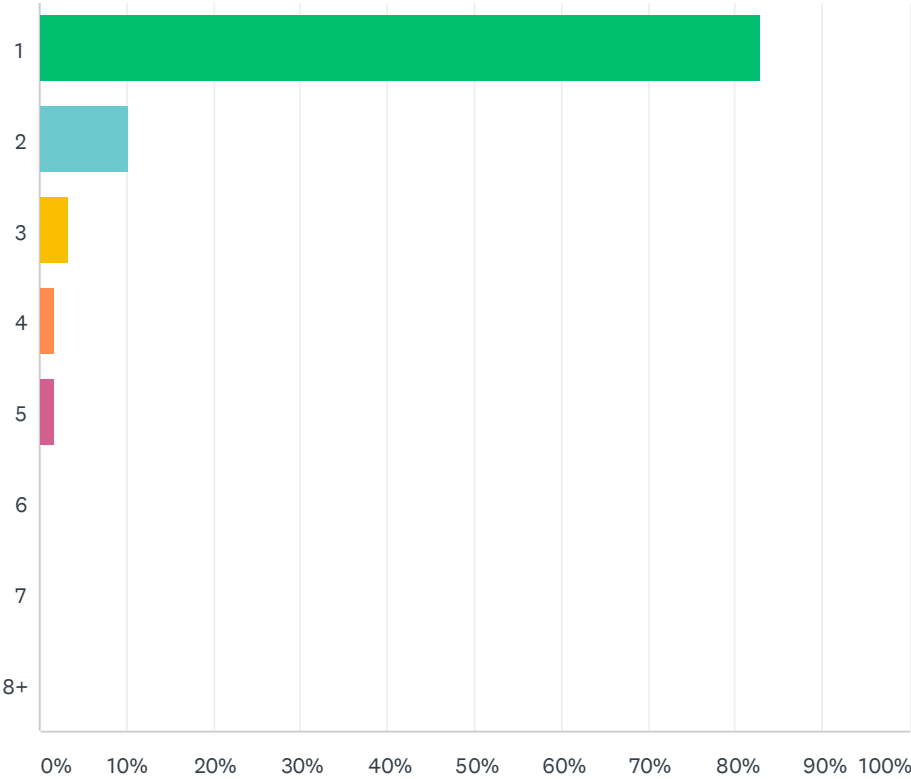


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	79%	45
No	21%	12
TOTAL		57

Q33 How many total people live in your household:

Answered: 58 Skipped: 3

Ferndale Housing Commission - Public Housing Resident Survey

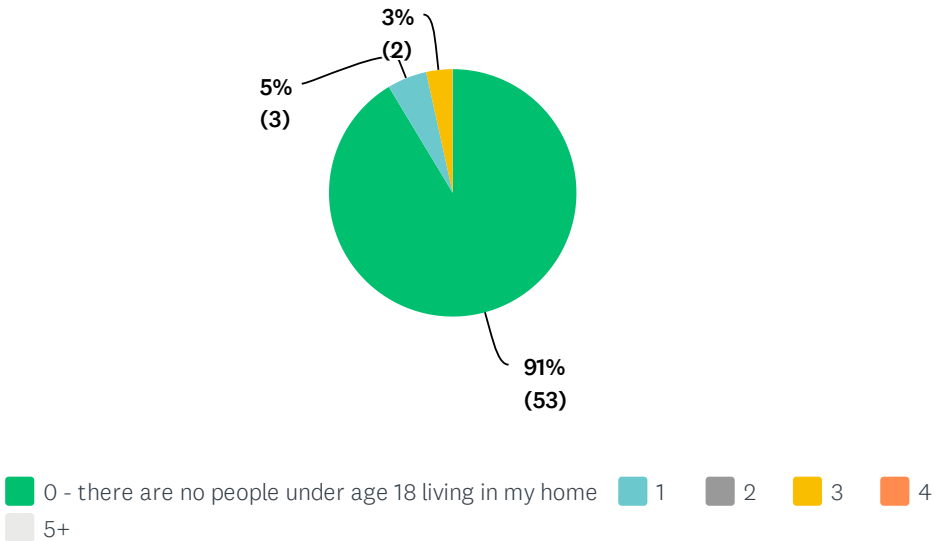


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	83%	48
2	10%	6
3	3%	2
4	2%	1
5	2%	1
6	0%	0
7	0%	0
8+	0%	0
TOTAL		58

Q34 Of those, how many are under the age of 18?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 3

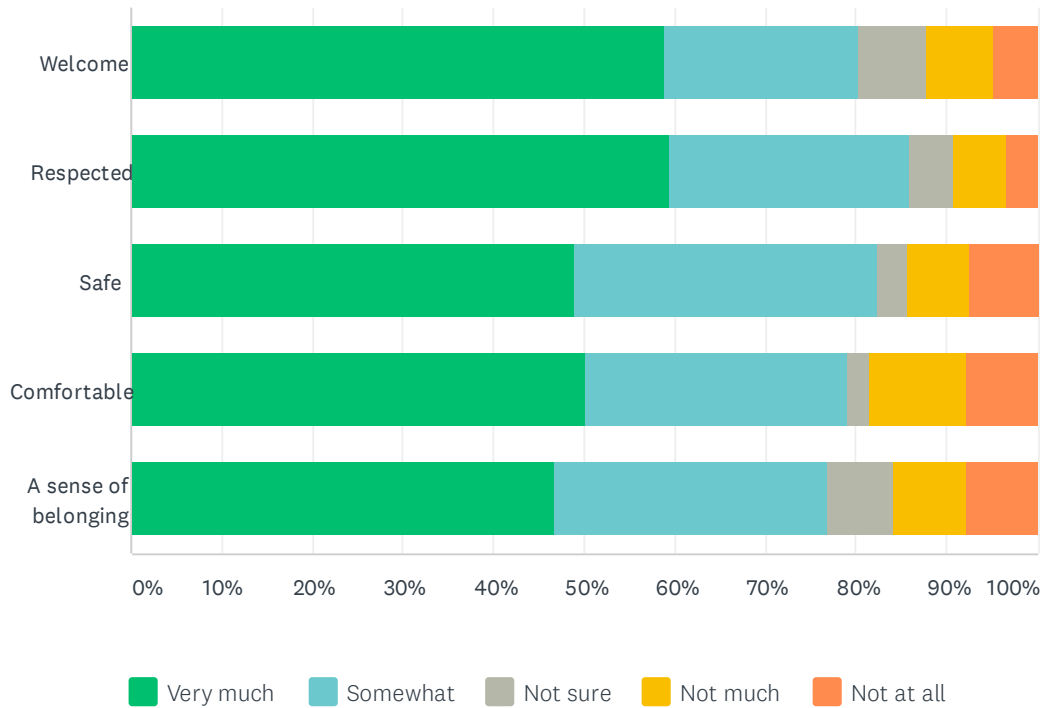
Ferndale Housing Commission - Public Housing Resident Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0 - there are no people under age 18 living in my home	91%	53
1	5%	3
2	0%	0
3	3%	2
4	0%	0
5+	0%	0
TOTAL		58

Q1 In your neighborhood, to what extent do you feel:

Answered: 208 Skipped: 0

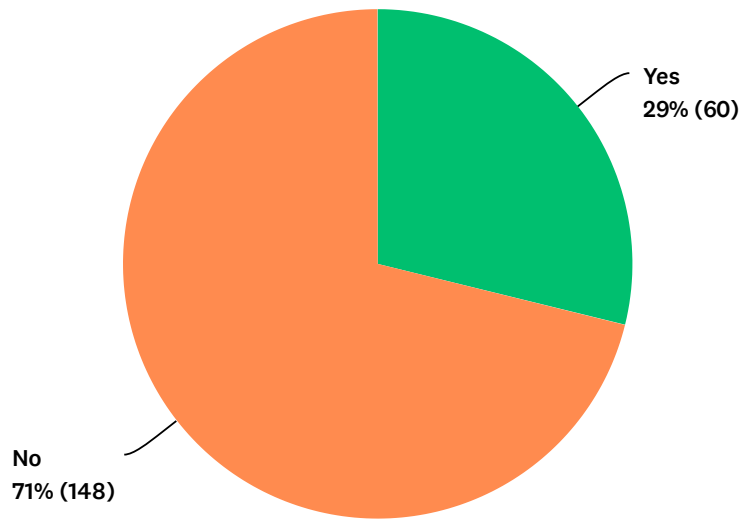


	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Welcome	59% 120	22% 44	7% 15	7% 15	5% 10	204
Respected	60% 122	26% 54	5% 10	6% 12	3% 7	205
Safe	49% 100	33% 68	3% 7	7% 14	7% 15	204
Comfortable	50% 103	29% 59	2% 5	11% 22	8% 16	205
A sense of belonging	47% 95	30% 61	7% 15	8% 16	8% 16	203

Q2 Have you ever felt unsafe in your current home/apartment?

Answered: 208 Skipped: 0

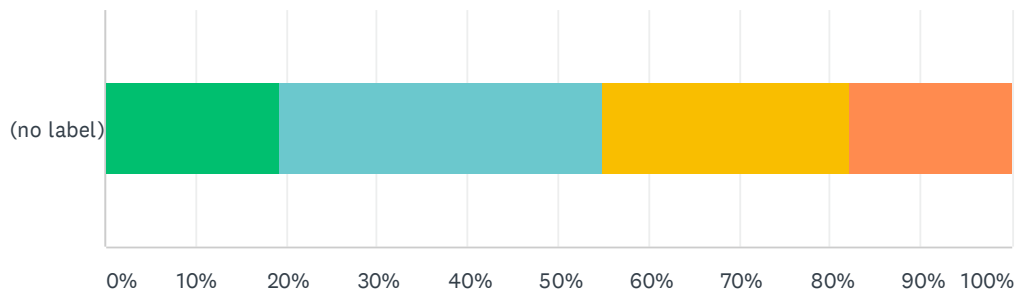
Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	29%	60
No	71%	148
TOTAL		208

Q4 To what extent do you have close relationships with people in your apartment building or neighborhood?

Answered: 208 Skipped: 0



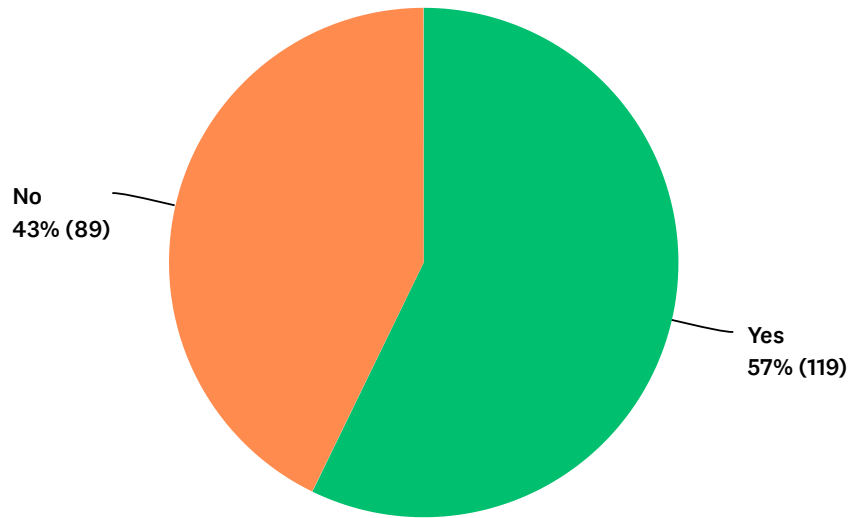
■ I feel very close to some
 ■ I feel somewhat close to some
 ■ I don't feel especially close to anyone
 ■ I feel pretty distant from everyone

	I FEEL VERY CLOSE TO SOME	I FEEL SOMEWHAT CLOSE TO SOME	I DON'T FEEL ESPECIALLY CLOSE TO ANYONE	I FEEL PRETTY DISTANT FROM EVERYONE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	19% 40	36% 74	27% 57	18% 37	208	2.44

Q5 Have you ever shared an official concern/complaint with your landlord?

Answered: 208 Skipped: 0

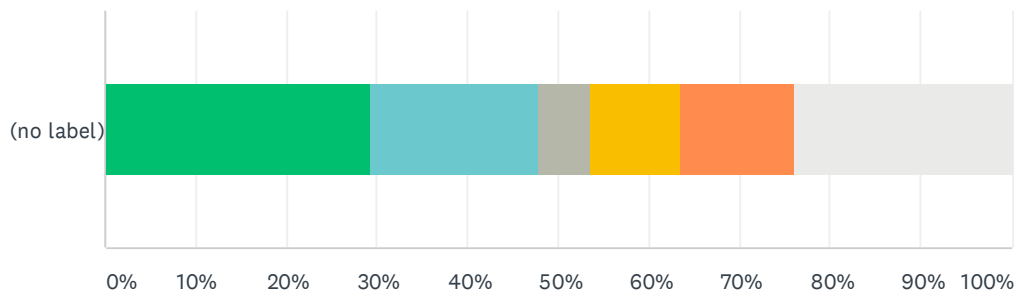
Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	57%	119
No	43%	89
TOTAL		208

Q6 How seriously did you feel your landlord took your concern(s)?

Answered: 205 Skipped: 3



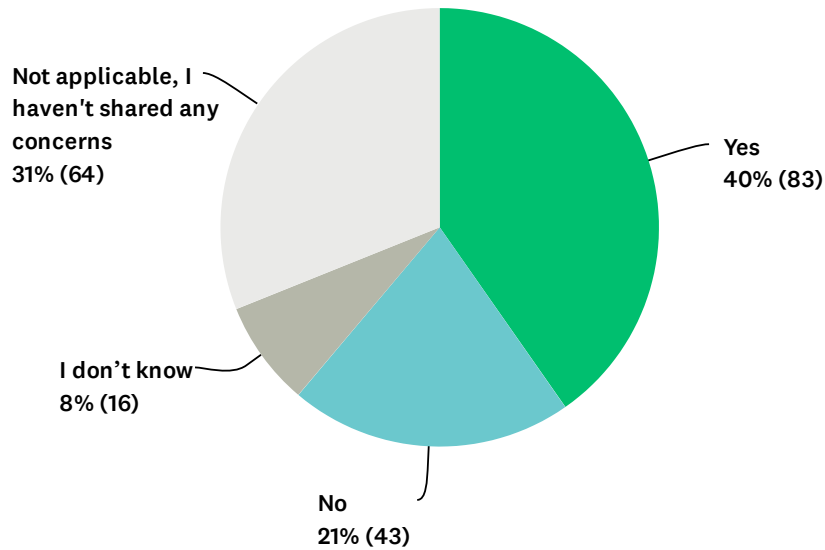
Very seriously Somewhat seriously Not sure Not too seriously Not seriously at all Not applicable, I have not shared any concerns

	VERY SERIOUSLY	SOMEWHAT SERIOUSLY	NOT SURE	NOT TOO SERIOUSLY	NOT SERIOUSLY AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE, I HAVE NOT SHARED ANY CONCERNS	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	29% 60	19% 38	6% 12	10% 20	13% 26	24% 49	205	3.30

Q7 If you shared a concern, was action taken by your landlord?

Answered: 206 Skipped: 2

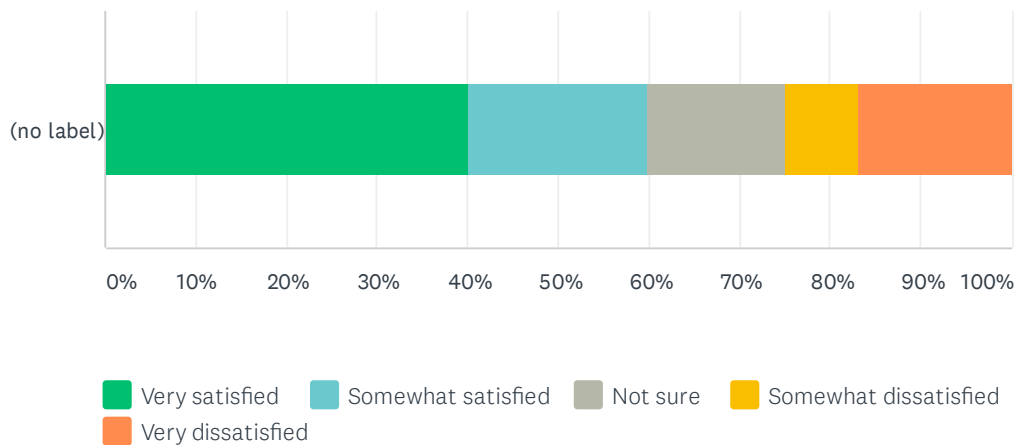
Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	40%	83
No	21%	43
I don't know	8%	16
Not applicable, I haven't shared any concerns	31%	64
TOTAL		206

Q8 How satisfied were you with the outcome?

Answered: 184 Skipped: 24

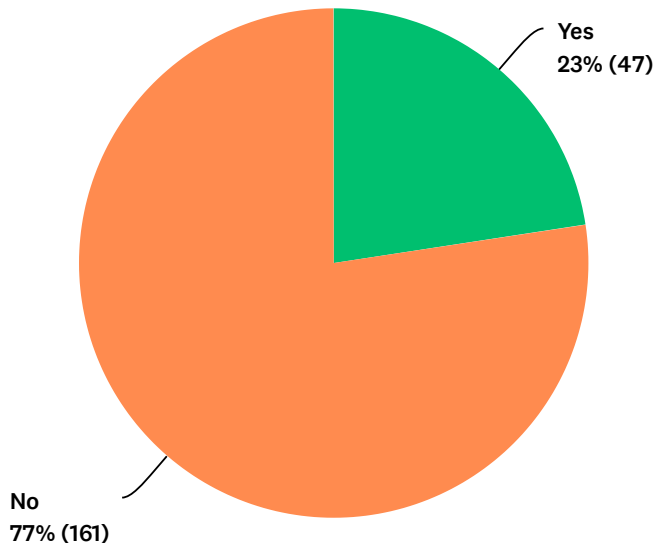


	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NOT SURE	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	40% 74	20% 36	15% 28	8% 15	17% 31	184	2.42

Q9 Have you ever shared an official concern/complaint with the Ferndale Housing Commission?

Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey

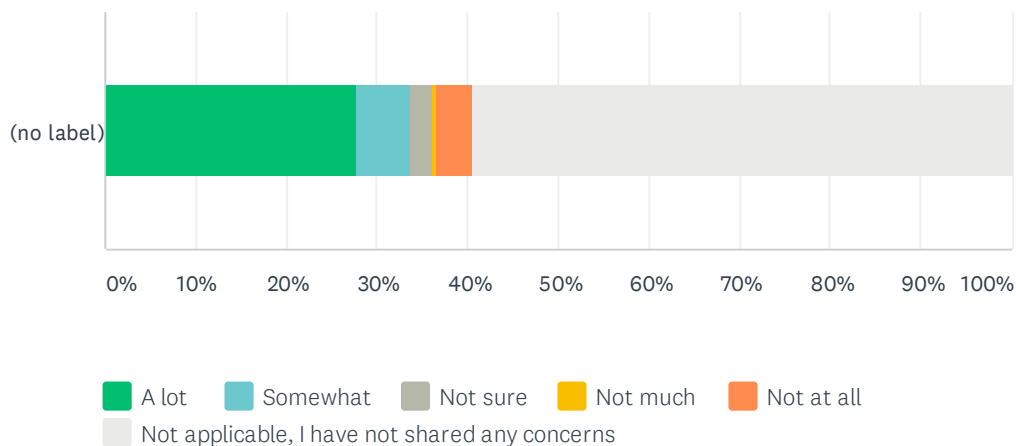
Answered: 208 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	23%	47
No	77%	161
TOTAL		208

Q10 To what extent do you feel the staff of the Ferndale Housing Commission took your concern(s) seriously?

Answered: 202 Skipped: 6

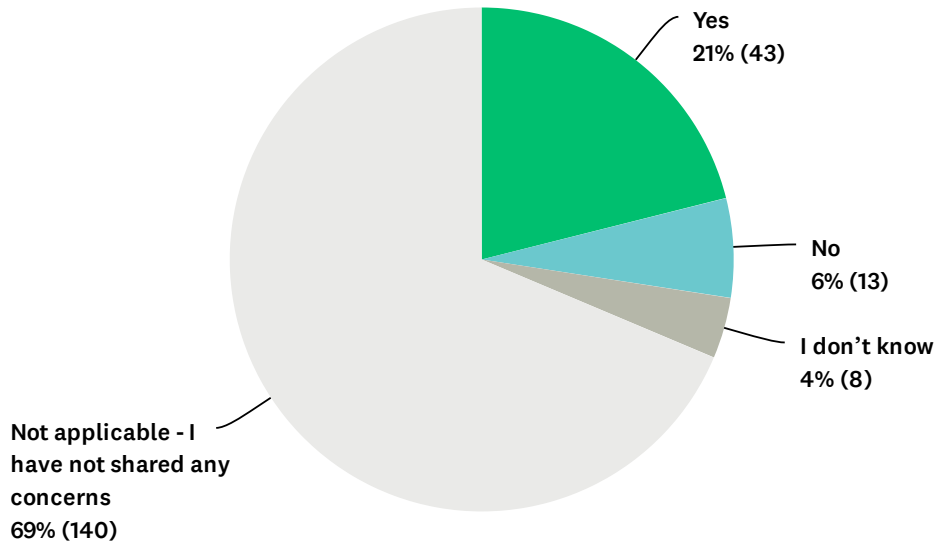


	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE, I HAVE NOT SHARED ANY CONCERNS	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	28% 56	6% 12	2% 5	0% 1	4% 8	59% 120	202	4.25

Q11 Was action taken by the Ferndale Housing Commission?

Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey

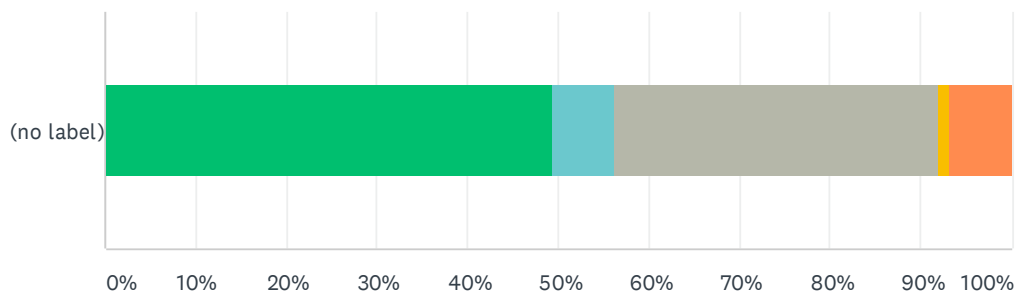
Answered: 204 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	21%	43
No	6%	13
I don't know	4%	8
Not applicable - I have not shared any concerns	69%	140
TOTAL		204

Q12 How satisfied were you with the outcome?

Answered: 160 Skipped: 48

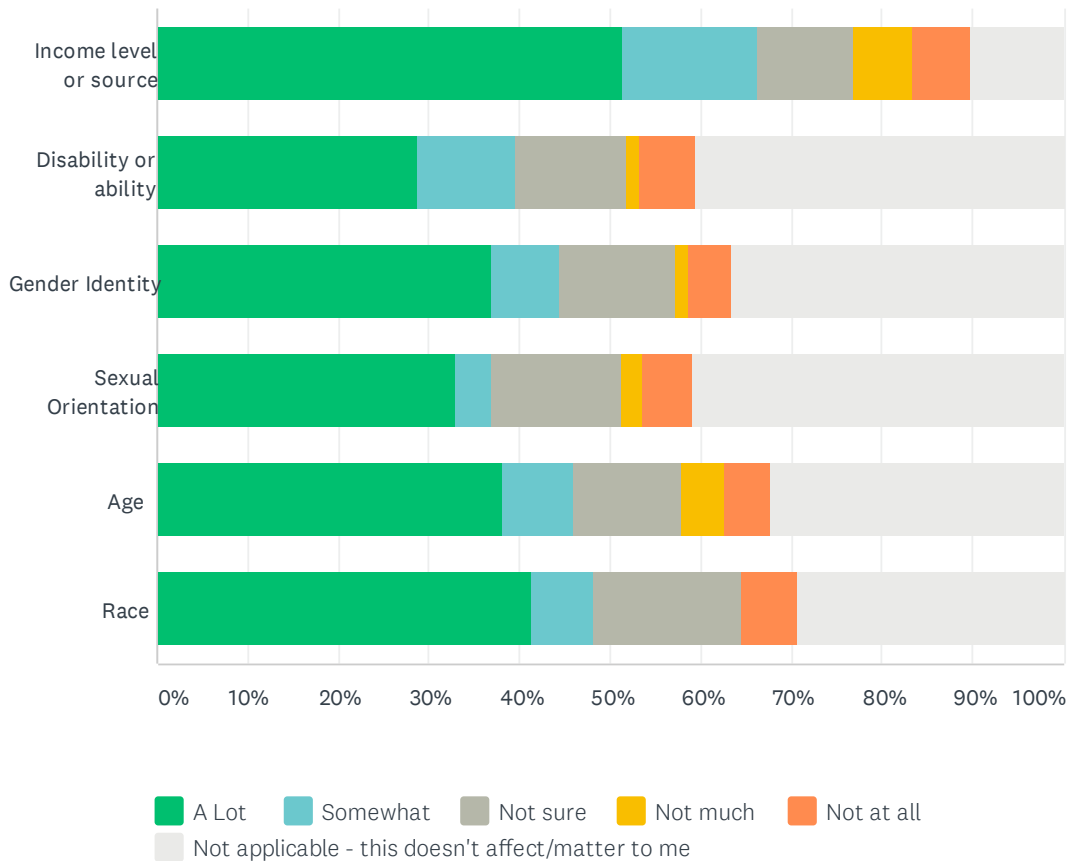


■ Very satisfied
 ■ Somewhat satisfied
 ■ Not sure
 ■ Somewhat dissatisfied
 ■ Very dissatisfied

	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NOT SURE	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	49% 79	7% 11	36% 57	1% 2	7% 11	160	2.09

Q13 To what extent do you feel your landlord treats you with respect regarding your:

Answered: 208 Skipped: 0

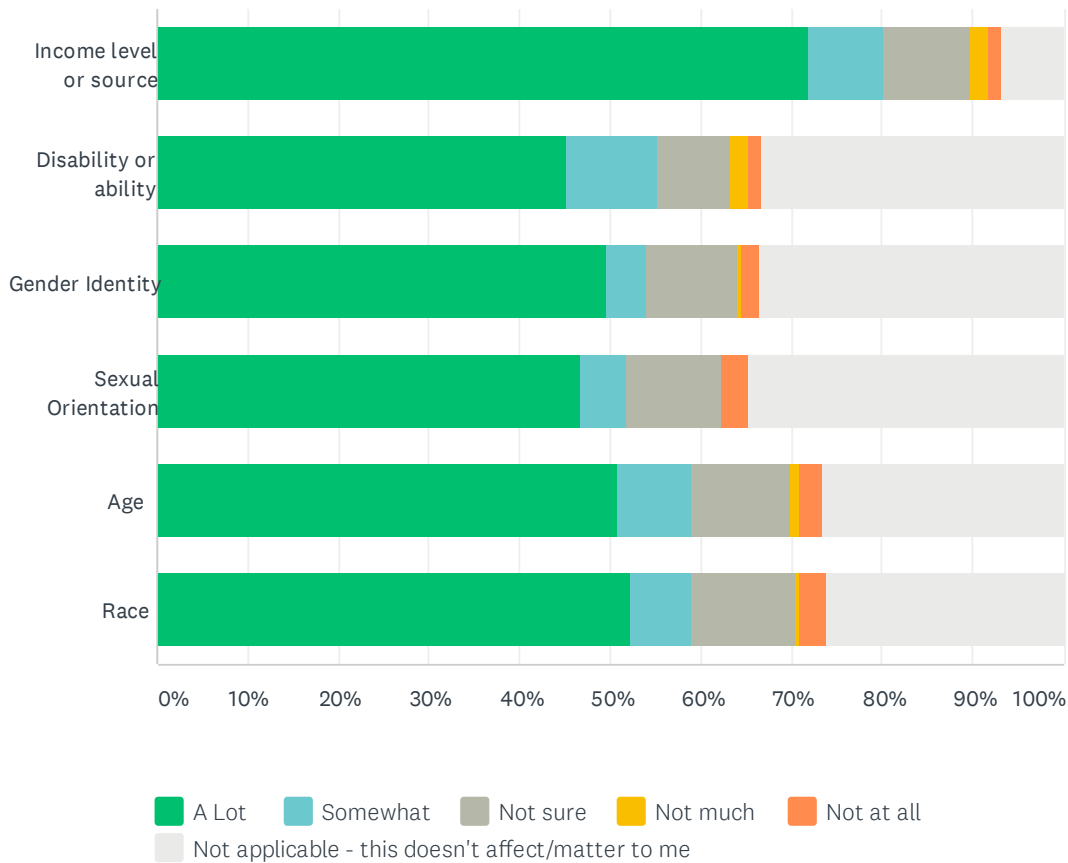


	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE - THIS DOESN'T AFFECT/MATTER TO ME	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Income level or source	51% 105	15% 30	11% 22	6% 13	6% 13	10% 21	204	2.32
Disability or ability	29% 59	11% 22	12% 25	1% 3	6% 13	40% 83	205	3.67
Gender Identity	37% 75	7% 15	13% 26	1% 3	5% 10	36% 74	203	3.39
Sexual Orientation	33% 67	4% 8	14% 29	2% 5	5% 11	41% 83	203	3.66
Age	38% 78	8% 16	12% 24	5% 10	5% 10	32% 66	204	3.27
Race	41% 85	7% 14	16% 33	0% 0	6% 13	29% 60	205	3.11

Q14 To what extent do you feel Ferndale Housing Commission staff treats you with respect regarding your:

Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey

Answered: 207 Skipped: 1

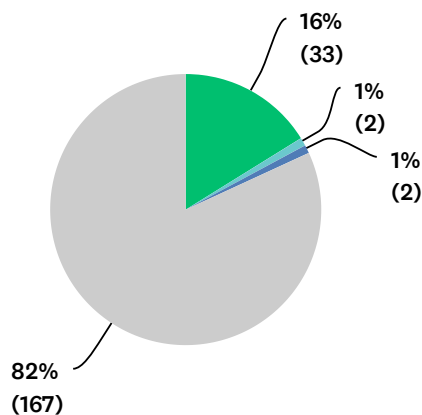


	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE - THIS DOESN'T AFFECT/MATTER TO ME	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Income level or source	72% 149	8% 17	10% 20	2% 4	1% 3	7% 14	207	1.73
Disability or ability	45% 91	10% 20	8% 16	2% 4	1% 3	33% 67	201	3.04
Gender Identity	50% 99	5% 9	10% 20	1% 1	2% 4	34% 67	200	3.02
Sexual Orientation	47% 94	5% 10	10% 21	0% 0	3% 6	35% 70	201	3.12
Age	51% 103	8% 17	11% 22	1% 2	2% 5	27% 54	203	2.76
Race	52% 106	7% 14	11% 23	0% 1	3% 6	26% 53	203	2.73

Q15 Have you experienced or noticed any negative experiences based on any of the areas listed above?

Answered: 204 Skipped: 4

Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey

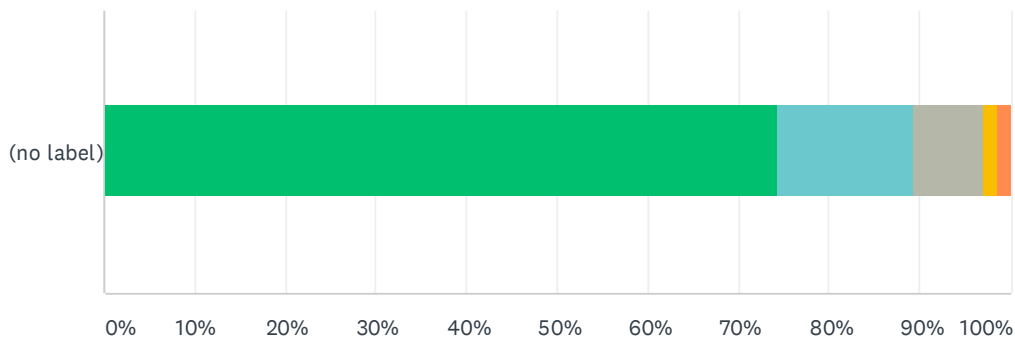


■ Yes, with my landlord
 ■ Yes, with Ferndale Housing Commission staff
 ■ Yes, with both
 ■ No, not with either

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, with my landlord	16%	33
Yes, with Ferndale Housing Commission staff	1%	2
Yes, with both	1%	2
No, not with either	82%	167
TOTAL		204

Q17 To what extent do you think the Ferndale Housing Commission rules are fair for all people?

Answered: 206 Skipped: 2

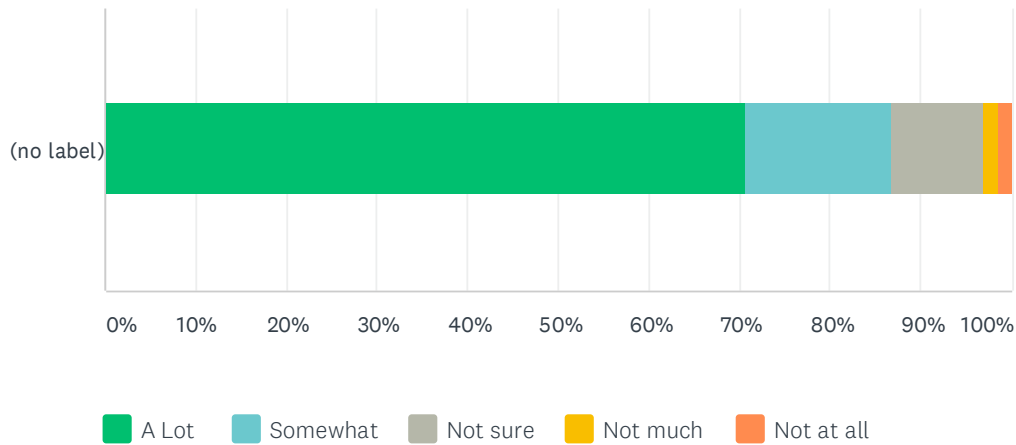


■ A Lot
 ■ Somewhat
 ■ Not sure
 ■ Not much
 ■ Not at all

	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	74% 153	15% 31	8% 16	1% 3	1% 3	206	1.41

Q18 To what extent do you think the Ferndale Housing Commission's rules are implemented fairly and consistently?

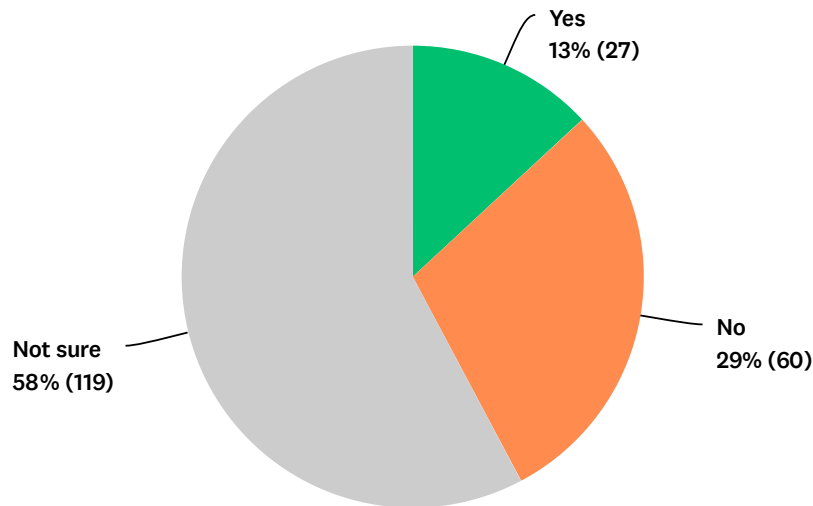
Answered: 205 Skipped: 3



	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	71% 145	16% 33	10% 21	1% 3	1% 3	205	1.47

Q19 Are there some areas where fairness could be improved?

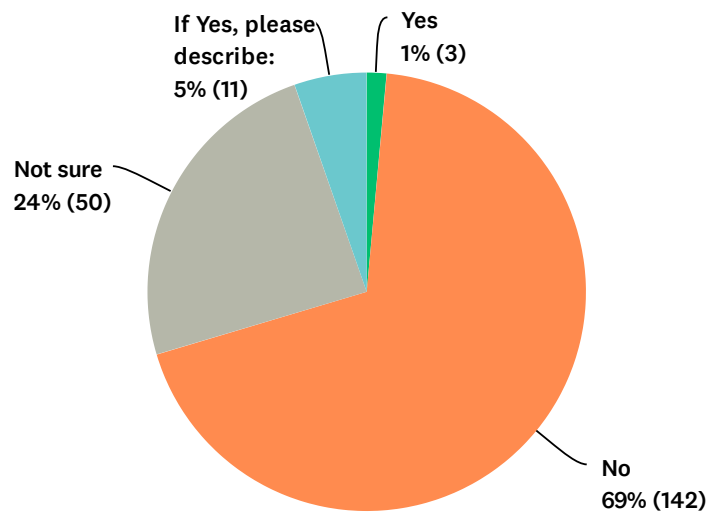
Answered: 206 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	13%	27
No	29%	60
Not sure	58%	119
TOTAL		206

Q20 Sometimes rules that are equal for all don't meet everyone's needs and could be harmful. For example, providing a peanut butter sandwich to everyone (equal) even though some are allergic to peanuts (harmful). Have you noticed or experienced situations where the Ferndale Housing Commission's rules or practices don't meet someone's needs or are harmful?

Answered: 206 Skipped: 2

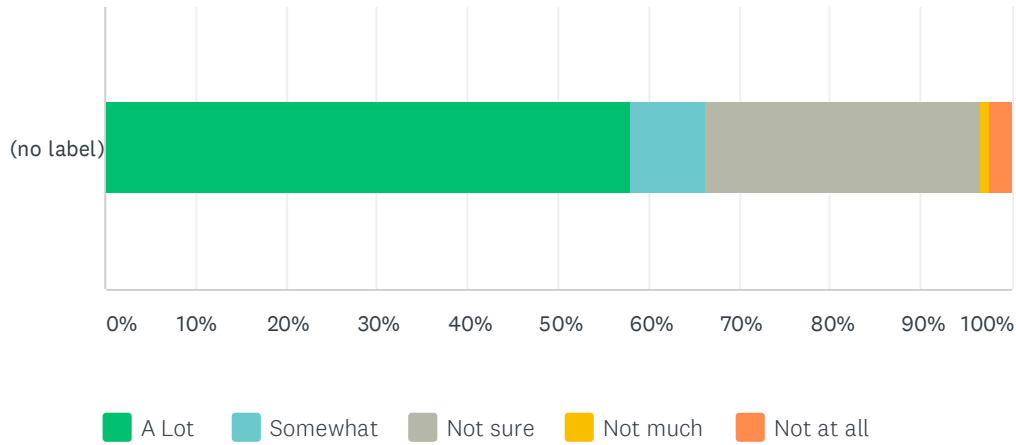


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	1%	3
No	69%	142
Not sure	24%	50
If Yes, please describe:	5%	11
TOTAL		206

Q21 To what extent do you think the Ferndale Housing Commission works to prevent racism and other forms of discrimination?

Answered: 205 Skipped: 3

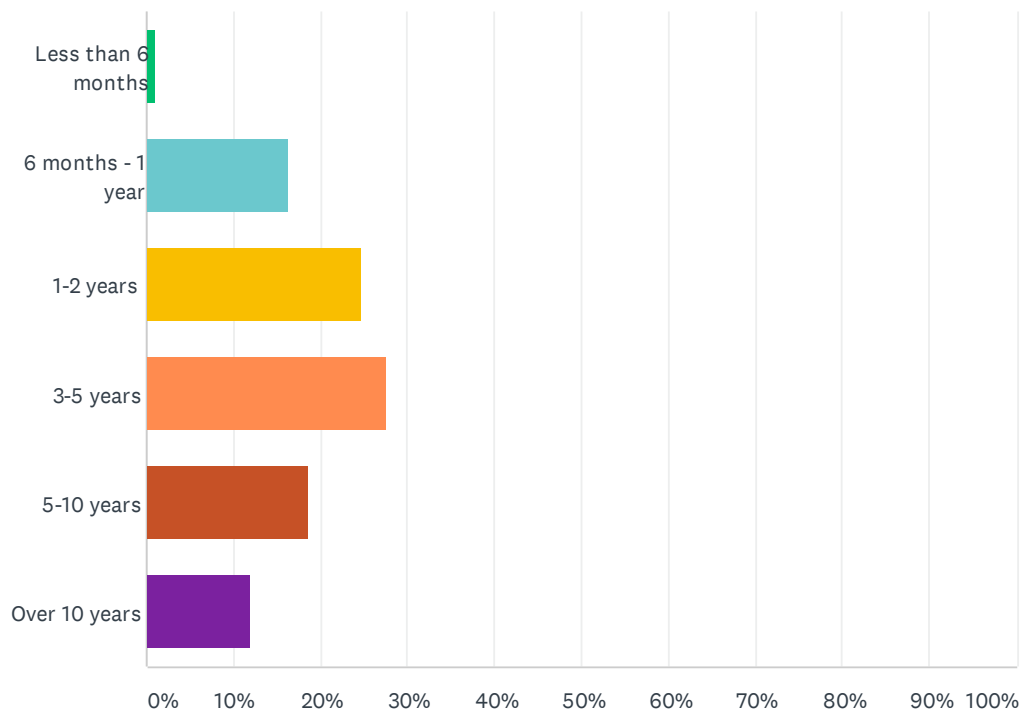
Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey



	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT SURE	NOT MUCH	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	58% 119	8% 17	30% 62	1% 2	2% 5	205	1.81

Q22 How long have you been in the Ferndale Housing Commission Voucher Program?

Answered: 203 Skipped: 5

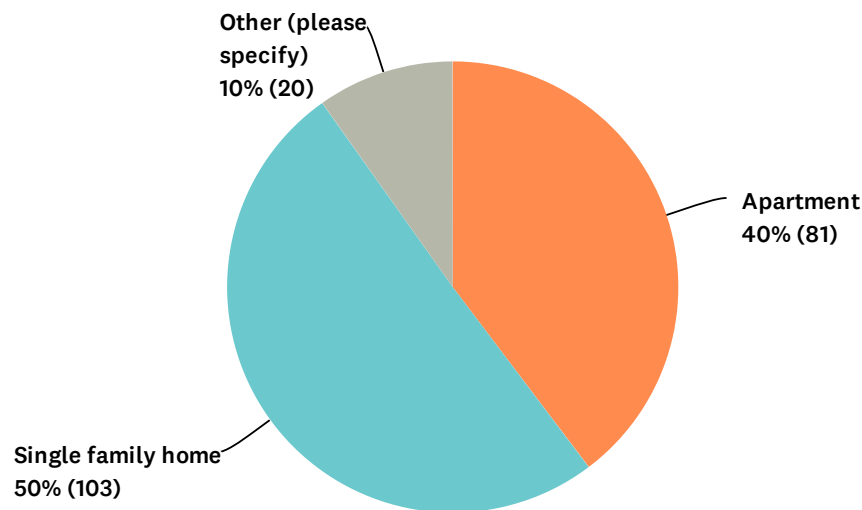


Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 6 months	1%	2
6 months - 1 year	16%	33
1-2 years	25%	50
3-5 years	28%	56
5-10 years	19%	38
Over 10 years	12%	24
TOTAL		203

Q23 What best describes your housing type?

Answered: 204 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Apartment	40%	81
Single family home	50%	103
Other (please specify)	10%	20
TOTAL		204

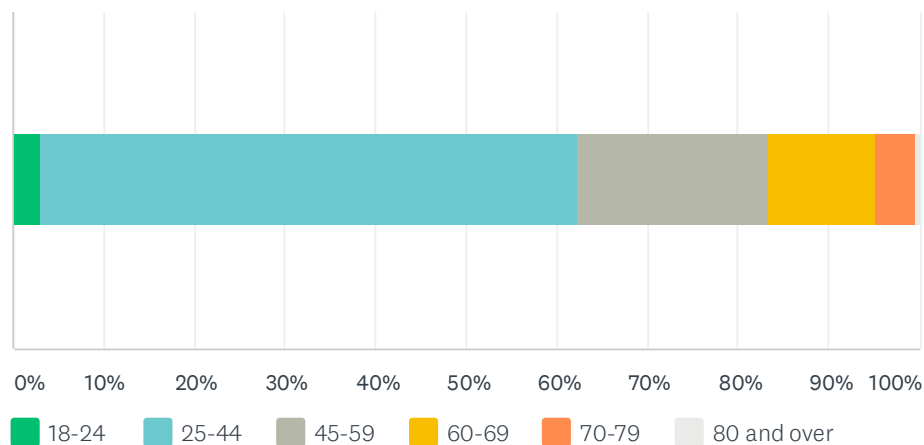
Q24 What city do you live in?

Answered: 201 Skipped: 7

Q25 How old are you?

Answered: 204 Skipped: 4

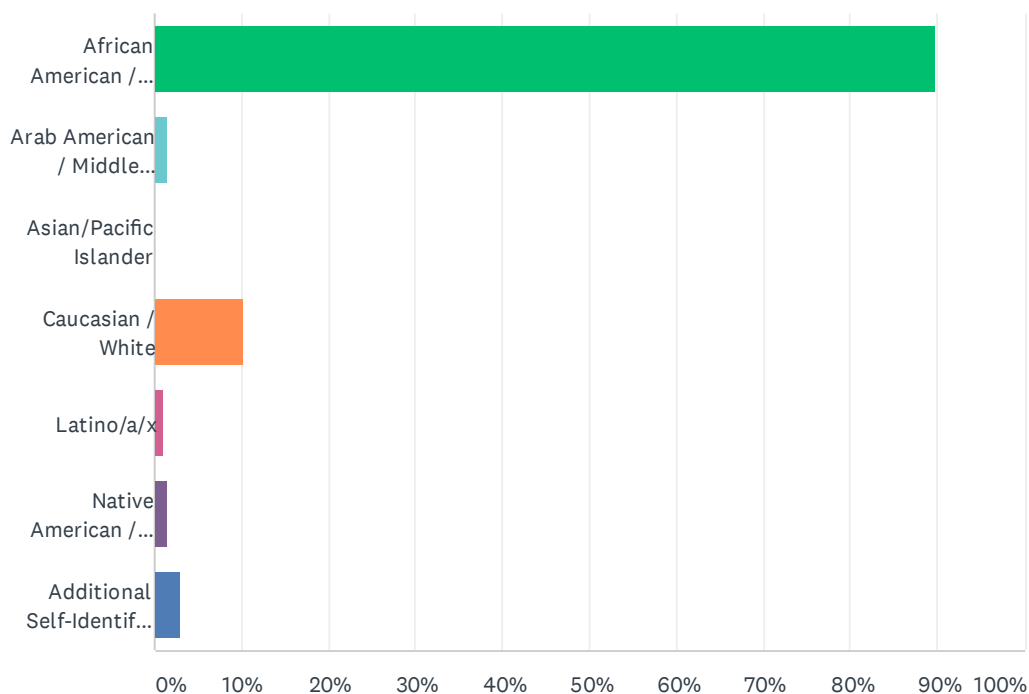
Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18-24	3%	6
25-44	59%	121
45-59	21%	43
60-69	12%	24
70-79	4%	9
80 and over	0%	1
TOTAL		204

Q26 What is/are your race(s)/ethnicities? (check all that apply):

Answered: 204 Skipped: 4

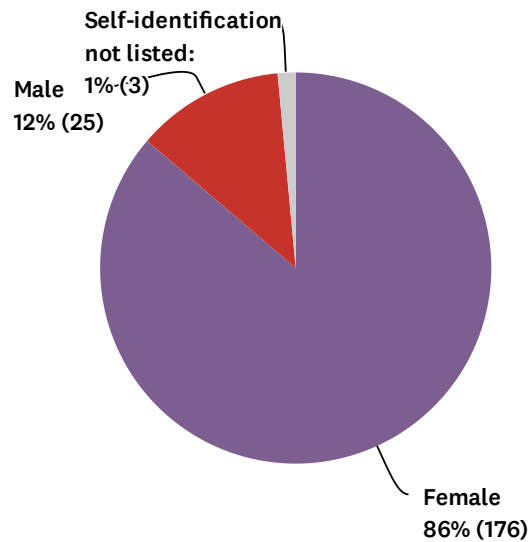


Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
African American / Black	90%	183
Arab American / Middle Eastern Descent	1%	3
Asian/Pacific Islander	0%	0
Caucasian / White	10%	21
Latino/a/x	1%	2
Native American / American Indian	1%	3
Additional Self-Identification:	3%	6
Total Respondents: 204		

Q27 What is your gender?

Answered: 204 Skipped: 4

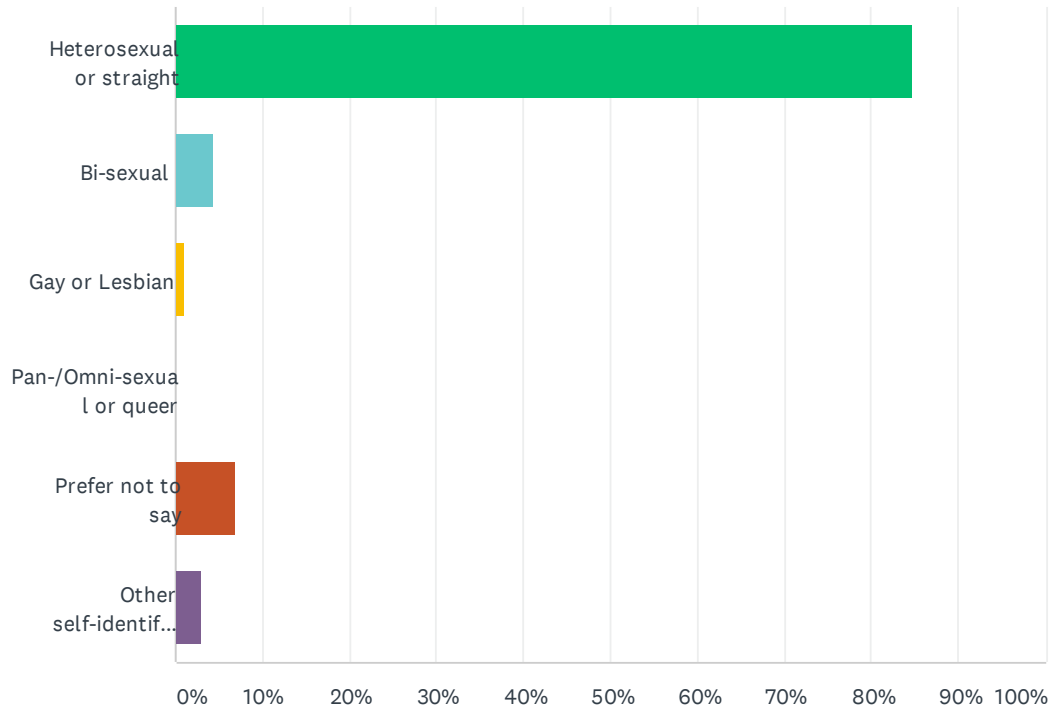


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	86%	176
Gender non-binary	0%	0
Male	12%	25
Self-identification not listed:	1%	3
TOTAL		204

Q28 How do you describe your sexual orientation?

Answered: 203 Skipped: 5

Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey

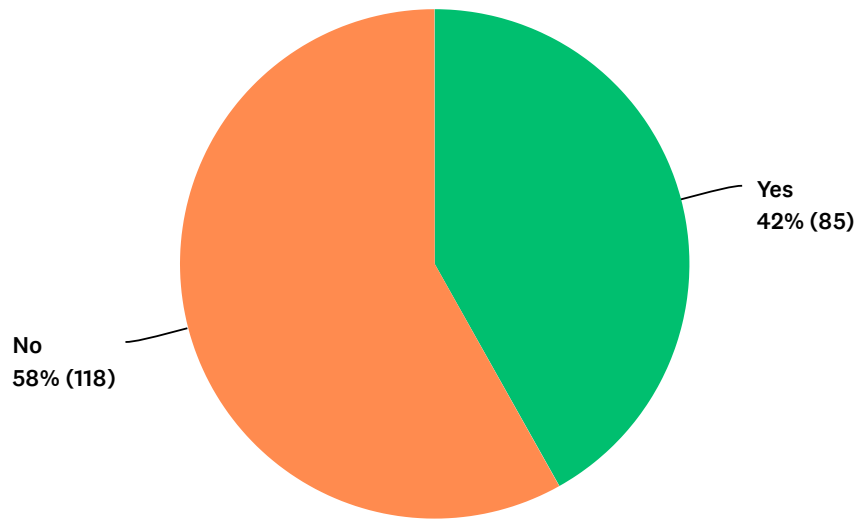


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Heterosexual or straight	85%	172
Bi-sexual	4%	9
Gay or Lesbian	1%	2
Pan-/Omni-sexual or queer	0%	0
Prefer not to say	7%	14
Other self-identification:	3%	6
TOTAL		203

Q29 Do you live with a disability?

Answered: 203 Skipped: 5

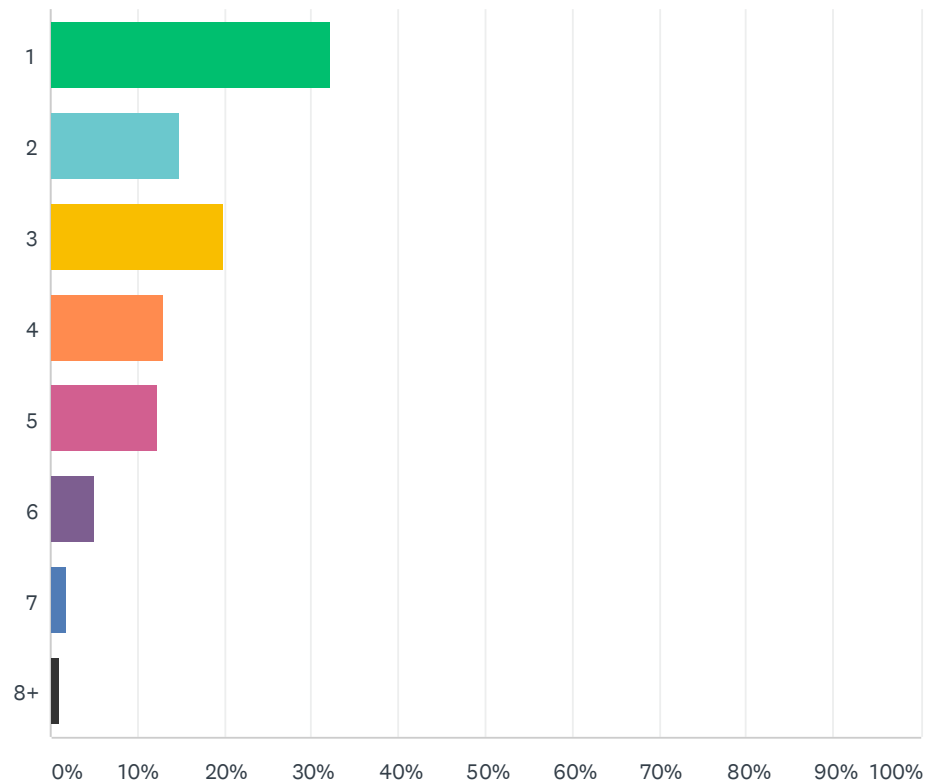
Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	42%	85
No	58%	118
TOTAL		203

Q30 How many total people live in your household:

Answered: 202 Skipped: 6

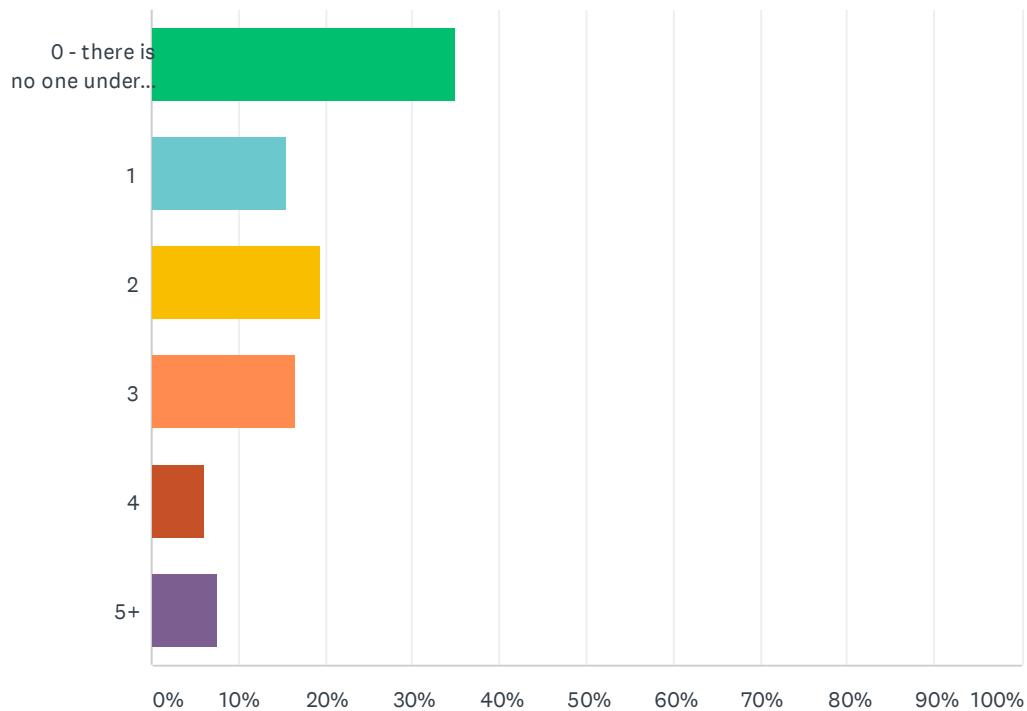


Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	32%	65
2	15%	30
3	20%	40
4	13%	26
5	12%	25
6	5%	10
7	2%	4
8+	1%	2
TOTAL		202

Q31 Of those, how many are under the age of 18?

Answered: 200 Skipped: 8



Ferndale Housing Commission - Voucher Recipient Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0 - there is no one under 18 living in my home	35%	70
1	16%	31
2	20%	39
3	17%	33
4	6%	12
5+	8%	15
TOTAL		200

Recommendations from the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Antiracism (IDEA) Task Force



As charged by the Ferndale Housing Commission, 2020-2021, to take meaningful action to ensure its core values of inclusion, diversity, equity and anti-racism are embodied within its policies, programs and operations.

The following key highlights priorities set by the Task Force, suggestions considered easy to implement and one time-sensitive item.



Time-Sensitive



Priority



Easy to complete

LOW INCOME HOUSING SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in this section reflect areas where the Ferndale Housing Commission could advocate for changes outside of its own authority level, including the City of Ferndale, Oakland County, the broader Metro Detroit area, and the State of Michigan. The IDEA Task Force recommends that the Board of the Ferndale Housing Commission consider ways to move these recommendations forward as an advocate on behalf of those participating in the Ferndale Housing Commission's programs.

1.0 Federal Policy Changes. *Items 1.1 – 1.3 are designed to be responsive to federal policies that intertwine, resulting in voucher program participants being stuck in “low opportunity” neighborhoods: areas with high poverty concentrations, low municipal resources, populated predominantly by people of color. Providing supports and accommodation for other living*



*expenses, for transitional housing while finding permanent housing and greater flexibility within regions can expand options for voucher program participants.*¹²

- 1.1 Advocate for vouchers to be permitted to cover additional expenses beyond rent.
- 1.2 Advocate that vouchers be permitted to cover transitional housing costs while an approved participant is seeking housing, including temporary hotel stays.
- 1.3 Advocate that the rent cap definition for the region be expanded to accommodate greater nuance in rental housing costs within the various geographic regions of the tri-county area. Rents in one part of the region are much different than other areas and can prohibit voucher program participants from moving to high opportunity neighborhoods where rents are typically higher than vouchers will permit.³
- 1.4 Advocate that low-income housing ban-for-life be removed for those convicted of methamphetamine production on the premises of federally funded housing. *This is a multi-faceted issue that disproportionately impacts African Americans: while illegal drug activities are similar rates for both African American and Caucasian Americans, African Americans experience higher arrest and conviction rates. Further, U.S. policy, in its “war on drugs,” has addressed drug issues with incarceration over treatment and has implemented many lifelong penalties for those who have been convicted of crimes. This results in reduced access to many services at a time when those leaving incarceration may need the support most – disproportionately affecting African Americans over other racial groups.*⁴

2.0 Regional / State Policy Changes.

- 2.1 Advocate that “source of income” be included in the discrimination prohibitions for landlords and rental property managers in the City of Ferndale, and all counties and municipalities where FHC participants may look for housing, in order to reduce the discrimination that Section 8 Voucher Program holders face in securing rental homes. *Housing discrimination in Metro Detroit often occurs in neighborhoods with lower*

¹ Presentation on Low-Income Housing, February 2021. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iRMlrRSZXs8LabVtVjrvS-BDkgkMtCFM/view?usp=sharing>.

² How Wealthy Towns Keep People with Housing Vouchers Out: <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-wealthy-towns-keep-people-with-housing-vouchers-out>

³ How Do Small Area Fair Market Rents Affect the Location and Number of Units Affordable to Voucher Holders? (NYU Furman Center) https://furmancenter.org/files/NYUFurmanCenter_SAFMRbrief_22Jan2018.pdf

⁴ Race, Drugs, and Law Enforcement in the United States (Human Rights Watch). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/06/19/race-drugs-and-law-enforcement-united-states>



incomes, more renters and a higher proportion of Black or Hispanic residents.⁵ The stigma against section 8 voucher holders contributes to the discrimination. Further, multiple voucher program participants reported experiencing landlord discrimination and/or maltreatment based on their section 8 voucher status.

2.2 Advocate with the Michigan legislature for the legalization of rent control policies in Michigan. *There are promising policies for rent control that support low-income families and preserve and boost local economies.⁶ No municipality in Michigan is currently permitted to pass rent control ordinances or controls, by State law.*

2.3 Advocate that area counties review landlord policies and consider ways to increase landlord participation in housing authority programs.⁷ *Many landlords do not accept section 8 vouchers, placing voucher holders at risk of losing their vouchers if they can't find rental housing. Voucher holders also often sense they are turned down due to racial discrimination, putting them at even greater risk of failing to secure housing in the market.⁸*

3.0 City of Ferndale Advocacy.



3.1 Identify current COVID-related funding which could benefit FHC program participants with financial assistance and other supports and provide information and support for people to access those supports. *There are significant COVID-related funds that have been allocated by the federal government to support renters across the country. As a time-sensitive item, the Task Force recommends the Ferndale*

⁵ Study: Housing discrimination in metro Detroit more likely in lower-income neighborhoods
<https://www.michiganradio.org/post/study-housing-discrimination-metro-detroit-more-likely-lower-income-neighborhoods>

⁶ Rent Control: What Does the Research Tell Us about the Effectiveness of Local Action?
https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99646/rent_control._what_does_the_research_tell_us_about_the_effectiveness_of_local_action_1.pdf

⁷ HUD has information on specific things that housing authorities can do here:
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/winter19/highlight3.html>

⁸ Getting a Section 8 Voucher Is Hard. Finding a Landlord Willing to Accept It Is Harder.
<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/08/31/getting-a-section-8-voucher-is-hard-finding-a-landlord-willing-to-accept-it-is-harder>



Housing Commission find any and all potential funding and other COVID related resources and share information about these resources with all program participants.⁹

3.2 Advocate that the city create a subsidy program to assist low-income families, including the following.¹⁰ *Ferndale housing rates have seen tremendous increases in the last several years which outprice low-income people even as the City recognizes the relationship and benefits of an income-diverse community. The Task Force asks the FHC to advocate the city seek creative means and develop additional financial supports for low-income individuals.*

3.2a Resources to support the transportation costs of finding homes, help pay security deposits, support moving costs.

3.2b Resources to support participant moves from public housing to the voucher program.

3.2c Expansion of affordable housing options.

3.3 Seek out supports and resources for people/families to move from renting to home ownership (include expanding rent-to-own options); consider potential of building community of tiny house as strategy toward growing home ownership¹¹. *The U.S. has a wealth gap which is split along racial group lines. Intergenerational wealth is largely accumulated through real estate gains, which have been less accessible, specifically to African Americans, through the generations due to discriminatory housing policies and lending practices. Additional resources to enable families to make the transition from renting to owning are needed.*¹²

VOUCHER PROGRAM PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Voucher Program Policies/Practices. *For items 4.1 – 4.3, finding housing continues to be an issue for section 8 voucher holders across the country. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the*

⁹ Michigan renters, landlords can apply for new rent aid program starting Monday (Detroit Free Press) <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2021/03/12/michigan-rent-aid-eviction-aid-federal-money-to-avoid-eviction/6925853002/>

¹⁰ Washington DC has this- the Local Rent Supplement Program. <https://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/16-04-LRSP-Brief.pdf>

¹¹ Other housing authorities have a program called Home Ownership Program, which is an enhanced version of the Family Self Sufficiency program – a potential model.

¹² Systemic Racism explained: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrHIQIO_bdQ&t=1s



resulting housing rate increases have magnified and exacerbated this issue with reports of rental rates skyrocketing across Metro Detroit and the country.^{13 14}

PRIORITY

4.1 Review and maintain an updated list of potential regional rentals to ensure that those on the list accept vouchers for payment and that there is a spread within high-opportunity neighborhoods.

PRIORITY

4.2 Effective immediately, roll-back time requirement to find housing due to COVID impact.

PRIORITY

4.3 Effective January 2022 at the latest, expand the time requirement to find housing from 90 days to six months as standard.

For items 4.4-4.6, voucher program participants consistently cited issues with landlords as being a strong concern in the IDEA Survey and ask for FHC assistance in helping to resolve these concerns, as well as prevent them from happening.¹⁵

PRIORITY

4.4 Improve oversight of landlords:

4.4a Assist renters with handling unaddressed concerns.

4.4b Clarify landlord rules and improve oversight to reduce maltreatment.

4.5 Gather, assemble and make information about federal protections readily and easily available/accessible to program participants.

4.6 Revise and update description of housing inspection process for clarity and understanding; ensure tenants have full access to being present at inspections.

¹³ What's fueling the massive spike in home and rent prices across metro Detroit? (WXYZ TV).

<https://www.wxyz.com/news/7-in-depth/whats-fueling-the-massive-spike-in-home-and-rent-prices-across-metro-detroit>

¹⁴ Detroit Metro Report on real estate rate increases (Zumper). <https://www.zumper.com/blog/detroit-metro-report/>

¹⁵ According to the IDEA Survey, 57% of participants have shared concerns with their landlords. Of those, 32% said that concerns shared with their landlord were not taken too seriously or not taken seriously at all. 20% stated no action was taken on concerns; another 8% said they didn't know if action had been taken. 24% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the outcome. 15% have had outright negative interactions with landlords, citing such experiences as unresponsiveness, violation of privacy (sharing section 8 voucher status resulting in stigma from neighbors), causing/threatening eviction.





PUBLIC HOUSING PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Public Housing Program Policies/Practices. *In items 5.1 – 5.4, interviews with public housing residents consistently revealed a lack of / mis- understanding about rules and regulations. Information needs to be provided in a range of formats and care must be taken to ensure tenants understand the rules.*



5.1 Improve communications to residents.

- 5.1a Building/group resource access.**
- 5.1b Program protocols regarding situations involving violence, including information about resident protections and post-event counseling and support.**
- 5.1c Gathering input from residents on decisions regarding building improvements.**
- 5.1d Provide information in more visually and easier-to-read ways with video options, and simpler read options (such as info graphics with icons and color).**



5.2 Clarify rules regarding living arrangement rules in units, ensure that policies regarding living requirements (who, how many) are implemented consistently and consider options and alternative referrals for those not abiding by the policies.



5.3 The Board should annually review a report of lease violations and terminations broken down by race, gender and disability demographics to assess fairness and equity.

5.4 Review and expand the ways in which residents are engaged in group decision-making; apply core values to inform how resident committees operate. ¹⁶

- 5.4a Review leadership structure of committees.**
- 5.4b Consider offering incentives to attract participation (such as providing food and beverages, door prizes/raffles, etc.) for resident meetings.**
- 5.4c Review content of meetings – limit reports and updates, include opportunities at every meeting for participants to meet in small groups**

¹⁶ In interviews, residents shared that they felt meetings were unproductive, that they felt unheard and that meetings are “clique-y.”



and share their opinions on a particular topic of interest with recommendations for change to the FHC.

5.5 Expand the options for residents to resolve concerns. *When asked to what extent residents feel treated with respect by other residents based on certain identity characteristics (income level, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, race), less than half said “a lot” or “somewhat.” More than a third had personally experienced a negative interaction, witnessed it, or both. All interviews revealed level of discomfort in addressing neighbor issues and discontent at how concerns currently get handled, due to lack of resolution, perceived unfairness by staff, safety among residents, or other issues. A level of staff fatigue was also noted in handling resident concerns.*

5.5a Include use of mediation and restorative practices frameworks¹⁷

5.5b Partner with law firm to provide pro bono mediation/arbitration services

5.6 Provide resident anti-bias education and learning opportunities. *When describing negative experiences based on identity characteristics such as race, many people shared experiencing disrespectful behavior by other residents - such as stereotype-based name calling and derogatory language (Called “Ahmed” & “White Muslim”; Called “Faggot”; Being called derogatory names, Told to go back to my country). Furthermore, Public Housing Survey responses here indicated that Caucasian residents (56%) were more likely to feel unsafe in their apartments than African American respondents (20%) which may speak to how groups interpret and perceive safety levels based on their race and experiences.*

5.7 Further explore differential treatment by staff based on identity characteristics; consider identifying a third part ombudsman to whom residents can safely share concerns. *32% of Public Housing survey respondents indicated they had had a negative interaction with staff, witnessed it, or both. African Americans were more likely to report this as a personal experience while Caucasians were more likely to have witnessed an incident. Interviews confirmed this experience, adding that some respondents felt that some staff were more likely to take the side of someone who was*

¹⁷ Consultant recommended practice: Restorative Practices for resolving conflict <https://www.iirp.edu/restorative-practices/defining-restorative/> to increase resident self-management, reduce staff triangulation in conflict and encourage positive relationship-building among residents.



Caucasian in conflicts (“I sometimes feel like they assume good intentions of white people and bad intentions of black people”).

Additional Consultant Recommendations

5.8 Resident orientation

- 5.8a Verbally read all policies in the Resident Handbook (word-for-word) for new residents. Provide clear access to any referenced documents.
- 5.8b At least annually, offer a Resident Handbook “refresher” where a staff member reviews all resident handbook policies/procedures in person for all who wish to attend.

5.9 Gather, assemble and make information about federal protections readily and easily available/accessible to program participants.

5.10 Invite domestic violence and sexual assault treatment professionals to review policy on terminating perpetrators of domestic violence / sexual assault to ensure best protection for victims (ACOP, pg. 13-25).

ADDITIONAL FHC POLICY & PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this section reflect a variety of areas where the Ferndale Housing Commission could make specific changes to improve conditions that affect program participants.

6.0 Ferndale Housing Commission By-laws

6.1 On composition. *Although there are 880 section 8 voucher program participants and 157 public housing participants, there is no board representation from voucher program participants. Furthermore, survey participation resulted in 23% of section 8 voucher holders as compared to 39% of public housing residents. Section 8 voucher program holders are also spread out among three counties, while the public housing program is Ferndale-only. Efforts to increase representation from section 8 voucher holders as well as people outside of Ferndale will be important to making program improvements in the future.*



- 6.1a Include designated seats for representation from both the voucher program and the public housing program on the Board.



PRIORITY

6.1b Expand number of Board seats to include more community representation.

PRIORITY

6.1c Define more distinctly what is meant by the term “qualified applicants”
This is vaguely defined and open to potential unconscious bias in the review process. The Board should consider tightening this language in alignment with diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism values.

6.1d Consider adding to qualified candidate description, “with demonstrated commitment to the vision, mission and core values of the Ferndale Housing Commission.”

PRIORITY

6.2 Require annual training for Commissioners to include diversity, equity, inclusion, antiracism, antibias, and anti-ableism topics; include a discussion of what the Board thinks its responsibilities to the City's antiracism statement are.



6.3 Review and expand communications regarding notifying residents of Commission meeting schedule. *For improved participant awareness and participation.*



6.4 Consider adding “Open call” in commission meetings before old business and new business to that residents/public can share on items prior to vote. *To allow participants greater levels of participation.*

Additional Consultant Recommendations

6.5 Revisit existing core values¹⁸ to clearly define what each means and/or establish a new set of 3-7 core values by which the FHC will make key policy and practice decisions. Core values should be used as a lens through which to make decisions governing commissioners, staffing, policies and practices and programs. Involve staff and advisory councils from both public housing and the voucher program to develop/refine these values.

6.6 Develop clause describing under what circumstances a commissioner can be removed. *For added accountability.*

¹⁸ Personnel Policies, pg. 4



7.0 Personnel Policies & Practices



7.1 Do an audit of staff trainings and identify gaps. Offer anti-bias and inclusion training annually to all staff and during orientation for all new staff. ¹⁹

7.2 Language updates:



7.2a Include homophobia and transphobia in description of Harassment Policy.



7.2b Include “gender identity/expression” and “HIV Status” in Equal Employment Opportunity Policy and in all other sections where protected classes are listed.



7.2c Remove repetitive references to criminality and prosecution.



7.2d Broaden isms coverage. Replace “racism” with “repeated offensive statements or behaviors based on one’s protected class status.” (Pg. 13)



7.3 Gather resident input on the current policy granting permission for staff to carry firearms while on duty; and revise as necessary. *Task Force members were unaware employees could carry firearms with permission and recommend residents have greater input in setting this policy due to multi-layered concerns over historic racialized use of force, potential for bias to drive actions and safety.*



7.4 Add “or the Board Chair” to the list of people an employee can contact with questions regarding the whistleblower policy.

Additional Consultant Recommendations

7.5 Consider criminal record convictions policy in personnel decisions through antiracism lens²⁰, seeking to reduce barriers to economic security for those with a criminal background record in light of significant evidence that the U.S. criminal justice system has unfairly targeted black and brown people for arrests, prosecutions and

¹⁹ See item 5.7

²⁰ Ban the Box and Beyond: Ensuring Individuals with a Criminal Record Have Access to the Labor Market (Center for American Progress). <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2017/07/27/436756/ban-box-beyond/>



sentencing. Further, to hold this understanding of current and historic dynamics while also maintaining a safe a secure physical space for program participants.

7.6 Identify which parts of the Personnel Policy are required by law, revise all other policies.

7.6a Remove duplicate language, especially regarding criminal activities.

7.6b Reframe overall tone from a place of positive expectations with less emphasis on rule-breaking and consequences.

7.7 Review LaTosch Consulting Hiring and Recruiting tip list and update relevant practices.²¹

7.8 Remove list of qualities and replace with expanded core values when developed.²²

8.0 Code of Ethics.

8.1 Revise Code of Ethics:



8.1a Ensure it is written in plain English.



8.1b Add sections on anti-discrimination (similar to personnel policy) and interpersonal relations expectations.



8.1c Remove duplications from personnel policy and reference it here in the code of ethics.



8.2 Post Code of Ethics on website.



8.3 Provide all contractors with the Code of Ethics; hold them to it.

8.4 Add information with anti-discrimination and interpersonal codes of conduct sections to the Code; reference the Code in both the Personnel Policy Manual and the Resident Handbook.

²¹ LaTosch Consulting Hiring and Recruiting Quick Tip list
https://drive.google.com/file/d/19zHQF9WwlrkkYoYryS0_nPna0qZrFue/view?usp=sharing

²² (Personnel Manual, Pg. 16, also see recommendation 6.5)



8.5 Reframe overall tone from a place of positive expectations with less emphasis on rule-breaking and consequences.

9.0 Resident Handbook.



9.1 Include more graphics/less text. *This relates to the accessibility of documents, adding graphics that are intuitive and making documents more readily understandable, increasing font size, reducing quantity of text – helps with visual learners.*



9.2 Include information about what makes a unit accessible and how many accessible units there are per building that are available.



9.3 Include timeframe by which a resident should expect to hear follow-up from staff after sharing a general complaint (Pg. 27).



9.4 Describe what is meant by criminal or suspicious activity in order to lessen the chance that the police may be called as a result of personal biases.



9.5 Compare Grievance and complaint language to Grievance policy in ACOP – ensure names of processes match and are consistent (Ex: general complaint, grievance, informal hearing, etc. - Pg. 27).



9.6 Increase request times to 30 days instead of 10 days (Pg. 28).

9.7 Consider installing an ATM in the lobby that allows people to pay their bills easily and electronically (utilities, rent, etc.) *Relates to accessibility and proactive support for people to pay their bills.*

Additional Consultant Recommendations

9.8 Consider offering restorative practice training to residents and offer residents options to solve their neighbor concerns: direct, restorative circle, mediation, staff intervention, etc.

9.9 Include a list of items in the handbook that are also included in the lease agreement (Pg. 2).

9.10 Specify how and when FHC will notify residents of changes in policies, handbook, lease, ACOP, etc. (Pg. 2).



- 9.11 Record and share recordings (with closed captioning) of Board and resident committee meetings; save in an accessible online library (Pg. 3).
- 9.12 Include information about what special protections are offered to all victims of domestic violence (Pg. 5).
- 9.13 Include more exhaustive list of what is included in “other debts” that might be owed to FHC (Pg. 8).
- 9.14 Include information about remedies / resources for families who cannot afford their rent in the section on payment extensions (Pg. 10).
- 9.15 Revise section on “if you see people who do not belong here.” Update to include information about notifying staff first and checking on whether or not someone belongs there before calling the police (Pg. 12).
- 9.16 Neutralize the language in physical altercations and make consistent with all other illegal activity (Pg. 15).
- 9.17 Include a map of on-street parking locations (Pg. 24).
- 9.18 Update description to inform residents that utility requirement is a HUD requirement and provide information on utility support and how much time they have in order to avoid the circumstance (Pg. 30).
- 9.19 Provide access to lobby kiosk to electronically file complaints, access policies and procedures, forms, etc.

10.0 Procurement Policy.

- 10.1 Establish criteria for selecting contractors/partners based on established core values.

11.0 Fair Housing Policy.

PRIORITY

- 11.1 Add transportation assistance and staff support in looking for housing and/or communicating with landlords (Admin, Pg. 2-8).

PRIORITY





11.2 Provide sign-language interpretation and/or closed captioning for public meetings.



11.3 Form ongoing partnership with the Ferndale Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Commission to assist and advise on physical space upgrades and changes.

11.4 Add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes from discrimination (Admin, pg. 5).



11.5 Check to ensure that all posted placards with important information is posted at wheelchair-reading height to ensure readability for all.



11.6 Replace all instances of the word “handicap or handicapped” to people with disabilities; replace “handicap parking” with “accessible parking”.

Additional Consultant Recommendation

11.7 Include location of access to “PIH 2010-26” document which summarizes information about pertinent laws and implementing regulations related to nondiscrimination and accessibility in federally-funded housing programs. (ACOP, Pg. 2-13).

12.0 Eligibility.



12.1 Reduce time requirement from five years to three years for financial-related convictions.



12.2 Add sexual orientation and gender identity/expression to groups protected from discrimination.



12.3 Remove ACOP/Admin plan inconsistency regarding 5 year / 1 year eviction history.

Additional Consultant Recommendations. *There are a series of policies where the Ferndale Housing Commission is more restrictive than federal law, particularly around criminal history which places those who need the services most, less likely to qualify to receive them and which, by extension, disproportionately impacts people of color.*

12.4 Reduce time requirement from five years to three years for “drug-related criminal activity.”



- 12.5 Remove “regardless of whether or not the activity took place on the premises of federally assisted housing” clause out of PHA policy on automatic denial of admission.
- 12.6 Remove the clause describing “drug-related criminal activity” under the PHA description from ACOP 3-IIIC “Other Permitted Reasons for Denial of Admission.”
- 12.7 Remove “Has a pattern of unsuitable past performance in meeting financial obligations, including rent, within the past five years” (ACOP, Pg. 3-22).
- 12.8 Remove “Has a pattern of eviction from housing or termination from residential programs within the past five years” (ACOP, Pg. 3-22).

13.0 Grievance Policy.



- 13.1 Issue annual report that details grievances and resolutions, including information about demographics (of both complainers and complainees) on race, gender and disability, to assess equity and fairness.**

Additional Consultant Recommendations

- 13.2 Provide second chance language for failure to appear for informal hearing, allowing for a reschedule. (ACOP, Pg. 14-4).
- 13.3 Invite Immigration advocacy group to review immigration section and provide additional recommendations (ACOP pg. 14-6).

Consultant Note on Safety.

Concerns about resident safety among public housing residents was a frequently raised concern – both in the surveys and in individual interviews. Top concerns related to safety included the security of the building and concerns about violence. On building safety, residents raised concerns regarding such things as fire/bomb threats, unwelcome behavior by strangers/ resident guests, and door safety (security of building entrances, apartment door locks, lack of peep holes, lack of screen doors on scatter site homes). Concerns over violence included a shooting incident, stabbing and threats to commit violence. There are a number of concrete suggestions from residents and the task force related to improving building safety. It is recommended that the Ferndale Housing Commission do a deeper exploration of resident suggestions for improved security.



Importantly, feelings of safety affect a person's psychological state. If someone feels threatened or fearful, they may have increased levels of anxiety. People living in low-income housing have often experienced a lifetime of discrimination, maltreatment and oppression. Furthermore, "when people are chronically treated differently, unfairly or badly, it can have effects ranging from low self-esteem to a higher risk for developing stress-related disorders such as anxiety and depression," according to Vickie Mays, UCLA Fielding School of Public Health professor in the department of health policy and management.²³ Feeling unsafe in current housing can trigger and compound old traumas and contribute to feelings of stress, anxiety, powerlessness and disengagement.

Applying a "trauma-informed care" approach to creating community within the apartment buildings within the Ferndale Housing Commission could help to address many of the issues contained in this report. Some examples of practices that are important to consider when working with people who have trauma histories²⁴:

- Acknowledge harm done and promote consciousness
- Ensure consistency
- Never overpromise
- Support meaningful community engagement and structures
- Reflective process
- Promote safety
- Honor history and celebrate culture
- Remove participation barriers
- Provide compensation
- Make community growth and accomplishments visible

Training staff in trauma-informed management and building in practices that continually reinforce safety and security could build and strengthen the apartment building community over time.

14.0 Trauma-Informed Practices

14.1 Provide training to staff on:

- Unconscious bias / bias-reduction strategies
- Experiences of systemic oppression, individual and compounded
- Trauma-informed engagement practices

²³ Uncertain & Unsafe: The Damaging Impact of Marginalization on Mental Health (Talk Space)
<https://www.talkspace.com/blog/marginalization-discrimination-impact-mental-health/>

²⁴ Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement (The Urban Institute)
https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/98296/trauma-informed_community_building_and_engagement.pdf



- 14.2 Use trauma-informed approaches to regularly engage and involve residents in multiple ways, including discussions and planning around safety, maintenance requests, and addressing concerns and complaints, to name a few.

