

Message from Opportunity Dallas Founding Members:

It is with deep appreciation that Opportunity Dallas announces that Mike Koprowski will be resigning as its Executive Director to become the National Campaign Director of a new multi-sector housing campaign and relocating with his family to Washington D.C. to run this campaign.

Mike's opportunity to lead this national campaign is in large part due to his leadership and the success Opportunity Dallas has had over the last year. While Mike's passion and intelligence will be missed, he leaves Opportunity Dallas in good hands.

- *Miguel Solis will continue his work as the Chair of the Policy Task Force that released our City's first comprehensive housing policy proposal.*
- *Kelsey Beachner will continue as our Director of Operations responsible for all of the logistics and operations of the organization.*
- *Paula Blackmon will continue to consult on our government relationship work.*
- *Commit will continue to provide the data and mapping efforts of the organization in partnership with The Map.*

Now with policy recommendations publicly released, Opportunity Dallas enters a new phase of advocating for these policies to be adopted by the City Council and staff. This work has started, and we will continue to rely on each member of the Policy Task Force, our Leadership Table and all of our volunteers to help push these recommendations to adoption.

Please join us in wishing Mike great success in this new national role. Please see the statement from Mike below with further detail about this transition. His outstanding leadership has left Opportunity Dallas with a strong footing upon which we intend to build.

Friends and Colleagues:

I have accepted a position in Washington, D.C. to be the National Campaign Director of a new multi-sector housing campaign and will be departing Opportunity Dallas shortly. This position is a unique opportunity to pursue my passions at a nationwide level – to be a national coalition-builder and voice on housing, to work toward elevating this critical issue to the forefront of our nation’s policy agenda, and to help educate policymakers and the public about the magnitude of the affordable housing problem and the promise of potential solutions. It is an opportunity to build upon much of the work that I’ve been doing in Dallas and take it to broader scale.

This multi-sector housing campaign was launched by the National Low Income Housing Coalition together with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Children’s Health Watch, Make Room, and the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and with a steering committee of organizations including the Children’s Defense Fund, Community Catalyst, the Food Research & Action Center, NAACP, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the National Association of Community Health Centers, the National Education Association, and Unidos US. The campaign has received \$2.7 million over 3 years from the Funders for Housing and Opportunity, a new collaborative including The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the JPB Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Melville Charitable Trust, and Oak Foundation.

This broad coalition seeks to effectuate federal policies which address the affordable housing needs of low-income households across the country. Unaffordable homes drive poor people deeper into poverty, and there is a historically high number of low-income people who cannot afford the rent. Today, there are only 12 counties in America where a full-time worker on minimum wage can afford a one-bedroom rental. To compound the problem, federal housing assistance is chronically underfunded and currently faces unprecedented threats. Federal housing policies play a critical role in addressing the housing needs of the nation’s most vulnerable households. In many cases, the federal government plays a role that nothing else can. Proven solutions exist, but our nation is currently lacking the will.

Various sectors are recognizing that affordable housing is inextricably linked to their own priorities and concerns – education, health care, civil rights, anti-poverty, economic productivity, homeless prevention, veterans’ care, and many more. The work to expand affordable housing solutions cannot be done by housing advocates alone. Powerful new multi-sector constituencies are possible, and I am honored to work with such a talented team and to take on this great challenge.

It’s a very tough decision to leave Dallas, which welcomed my family with open arms and supported me throughout my efforts at Dallas ISD and Opportunity Dallas. We cherish the relationships we’ve built, and there is much we’ll miss about Dallas. My hope is that effective federal housing policies, which are a pivotal part of the solution, can both reinforce and accelerate local efforts in cities across the country, including Dallas.

I’m incredibly proud of the work that Opportunity Dallas has done. We spoke truth to power and raised awareness about the many ways that housing is connected to virtually every life outcome that matters. We weren’t afraid to say what has historically gone unsaid: that housing segregation is an economic and moral calamity for the entire city. And, alongside 32 diverse Dallas stakeholders, we have also recently published an unprecedented, comprehensive, and thoughtful package of specific housing policy recommendations that should be adopted by city government.

When first starting Opportunity Dallas, I felt Dallas needed a heavy push toward a coherent housing approach that promotes inclusive neighborhoods. Today, things appear to have improved, at least in my view. I hear these issues being discussed regularly in the local media, on discussion panels, at town hall meetings, in coffee shops, and, perhaps most importantly, at the City Council table. That is a very positive development. Dallas has more data than ever which expose its yawning disparities; more awareness that it must deal with housing if it is to fulfill its desire to become a more equitable city; and more consensus that economically and racially diverse communities

hold greater promise for the future of this city. And while a group like Opportunity Dallas can raise awareness and make recommendations, policy implementation rests squarely in the hands of city staff and elected councilmembers. I'm optimistic that they will strongly consider Opportunity Dallas' recommendations and usher in a robust, long overdue comprehensive housing policy.

The ideas behind Opportunity Dallas are much bigger than any single person. They are the product of many smart, hard-working volunteers over the course of the past year. For the first time, Dallas has a concrete policy vision for how to promote mixed-income and affordable housing at scale. Now that policy recommendations have been officially developed and released, Opportunity Dallas will naturally transition to a different role – that is, advocating for the policies it recommended and monitoring the outcomes if/when those policies are adopted by City Council. In this transitional period, Miguel Solis will continue to serve as Chair of the Policy Task Force, which consists of 32 Dallas stakeholders who are vested in this work. Kelsey Beachner, Director of Operations, will continue to handle the logistics and operations of the organization. Paula Blackmon will consult on external and governmental relations. And Commit will continue to provide data and mapping support to Opportunity Dallas in partnership with Robert Munding's *The Map*. Robert has been an integral data arm for Opportunity Dallas from its inception. As the transition proceeds, key members of the Opportunity Dallas Leadership Table will help formulate longer-range plans.

My time in Dallas has been an unforgettable experience. I hope that our work has helped make the city a better place. I'll be watching with great interest to see Dallas' continued progress in the months and years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Mike Koprowski