

The Public Housing Investment Update 2020

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Pandemic, Systemic Racism and Public Housing

The coronavirus pandemic has changed all our lives. This devastating tragedy has reminded us who true heroes are.

Housing needs created by the impacts of the pandemic pile onto the pre-existing condition that only [one of five low-income families](#) eligible for deeply subsidized housing programs (public housing and Section 8) and need assistance are served. The House of Representatives proposed \$100 billion in its May [2020 HEROES Act](#) for emergency rental assistance not to address this unacceptable situation, but to keep conditions from dramatically worsening.

Public housing authorities (PHAs) have struggled to maintain operations. They have stepped up in unprecedented ways to support their communities and keep both their employees and subsidized households safe, including many high-risk residents housed in close quarters. But PHAs have seen slowed progress toward preserving and upgrading housing as rehabilitation work substantially ceases in occupied units and the construction trade practices social distancing.

The racially charged murders and accompanying protests, as well as the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on minorities, have been stark reminders of long-standing fundamental racial injustice. The need for these annual articles in significant part has been the under-funding of public housing rehabilitation or replacement, which is directly related to the lack of political favor for Blacks and other minorities served (or perceived to be served) by the program.

Major Housing Assistance Boost Coming?

Our sorrows and shocks of 2020 and the national deficiencies exposed again should spur us to a greater level of commitment to basic housing assistance, among other needed actions.

The House of Representatives made such a commitment in the [Moving Forward Act](#) passed in July 2020, which includes \$70 billion in public housing Capital Funds and other important provisions. The [House 2021 HUD appropriations act](#) adds \$24 billion in Capital Funds as part of an emergency infrastructure package.

The housing assistance proposals of Democratic presidential nominee [Joe Biden](#) or included in the [Democratic platform](#) likewise are sweeping. Both propose that every family eligible for a Section 8 voucher be able to receive one. That proposal would cost at least an additional \$125 to \$150 billion annually when fully implemented. Mr. Biden's campaign website describes his proposals as a \$640 billion investment in America's housing.

Continue reading the article by clicking the link below.

***Author's Post-Election Note**

The change in administrations will bring fresh attention to addressing the affordable housing crisis—pandemic related and beyond. For public housing preservation efforts, most of the recommendations at the end of this article can be implemented administratively or with succinct legislation that builds upon previous experience and should have broad support. A combination of those measures, strategic appropriations commitments and careful leveraging of funds could build upon considerable progress and support much more extensive efforts.

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