

May 3, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR: Principal Staff

FROM: George Latimer

SUBJECT: HUD's Presence on the Internet

Quite unexpectedly, I have stumbled across a wonderful opportunity to depict the "new HUD." The Internet offers a vast and growing audience of current and potential intermediaries, clients, practitioners, and consumers - all of whom need tools to accomplish their objectives, be they buying a home, organizing their communities, or providing housing assistance. If we shape our presence on the Internet properly, I believe that we can offer this audience a convenient, comprehensive, easily understood, tool kit of information; and at the same time, HUD could market a new and valuable product: information.

With Marilyn's blessing, Don Demitros, who heads up information technology for the Department and acts as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration, asked the Special Actions Office to serve as the facilitator for developing HUD's presence on the Internet. Candi Harrison, our office manager and a career employee, is an active Internet user and a good writer/editor; and she could coordinate the project. To put it plainly, that's why Don chose our office to facilitate this effort.

A number of you already are thinking about HUD's presence on the Internet. Dom Nessi has created an impressive information clearinghouse on native Americans, called "CodeTalk." Others of you are using the Internet in various ways to communicate basic information and to invite interactive dialog. What is lacking, however, is an over-riding construct or plan for what HUD's presence should be. Absent this framework, we risk cluttering our gopher and home page with volumes of information which may - or may not - be useful to our audience.

Special Actions' role in this effort is two-fold: 1) to invite the thinking of both employees and our customers to help us formulate a framework for our Internet presence; and 2) to serve as the funnel for information going onto the Internet, to ensure that it falls within the framework we've established. Our thinking is that this framework should be organized around our constituencies (e.g., first-time homebuyers, CDCs and non-profits, mayors and governors, lenders, housing authorities, etc.). But we welcome - indeed, require - your ideas.

We are organizing a small group who will develop the overall framework for our internet presence. I invite you to suggest members of your staff to join this effort, either to Candi or me. I believe this is an effort worthy of our time and energy. I welcome your suggestions.

