



Berkeley Housing Authority

1936 University Ave, Suite 150 Berkeley, CA 94704
Telephone: (510) 981-5470 Fax: (510) 981-5480

Tia M. Ingram, Executive Director

Owner Hap'Nings...April 2016

New Payment Standards

On February 11, 2016, the BHA Board of Commissioners adopted new Payment Standards that reflect market rents:

Studio	1-Bedroom	2-Bedrooms	3-Bedrooms	4-Bedrooms
\$1,449	\$1,746	\$2,208	\$3,078	\$3,431

Special thanks to Congresswoman Barbara Lee who was instrumental in HUD's decision to increase the Fair Market Rents by 35%! And, special thanks to you, our 800 participating landlords. We've told you over and over we could not operate the Housing Choice Voucher Program in Berkeley without you, and now the wait is over.

- **NEW CONTRACTS.** These new rates are effective for new contracts with an effective on or after February 12th, so send those vacant or soon-to-be vacant unit listings to us ASAP (see enclosed form).
- **EXISTING CONTRACTS.** For households that remain in the same rental unit, the higher payment standard will be applied at the next regular (annual) recertification on or after April 1st.

Supporting Positive Tenancies

Should an issue arise with your tenancy(ies) please let our Housing Specialists know by providing documentation of any notices (late or non-payment of rent, nuisance, or other lease violations). You can email (see staff contacts below), drop off at our office (1936 University Ave, Suite 150), or fax (510-981-5480). This will help us document and address patterns of non-compliance with the lease and S8 program rules.

Please also remember to contact us immediately if you are aware that any of the tenants are away from the unit for more than 30 days (hospitalization, vacation, etc) or if a guest turns into an "addition to the household" without prior approval by you and BHA.

Staffing Changes. I am pleased to announce the appointment of:

- ✓ **Tilda Barnes**, interim Housing Occupancy Manager. In addition to her duties associated with new contracts, Ms. Barnes now supervises the Leasing Services Division. Her contact information is tbarnes@ci.berkeley.ca.us or (510) 981-5484;

- ✓ **Omar Flores**, interim Housing Specialist. See case load assignment below; we have also changed case manager assignments. See the chart below for assignments effective May 1, 2016. Thank you in advance for your patience during the transition.

Housing Specialist	First Letter of Client Last Name	Phone	Email
Lynda DeShazier	A, B, C, L and O	510-981-5482	ldeshazier@ci.berkeley.ca.us
Tracy Jackson	E, F, G, H, I, J and	510-981-5486	tjackson@ci.berkeley.ca.us
Althea Maybon	R, S, T, W and X	510-981-5478	amaybon@ci.berkeley.ca.us
Omar Flores	D, K, M, P, Q, U, V, Y and Z. Also: New Contracts/ Portability	510-981-5489	oflores@ci.berkeley.ca.us

Owner Forum – Saturday, March 19, 2016

On Saturday, March 19th, approximately 50 owners joined us at the North Berkeley Senior Center for our first Owner Forum. Based on the feedback, a lot of useful information was exchanged, and there is great demand to repeat the forum at least twice each year. We heard you and will plan accordingly. Listed below is a summary of the key discussions; you can view a complete copy of the power-point presentation on the BHA website: www.cityofberkeley.info/bha. If you don't have internet access, you can request a hard copy by calling Celinda at (510) 981-5483.

- Assistance to help seniors (62+) maintain independent living. City of Berkeley Senior Services (981-5200, ltalley@ci.berkeley.ca.us) shared information about programs and services available, free of cost, to assist seniors maintain independent living.
- New Payment Standards. New Payment Standards are not applicable immediately for all contracts. The Payment Standard is effective immediately for **new** contracts (Feb 12th, 2016 this year), and for all **existing** households at the first contract anniversary (after the effective date, April 1 and beyond), when a Rent Increase is requested. To request a rent increase, at least 60 days prior to the contract anniversary, provide a copy of the 60 day Notice of Intent to Increase Rent to your tenant and the Housing Specialist (see below), along with Rent Comps and a Unit Characteristics Survey (found on our website at www.cityofberkeley.info/bha).
- New Incentives to participation. We are *exploring*:
 - a. Exemption from an increase in the gross receipts (business license) tax. Under the leadership of Mayor Tom Bates, we are exploring exempting units rented to families with S8 assistance from this tax.
 - b. Damage Claim program. We are developing a program to offset cost/losses experienced by owners at the conclusion of a S8 assisted tenancy (i.e.,

damage to unit; unpaid rent; eviction expenses; hold over of a live-in aid after their services are no longer required).

- c. Rental Housing Safety Program (RHSP). We incorrectly advised that units rented to families with S8 assistance are exempt from the \$26 per unit annual fee; we apologize for the error, and are working with Mayor Bates to see if we *can* exempt the tax increase for S8 units going forward.

Peer Counseling. The highlight of the day was the valuable information exchanged as owners asked questions, and staff and other owners in attendance provided feedback. Krista Gulbransen suggested owners consider joining Berkeley Property Owners Association (BPOA), and availing themselves of services and technical assistance offered to members. To learn more, visit: www.bpoa.org or call: 510-525-3666.

A. Important considerations for all leases

- a. Who is responsible for sewer charges? Just as you address natural gas, electricity and water, it is important to note in the lease, who will be responsible for sewer charges. If it is not addressed in the lease, the owner is responsible.
- b. Who is responsible for changing fluorescent bulbs? Unlike typical light fixtures, fluorescent bulbs can be expensive and difficult to install (they are typically in fixtures mounted above 6 feet). Unless clearly stated in the lease, the owner is responsible.
- c. Why won't the City remove what is clearly illegal dumping from a property? The issue is "private property." The City will not go onto private property to remove items. An owner (or tenant) can call 211 for assistance with removal/disposal of unwanted bulky items.
- d. What happens to the HAP contract (rental subsidy) when the only person left in the unit is not on the voucher?
BHA cannot pay any subsidy beyond the end of the month when the last assisted household member is no longer housed. It is important for owners to be aware of who is living in the unit at all times; and to create a paper trail of warning if you observe what appears to be additional, nonauthorized people living in the unit (copy to BHA Housing Specialist – see above). BHA recognizes the unique challenge associated with someone BHA allowed to reside in the unit as a Live-in Aide, but has no legal right to remain in the unit with the S8 assistance. We are exploring ways to support our landlords in this situation, including possible compensation under a future "damage claim" program.
- e. Who is responsible for the smoke carbon monoxide detectors after the first year? The primary concern is life safety. The family (and neighbors) are at great risk, as is the property, if the unit lacks a fire/smoke detector and carbon monoxide detection device. BHA's inspector always has a supply of batteries, and will wait while it is installed. The inspector is not authorized to perform the installation. One owner shared the importance of documenting when the battery or detectors have been removed or tampered with; such documentation can be invaluable in

the event of loss of life or property in a fire. Again, provide BHA a copy of all notices for our files.

f. Who is responsible for housekeeping?

The issue most often cited is excessive hoarding. Hoarding is a mental health issue, and one that can lead to unsanitary conditions for the resident and neighbors. BHA recognizes the situation is often beyond the control of the owner, and thus the rental subsidy is continued without interruption for as long as possible while we explore interventions.

B. Is smoking allowed in S8 units?

Smoking is prohibited in all multi-unit buildings (including common areas) in the City of Berkeley. Enforcement is managed by Public Health, after 3 complaints, a citation may be issued. BHA requires that all new leases include the prohibition against smoking in multi-unit buildings. For more information, visit http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Health_Human_Services/Public_Health/Smoke_Free_MUH.aspx.

C. When BHA approves an increase in contract rent, who pays the additional rent?

- a. BHA pays 100% of any increase provided the rent ceiling is not more than the Payment Standard (less) the allowance the family is eligible for tenant paid utilities (typically \$100-\$120).
- b. BHA and the family share the increase if the rent ceiling is Payment Standard with a deduction (less than the full utility allowance).
- c. **Over-housed.** If the family is renting a unit that has more bedrooms than authorized on the voucher (i.e. a 3 bedroom unit occupied by a family with a 2 bedroom voucher) the family will pay 100% of the increase above the 2-bedroom Payment Standard.

D. What information will BHA provide to a prospective landlord?

The Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) is used to advise BHA of the owner's serious intent to rent the unit to the family. Upon receipt of this document (signed by the owner and family), BHA will share any prior inspection reports, and contact information for prior landlords maintained in the tenant file (existing families), should the prospective landlord wish to view them. The family can sign a release allowing BHA to provide any additional information. However, no information will be released without a fully executed RTA.

Special thanks to our landlord partners; Jay Kelekian, Executive Director, Berkeley Rent Board; Krista Gulbransen, BPOA; Leah Tally, Aging Services; Kristen Lee, Health, Housing and Community Development; BHA Board Chair, Carole Norris; BHA Commissioner Adolph Moody; and BHA staff Jesy Yturralde, Finance Manager and Tilda Barnes, Interim Housing Occupancy Manager.