



HOUSING MOBILITY SERVICES PLAN

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Houston Housing Authority (HHA) Housing Mobility Services Plan

I. Program Description

The overarching goal for the HHA Housing Mobility Services program is to increase housing choices for Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) families with children and increase the number of HCV families with children living in high-opportunity neighborhoods. Specifically, mobility services will be made available to participating HHA HCV families or participants who have at least one child in the household age 17 or younger at the time of initial enrollment in the program.

Measurable objectives include: enrolling 1,000 eligible families with children into the Housing Mobility Services program (200/year), and at least 32% of households enrolled in the program will move into housing in a high-opportunity neighborhood over the 5-year project period.

A. Housing Mobility Services

HHA will provide the full range of required pre-move and post-move services to support voucher holders living in high-poverty areas to move to high-opportunity neighborhoods. Services will include:

1. **Pre-Move Services:** When a household is enrolled into the Housing Mobility Services program, the Case Manager will contact the household to schedule an initial meeting. During this initial meeting, the Case Manager will discuss the family's housing needs and wants, including any preferences (first-floor units, pets, single-family homes vs. apartments, etc.). The Case Manager will then work with the household to map their family systems, discuss their current social support system and identify and map locations of key supports (such as schools, extra-curricular activities, childcare, work, healthcare, and religious institutions). The Case Manager and the family will then determine which services are transferrable to the new location and discuss what additional resources the family may need in their new community (such as childcare, utilities, healthcare providers, etc.). The Case Manager will then discuss potential high-opportunity areas that may be a good fit for the family, given their specific needs and the locations of their non-transferrable family supports. Additionally, the case manager will provide a map of HHA's designated high-opportunity areas to the family and will discuss both the short-term and long-term benefits of moving to a high-opportunity area. The Case Manager will work collaboratively with the household to develop a Family Preparation Plan (FPP) outlining the family's housing goals and the steps necessary to achieve them and assist them with moving to a high-opportunity area. They will work with the household to calculate affordability for potential high-opportunity areas and discuss the household's share of rent based on rental costs and voucher payment standards for the high-opportunity areas being considered. The Case Manager will discuss any concerns the family has about moving to a new area (e.g. helping their children get situated in a new school, their commute to work). During this initial meeting, the Case Manager will also discuss any potential barriers to moving the family may face. With the family's approval, the Case Manager will run a soft credit pull and a background check and will review the results of these reports with the family. They will also review any recent evictions and/or utility arrears with the family and develop a strategy to address those challenges in the application cover letter to be submitted to landlords.

The Case Manager will refer families with low credit scores or who otherwise may benefit from financial literacy services to Credit Coalition (financial education on establishing/repairing credit), The Women’s Resource (finance classes and financial coaching), Covenant Community Capital (financial literacy education and IDA supports), There is No Box CDC (budget preparation, credit counseling, financial literacy education), and/or The Alliance (financial education and financial coaching). At the end of the initial meeting, the Case Manager will review the next steps with the household and provide them with a client binder with the materials reviewed during the meeting.

2. **Family Preparation:** Family preparation services will be focused on preparing families for the housing search process. Program participants will be required to participate in HHA’s STAR Program learning module, which will focus on preparing households for successful tenancies.

In addition, HHA will provide a series of workshops for families, including:

- Housing search (how to search for housing, how to use HHA’s address locator tool, how to use online housing search engines, and best practices for making a good first impression with property owners),
- Renter’s basics (how to read a lease, paying rent timely, the basics of owner-tenant law, how to turn on utilities, how to handle maintenance issues that arise, how to be a good renter, and the HHA inspection procedures), and
- Money management (intro to credit history and how it can impact rental applications, the costs of moving and furnishing a home, and the importance of paying rent and utilities timely).

The Case Manager will also refer households to outside entities for services to address other identified barriers as needed. As needed or desired by the family, the Case Manager will also help to coordinate tours of schools, meetings with school staff/educators in high-opportunity neighborhoods and coordinate tours or meetings with any other key services (such as after-school care) in the high-opportunity neighborhoods to help households get better acquainted with the high-opportunity neighborhoods. The Case Manager will also work with the household to draft an application cover letter that introduces them to potential landlords, highlights why they would make excellent tenants, and addresses any barriers that may come up during the application process (such as low credit score or prior evictions). During the Family Preparation Phase, the Case Manager will contact households periodically (via text, email, or phone) to check their progress and determine when the household is ready to move to the Housing Search phase.

Additionally, the Case Manager will identify and provider referrals to other available resources and programs that the family may qualify for such as the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, the Opportunity Neighborhoods Program, and other incentive programs designed to increase economic mobility and opportunity for participants. A family’s participation in these aforementioned programs is not required.

3. **Housing Search:** Once a household is ready for a housing search, they will work alongside their Case Manager to search for units in high-opportunity neighborhoods. The Case Manager, with support from HHA’s existing team of Landlord Liaisons, will continuously scour rental listings

within high-opportunity neighborhoods within the HHA's jurisdiction. When the Case Managers identify units within high-opportunity neighborhoods, they confirm unit affordability and reach out to the property owner to discuss the housing mobility program and encourage the owner to participate, providing an overview of the leasing process and work to address any concerns the owner may have. For owners interested in participating, the Case Managers will place the unit on a list of available units. The Case Managers will review and update this list weekly to ensure units remain available. When a household moves to the Housing Search phase, their Case Manager will review available listings to identify units that meet the family's wants/needs. The Case Manager will present these units to the family, and should the family be interested in one or more of the units, the Case Manager will accompany the family to view the units. The Case Manager will present households with units that meet their expressed needs/wants on an ongoing basis. HHA will develop and make available to participating households and property owners, an online tool that can be used to determine if a property is in a high-opportunity area and that shows what rents are considered to be affordable in each high-opportunity area by voucher size and unit size. Once a household has identified a unit they like, the Case Manager will support them in submitting an application (including the cover letter they drafted during the pre-move phase). Flexible financial assistance with application fees will be available during this stage.

The initial voucher search term is currently 120 days; however, Mobility Program participants will be eligible for an automatic 30-day extension beyond the initial voucher term. Additional extensions may be given as a reasonable accommodation or for other extenuating circumstances, as evaluated by HHA.

4. **Lease-Up:** Once a property owner has approved a household's application, the household moves to the lease-up phase. HHA will prioritize and expedite inspections for Housing Mobility households, and the Case Manager will assist the household with understanding their lease and coordinating their move.

HHA will provide financial assistance to program participants up to a maximum of \$1,775 under this Housing Mobility Program. Households may utilize other grants and/or resources beyond these amounts; however, the cap for Housing Mobility Program funds is \$1,775 per household. This may include a combination of (1) damage mitigation assistance (required); (2) security deposit assistance; and/or (2) flexible financial assistance; as described below:

- **Damage Mitigation Assistance:** \$300 (of the \$1,775 maximum assistance) will automatically be set aside for each participant household at the start of their program participation to be used for damage mitigation, in the event that there is tenant-caused damage to the unit. The \$300 will be held in a damage mitigation fund for the household for the duration of their tenancy in the unit. If the damage mitigation funds are not fully utilized upon move-out then the household may utilize any remaining funds towards their next move.
- **Security Deposit Assistance:** HHA will provide security deposit assistance for participating families that lease a rental unit in a high-opportunity area. The amount of the security deposit assistance may not exceed the actual security deposit required by the owner or the maximum security deposit allowed under applicable state and/or local law. HHA will

provide the security deposit directly to the owner or may provide it to the family as reimbursement once HHA verifies that it has been paid by the family. HHA may only provide one security deposit to a participating family and will not require repayment of the security deposit to HHA.

- **Flexible Financial Assistance:** Flexible financial assistance will be available to cover qualifying moving and transition-related expenses for families, up to a maximum of \$600 over the course of their participation in the program. This assistance may include:
 - Rental unit application fees,
 - Administrative fees,
 - Bus or train passes, and/or
 - Up to \$200 for moving expenses (movers, moving truck, or other short-term vehicle rental to assist in a move).

Funds may only be used for purposes related to searching for or renting units, including maintaining residency in high-opportunity areas.

5. **Post-Move Services:** Immediately following move-in, the Case Manager will work with the household to ensure they are properly oriented to the community. This may include helping enroll children in new schools, working with households to get oriented to neighborhood amenities (grocery stores, banks, pharmacies), helping get utilities transferred, etc. The Case Manager will then conduct check-ins with the household and property owner at 1-, 3-, 6-, and 9-months post-lease-up. During these check-ins, the Case Manager will help to address any challenges the household may face in their new neighborhood and will check in with the property owner to ensure they are pleased with their participation in the program (or provide mediation support to address any concerns they may have). HHA will maintain an “open-door” policy where households served can proactively request assistance and receive support from HHA staff to maintain their post-move housing. This may include landlord/tenant mediation or referrals to support services as needed.

HHA will also hold monthly events to encourage economic self-sufficiency (such as financial education, furthering education, training), being a good renter, staying in high-opportunity areas and other topics as needed. Families in the mobility program will continue to be referred to other HHA programs (such as FSS) as needed.

Additionally, if funding is available, Mobility Program participants may be eligible to access other landlord leasing incentives available under HHA’s Moving to Work (MTW) program or other initiatives. This may include damage mitigation assistance (not exceed the lesser of the cost of the repairs or two months of contract rent minus the participant’s security deposit, if applicable) and/or other leasing incentives.

6. **Other Services – Ongoing:**

- **Education and Training:** In addition to the services above, HHA will provide ongoing opportunities for Mobility Program participants to participate in educational workshops

and training on topics including but not limited to fair housing, tenant and landlord rights, and financial literacy. These ongoing training and educational opportunities will assist households in maintaining stable housing, promoting economic self-sufficiency, and understanding tenant rights.

- **Housing Retention:** HHA will pursue a variety of strategies to promote long-term housing stability, retention and eviction prevention. These activities may include, but are not limited to:
 - Periodic check-ins with participants and landlords and follow-up to resolve identified issues.
 - In the case of issues of non-payment of rent, encourage owners to enter into repayment agreements and/or leverage other owner incentives for owners, as an alternative to filing for eviction.
 - Identify and work with participants who are at risk of utility shut offs. Assist participants in applying for resources to assist with utilities (i.e., LIHEAP) and/or resolve utility non-payment issues.
 - Assist participants and landlords with damage claims and leverage existing landlord incentive programs (if funds are available) to resolve issues related to damage to the unit.
 - Provide resources and referrals related to housekeeping, mitigation of excess clutter, and other health and safety-related concerns.
- **Coordination with Local Partners:**
 - Coordinate with local partners and agencies to identify resources for which participants may qualify, and make referrals as needed.
 - Actively participate in local eviction prevention coalitions and other related homelessness prevention advocacy efforts.

B. Administrative Policies

HHA is committed to implementing administrative policies across its programs to increase access to high-opportunity areas. In addition to the services detailed above, HHA will implement the following policies:

- **Ensuring adequate payment standards in high-opportunity areas:** In 2021, HHA received HUD approval to implement SAFMRs (Small Area Fair Market Rent) citywide. In its 2024 Annual Plan and MTW Supplement, HHA was approved to establish payment standards between 80-150% of SAFMR to expand housing options in high-opportunity areas. These new payment standards are provided through a tiered system that provides higher payment standards for units in high-opportunity areas to promote moves to these areas. The payment standards are broken up by zip code, with the highest opportunity zip codes eligible for payment standards at up to 150% SAFMR, subject to available funding.

HHA will continue to ensure that adequate payment standards are utilized in opportunity areas in order to increase housing choice in those areas. In addition, HHA may establish a payment standard schedule that is specific to Mobility Program participants and other special purpose voucher programs in order to improve utilization and leasing outcomes for these programs. Payment standards for Mobility Program participants will be established within 80-150% SAFMR range and will be reevaluated on an annual basis. These amounts may differ from traditional HCV program payment standards.

- **Voucher search term:** HHA currently provides an initial voucher search term of 120 days for all voucher participants. Participants may request an extension for up to 30 additional days, and may be granted to Mobility Program participants automatically. Additional extensions beyond 150 days may be considered as a reasonable accommodation or for other extenuating circumstances, as evaluated by HHA.
- **Non-Resident Applicant Portability:** HHA will update its Administrative Plan to adopt a policy allowing non-resident applicants participating in the Housing Mobility Services program to exercise portability immediately, rather than requiring them to lease in HHA's jurisdiction for a 12-month period.

C. Recruitment and Enrollment

HHA will aim to enroll approximately 15-20 HCV families with children monthly. Each Case Manager will serve a caseload of approximately 40 households each year, allowing HHA to serve up to 200 households each year and up to 1,000 households over the 5-year grant period.

HHA will initially reach out to existing voucher holders and, if space in the program is available, will also reach out to eligible households coming off the HCV waiting list. For the initial phase of outreach HHA will mail invitations to existing voucher holders (including Tenant-Based and Project-Based voucher participants). HHA will then conduct a lottery to place 300 participants on the initial interest list for the program. After the initial phase of outreach and enrollment, HHA will target outreach to all HCV participants and applicants by providing information about the program during initial voucher holder workshops and at recertification and will place brochures describing the program in the HHA lobby and on the HHA website.

All HCV applicants and participant families with at least one child aged 17 or younger living in the household may apply for participation in the program and have the opportunity to be placed on the interest list. All applications on the waiting list will be ordered according to preference status and then by date and time of application.

At such time that the interest list is longer than available slots for the following year, HHA will stop actively recruiting families to participate until there is more availability for the program.

D. High-Opportunity Area Map

A high-opportunity area map and census tracts are included as [APPENDIX 1: HIGH-OPPORTUNITY AREA MAP](#).

E. Program Materials

HHA will use the documents provided in the HUD Housing Mobility Toolkit to develop program materials to be offered to participants. These will include a Mobility Program Flier and a Client Binder that consists of:

- A Family Preparation Plan (FPP),
- Housing Mobility Program Participant Expectations,
- High-Opportunity Area Map, Affordability Map,
- High-Opportunity Area Neighborhood Descriptions,
- Tips for Searching for Housing Online,
- Credit Report Summary,
- Application Cover Letter,
- Housing Search Workshop Booklet,
- Renter’s Workshop Booklet,
- Money Management Workshop Booklet, and
- Unit Tracker.

F. Partnerships and Referrals

HHA has existing referral partnerships with a wide array of organizations providing support services that will be made available to participants, including:

- The Harris Center (behavioral health services, healthcare services),
- Credit Coalition (financial literacy education),
- The Women’s Resource (financial literacy education, financial coaching, career coaching), Workforce Solutions (vocational rehabilitation services, employment search and placement services),
- Easter Seals (assistive technology, financial literacy education, services for Veterans and military families),
- Dress for Success (employment services, interview clothing),
- Covenant Community Capital (financial literacy and IDA services),
- There Is No Box CDC (financial literacy workshops),
- SER Jobs for Progress (employment services),
- The Alliance (adult education, career training, financial literacy education, mental health services, healthcare),

- Per Scholas (vocational training and employment placement services), and
- Wesley House Houston (early childhood education, food pantry, financial literacy education, GED education, employment services).

HHA refers participants to these providers based on the needs identified in their case plan. Case Managers will contact the referral partner to help schedule an initial appointment, provide the participant with bus tokens to get to the appointment, and follow-up with the participant after the appointment to ensure they were able to access services and that their needs were met.

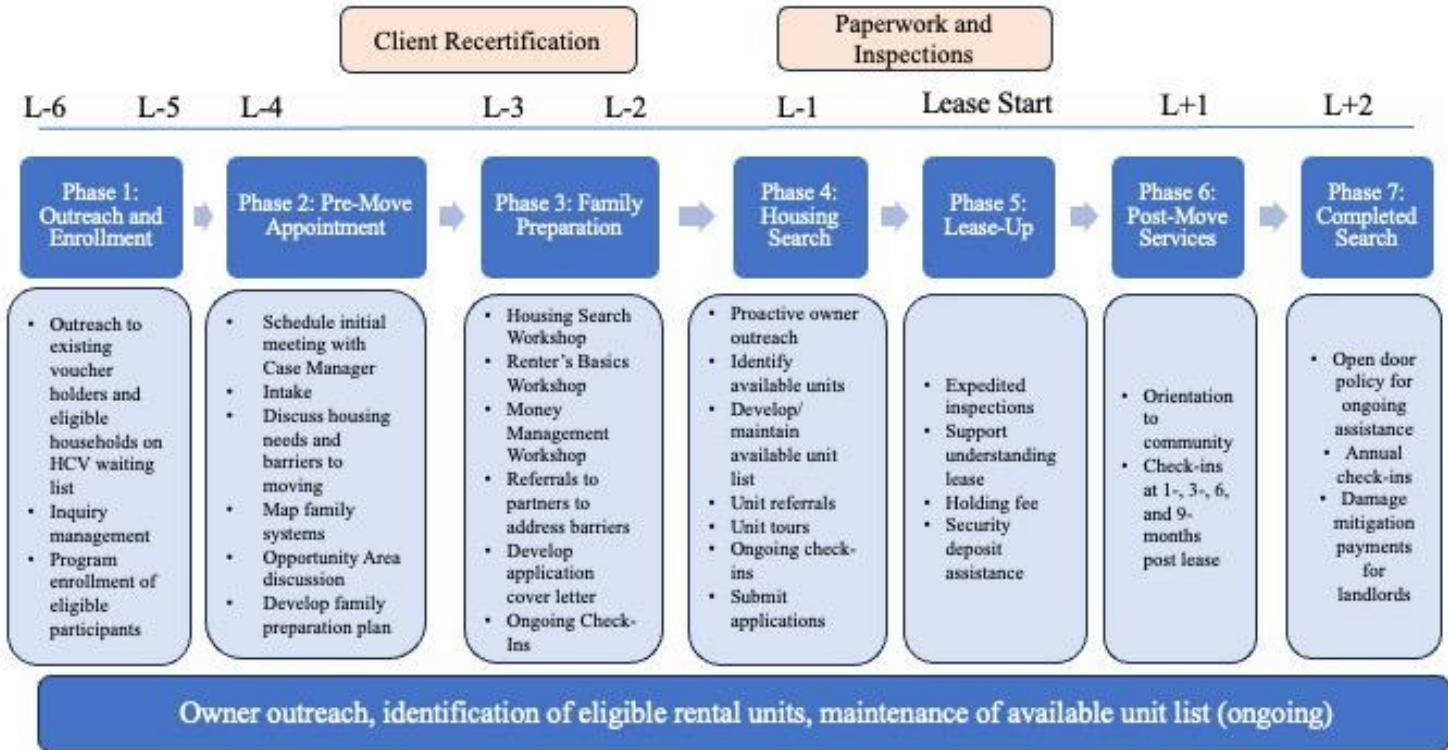
HHA will partner with local community stakeholders to enhance its mobility services and reduce barriers to housing mobility and financial self-sufficiency and to seek additional opportunities for program participants.

G. Service Delivery Model

HHA will implement several evidence-based practices in its program implementation, including:

- **Motivational Interviewing:** Case Managers will incorporate motivational interviewing into their approach to engaging with participants. Motivational Interviewing is an evidence-based practice incorporating active listening skills, encouraging creative conversations, and helping build rapport between staff and participants.
- **Trauma-Informed Care:** A Trauma Informed Care approach will be emphasized in staff training and incorporated into the delivery of services. Elements of our trauma-informed system of care include an environment that is physically and psychologically safe and meaningful participation by staff and voucher holders in the design and operation of the program. HHA involves participants in developing their own case plans and in providing input on the services to be accessed, ensuring participants are given a voice (something that is often taken away during traumatic experiences).

H. Process Map of Services



I. HCV Participant Engagement Plan

HHA will facilitate surveys of current HCV participants to gather their input on program structure, outreach methods, pre-move services, post-move services, and recommendations they have to improve the program design and most effectively support voucher holders in moving to high-opportunity neighborhoods.

Additionally, HHA will establish a committee of community stakeholders to provide continuous input and feedback on program objectives, policies, and outcomes.

J. Oversight and Monitoring

HHA will hire a Program Manager to provide direct supervision to the Case Managers. The Director of Economic Opportunities will provide an additional level of administrative oversight, ensuring the program is accomplishing its intended benchmarks and objectives. The VP of Fiscal and Business Operations will ensure all costs are allowable and reasonable and provide oversight of the accountant who oversees flexible financial assistance payments. The program management team will meet weekly to review progress and make changes as needed to ensure the program meets the needs of voucher holders and established benchmarks.

HHA will submit quarterly status updates to HUD, and other reporting as required and/or as requested. HHA will track the following information for each participating household:

- Head of household name and children's ages;

- Demographic data of family (race, national origin);
- Date of enrollment;
- Services received, including dates;
- Amount of flexible family financial assistance disbursed;
- Amount of landlord incentive funding disbursed on a family's behalf;
- Moved to high-opportunity area or not, including dates, and any subsequent move outcomes (if possible, also an explanation of why the family did not move);
- Family address before moving and family address after moving; and
- New admission or existing voucher holder.

K. Information Management

HHA will use an electronic file management system to gather/maintain data that will include all of the required data points and demographic information listed above. Client data will be entered following any client engagement. Files will be reviewed monthly to identify and correct any data entry gaps or errors.

II. Implementation Plan

A. Activities and Timelines

HHA's implementation for the housing mobility-related services program will begin with a six-month planning period. HHA will work collaboratively with HUD to finalize the housing mobility plan and complete all necessary planning activities. During the planning period, HHA will hire and train all new staff. Once HHA has received approval to begin implementation from HUD, HHA will begin outreach to current voucher holders. Voucher holders who elect to participate will be enrolled in the program, assigned to a Case Manager, and begin pre-move services. HHA anticipates that the first household will be enrolled into the program within 12 months of the grant award and that the first household will move into a high-opportunity area within 180 days following enrollment.

B. Hiring and Training Plan

HHA will hire and train new staff (Case Managers) during the planning period so the program is prepared to serve households when HHA is approved to begin implementation. Training to be provided to all direct services staff will include cultural competency, trauma-informed care, housing first approach, motivational interviewing, fair housing laws, and privacy and confidentiality.

III. Mobility Program Service Area

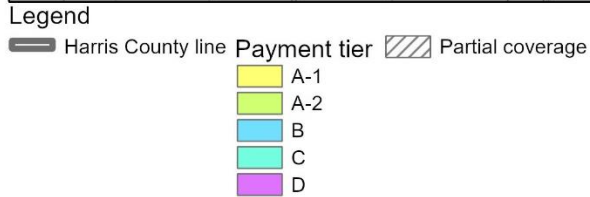
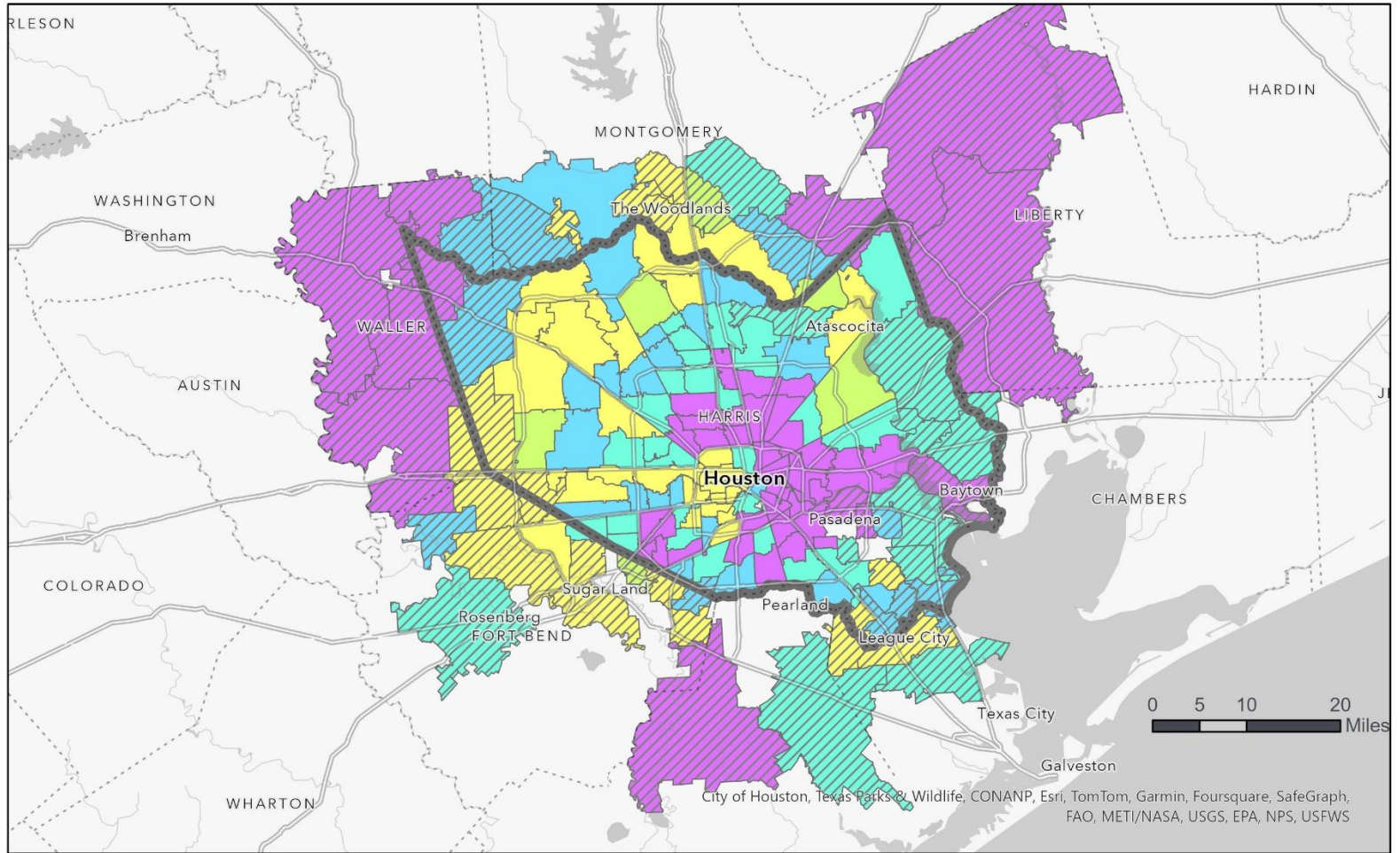
HHA service area has an adequate number of moderately priced rental units: The HHA service area has 335,289 moderately priced rental units in high-opportunity areas out of a total of 769,771 rental units. A map of the service area showing this data is included in [APPENDIX 1: HIGH-OPPORTUNITY AREA MAP](#).

IV. HHA Certification

HHA certifies that it will:

- 1) Offer all housing mobility-related services to all participants;
- 2) Not establish further criteria for participation beyond voucher families with children;
- 3) Provide a mechanism to do “soft” credit pulls;
- 4) Provide HUD with a final housing mobility plan no later than 9 months after the award date;
- 5) Provide quarterly status updates;
- 6) Submit reports, as required and authorized through an OMB approved form or other information collection, as applicable; and
- 7) Cooperate with HUD, or any contractors or grantees affiliated with HUD, in the evaluation of this program.

APPENDIX 1: HIGH-OPPORTUNITY AREA MAP



ETJ ZIP codes, by payment tier

Source: Houston Housing Authority