

**COMBINED NOTICE OF FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND INTENT TO
REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS**

November 9, 2020

City of Houston
Housing and Community Development Department (HCDD)
2100 Travis, 9th Floor
Houston, TX 77002
(832) 394-6183/(832) 394-6018

This Notice shall satisfy the above-cited two separate but related procedural notification requirements.

REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

On or about **Wednesday, November 25, 2020** City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department will submit a request to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the release of the following funds:

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds authorized by Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-383, as amended), to undertake a project known as:

Project Title: Bethune Empowerment Center

Location: 2500 S. Victory, Houston, TX 77088

Purpose of project: The Bethune Empowerment Center is an adaptive reuse of the existing Bethune Academy, previously serving as an elementary school in the Aldine Independent School District (AISD). The proposed project, the Bethune Empowerment Center, will serve as a business incubator and vocational entity for the Acres Homes neighborhood. It will include workspaces of various sizes and configurations, from offices with capacity of 1-2 working individuals, to whole open conference areas, a Board Conference Room, Administrative Spaces, Food & Beverage Spaces, Collaborative Working Environments, Research & Education Meeting Space, and Support/Circulation spaces.

The site is an approximate 8-acre tract of land, which was formerly the site of the Bethune Academy, an elementary school in AISD. The site building was constructed in phases beginning in 1960. The City of Houston will enter into a long-term lease with the AISD for the site. The scope of the proposed building improvements includes interior demolition, roof replacement, interior finishes, mechanical replacement (AC's) and other system updates as needed for the initial phase of the project. The site will be used for several programs supporting economic development, workforce development training and a number of other community related services at the site. The remaining portion of the school will be improved in future development phases. The environmental review is designed to cover the entirety of the conversion process for Bethune Elementary to be converted into Bethune Empowerment Center and is not limited to Phase 1 of the process mentioned above.

The Housing and Community Development Department (HCDD) will provide approximately \$4,000,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for the renovation of a 29,200 square foot (SF) facility located at 2500 South Victory Dr, Houston, Texas.

The City and AISD will execute an Operations and Management Agreement to lease the facility to Houston Business Development, Inc. (HBDI) to manage renovations. Upon completion of renovations, HBDI will operate and manage the Bethune Empowerment Center in order to effectuate the goals of the community resource center and to provide economic opportunities. Services provided at the facility include 9,000 SF of business incubator/ co-workspace, 5,000 SF leased space to Lone Star College to create an economic development hub, 7,600 SF for performing arts and event space, and 7,600 SF in community commercial kitchen area.

The City of Houston has classified Bethune Empowerment Center as an Environmental Assessment (24 CFR 58.36, subpart E) subject to laws and authorities at 24 CFR 58.5, 24 CFR 58.6, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, and the additional EA Factors discussed by HUD. Please note that all of the activities described above must take place only after the Authority to Use Grant Funds (AUGF) is issued by HUD.

Grant No. & Amount: **B-19-MC-48-0018.....\$1,606,840.36**
 B-20-MC-48-0018.....\$2,393,159.64

Total \$4,000,000.00 of federal funding.

Sources	Amount
CoH HCDD (CDBG-entitlement)	\$4,000,000.00
In-Kind Donation HBDI	\$106,000.00
In-Kind Donation AISD	\$25,000.00
TOTAL	\$4,131,000.00

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The City of Houston has determined that the project will have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) is not required. Additional project information is contained in the Environmental Review Record (ERR) on file at the above address and is available for public examination or copying weekdays 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. The ERR can be accessed online at the following website <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/environmental-review/environmental-review-records/>.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any individual, group, or agency disagreeing with this determination or wishing to comment on the project may submit written comments to the City of Houston, Housing and Community Development Department, ATTN: Environmental Review Officer, 2100 Travis, 9th Floor, Houston, Texas 77002 or by email at hcdenvironmental@houstontx.gov. All comments received by the close of business on **Tuesday, November 24, 2020** will be considered by the City of Houston prior to authorizing submission of a request for release of funds. Commenters should specify which part of this Notice they are addressing.

RELEASE OF FUNDS

The City of Houston certifies to HUD that Tom McCasland, in his capacity as Director, consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. HUD’s approval of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and related laws and authorities, and allows the

City of Houston to use Program funds.

OBJECTIONS TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

HUD will consider objections to its release of funds and the City of Houston certification received by the close of business on **Thursday, December 10, 2020** or a period of fifteen days from its receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if they are on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer or other officer of the City of Houston approved by HUD; (b) the City of Houston, as Responsible Entity, has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 58; (c) the grant recipient or other participants in the project have committed funds or incurred costs not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by HUD; or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedures (24 CFR Part 58) and shall be addressed to: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1301 Fannin Street, Suite 2200, Houston, Texas 77002. Potential objectors should contact HUD to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

Tom McCasland, Director
City of Houston