



Berkeley Housing Authority

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Office of the Executive Director

BHA Resident Meetings Minutes March 14 & 15, 2012



A very special thank you to the residents that braved the heavy rain and wind to attend the March 14th meeting, and to those that joined us the evening of March 15th. While the crowds were small – there was a good *exchange* of information! What follows is a summary of the questions/concerns raised during the sessions, and next steps. We have organized the questions/comments by five (5) major categories: (I) Rehabilitation of units; (II) Relocation of existing households; (III) Public Housing to Section 8; (IV) Tenant-based Section 8; and (V) Other.

I. REHABILITATION OF UNITS

1. A resident shared information about conditions inside the units that should be reviewed, including heaters and plumbing.

The selected developer, Related, is interested in learning from the residents and will send a written survey to all residents to solicit more information that is known best by those who reside in the units.

2. Why are so many inspections required if you are going to do a comprehensive rehabilitation of all units?

We apologize for the number of inspections, and promise to limit them as much as possible. However, inspecting the units is an important part of Related's effort to make sure we learn as much about the properties as possible, and to identify any unit that may have conditions that requires special attention.

3. Why is there such short notice of inspections, and why must we be available all day?

We can, and will do better. With some of the prior inspections we only gave residents a couple days notice. With future inspections, our goal will be to give you at least 4 days advance notice, and we will narrow the window from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., to a block of no more than 4 hours.

4. How much is planned to be spent on rehabilitating the units?

Related anticipates a cost of approximately \$100,000 per unit. This includes replacing all the appliances, all the cabinets and counters tops, new flooring and painting throughout, potentially replacing all the windows. Plans for the exterior include complete repainting and where necessary, new roofs.

5. Is it really possible to complete this level of rehabilitation in one week?

Related has worked with Portrait Homes, the primary contractor, on several very similar rehabilitation projects – where the units were occupied. Based on the anticipated scope of work, we are confident that the interior work can be completed in one week. We are very careful to learn as much about the units as possible before the construction plans are finalized; this is why your feedback on the forthcoming survey is very important to helping us make sure we know as much about the units as possible. Residents will not be required to vacate during the exterior rehabilitation – landscaping and painting.

6. Which units will be rehabilitated?

All of the units will receive the same comprehensive rehabilitation. We would like to have the contractor begin with the vacant units. Note –if there is a cluster of vacant buildings, and one or two occupied units, we may ask the families in the occupied units to relocate so that the cluster of units can be completed as a group before crews move to another location.

7. Will the contractors exercise care in the materials they use?

Related is committed to energy efficiency, and environmental sensitivity. All materials used in the rehabilitation project will be evaluated prior to use in the project. This is another reason to relocate families during rehabilitation, in order to mitigate any hazard as a result of the construction activity.

II. RELOCATION OF EXISTING HOUSEHOLDS

1. Is August 15, 2012 the absolute deadline for all residents to move?

Absolutely Not. In accordance with the Berkeley Rent Control ordinance, no household – regardless of how many people occupy the unit - can be required to move. However, the Section 8 voucher offers significant financial advantages to households that qualify for, and move to a 1 or 2 bedroom unit.

The August 15, 2012 date is a goal by which we would like to know who is staying, and who wishes to move.

- i. *We believe some families will want to move during the summer – when school age children are out for summer vacation, and vacancy rates are higher in Berkeley (with the University not in session); and*
- ii. *Having more vacant units allow us an opportunity to rehabilitate these units in phase I. It also means families that are staying may choose one of these units, and avoid a temporary and permanent move.*

2. Will residents be required to move out temporarily while rehabilitation work is performed?

Yes for two reasons: there will be a lot of noise, dust and debris, and periods when the kitchen and bathrooms will be out of service, and areas of the unit will not have permanent flooring. We do not want any resident to endure this type of interruption.

Residents will have options, and be allowed to choose what works best:

- i. *Accept a cash payment and stay with a friend or relative;*
- ii. *Transfer to a “hotel unit on site” – one of the vacant units that Related will rehabilitate and furnish, including cable TV service; or*
- iii. *Move to a pre-paid hotel room with a daily food allowance.*

In all the above scenarios, Related will provide movers to assist with packing, household items to be stored during the renovation period. Residents will be responsible for packing and moving all valuables.

III. PUBLIC HOUSING TO SECTION 8 RENTAL ASSISTANCE

1. What size unit will my family qualify for – if I stay or if I elect to move?

The “occupancy standards” will be the same for families opting to stay in one of the rehabilitated units, or moving to a unit in the community. There is one-bedroom for the head of household (and spouse if any); one additional bedroom is approved for every additional 2 people. Exception: a family will qualify for a 4th bedroom when there are 4 people in the household other than the head of household and spouse. The family gets to determine how bedrooms are assigned. Two important notes:

- i. *A family may request a “Reasonable Accommodation” – if a family member is disabled, and needs a separate bedroom, is in need of a 24-hour Live in Aide, or has a substantial amount of*

medical equipment meriting an extra room for storage. Note: all Reasonable Accommodations requests will be verified by a medical care provider and may require a site visit (in the case of excess medical equipment).

- iv. If you move to a private market unit (with a tenant based voucher), you can possibly rent a unit with more bedrooms than on your voucher – if the owner reduces the rent, or if you agree to pay 40% of adjusted income for rent.*

2. Will all of the units remain affordable rental units?

Our ultimate goal is to have all 75 units preserved as affordable rental units over the long term. However, we cannot guarantee that all 75 units will be occupied by a very-low income family at initial occupancy. Based on the most recently available data, one or more existing residents have incomes greater than 50% of Area Median Income (AMI) – and thus are not considered “low income” by HUD guidelines. Under the local Rent Control ordinance, these families have a right to remain in their unit, provided they pay the prevailing rent. Related and BHA are committed to making any such unit available to a very-low income family as soon as it is vacated.

3. Will current residents have an opportunity to buy their (one) unit?

No. The Board has consistently pledged to keep all 75 units available as affordable rental units. Current residents that qualify, can use their relocation benefits as a down payment towards the purchase of a private market home.

4. Exactly when will families stop being “Public Housing Residents” and become “Section 8 Program participants”?

The transition from Public Housing to Section 8 will take place in 3 steps:

- i. Families remain eligible for rental assistance via the Public Housing or RHCP rules until otherwise advised.*
- ii. When the units are transferred to the new Owner, families that **are** Section 8 eligible will sign a lease with Related – but continue paying the same rent. Families that **are not** Section 8 eligible (over-income) will sign a new lease with the new Owner – and begin paying market rent.*

iii. *When the rehabilitation work is complete BHA will sign a Section 8 contract with the new Owner (for the project based vouchers) and Related will offer residents a new lease that is consistent with the Section 8 Project Based rules.*

5. How long will the “project based voucher” be tied to the unit?

As a condition of transfer, BHA will require all units be maintained as affordable rental (for very low-income families) for at least 99 years. The owner will sign a contract with BHA for an initial 15 year period. We fully anticipate that the contract will be renewed for an additional 15 years after that.

6. Will “empty nesters” (households that qualify for 1 or 2 bedrooms) be allowed to remain in their units, if they pay market rent?

*All households – regardless of size – can elect to remain a resident of the property. A family qualified for a 1 or 2 bedroom unit may remain in a 3 or 4 bedroom unit by paying the full rent. NOTE-the family **will** be eligible for temporary relocation benefits, but **will forfeit** the right to receive Section 8 rental assistance.*

IV. SECTION 8 TENANT BASED VOUCHER PROGRAM

1. Are the units on the “Available Unit Listing” the only units in Berkeley that a family can live with a Section 8 Voucher?

No. We provide a free rental listing service to help landlords with vacant units connect with families with Section 8 vouchers. The report, updated every Thursday and posted on BHA’s website - is one tool that can be used when searching for a unit. Families can also identify other potential units by using on-line services such as Craig’s List, newspaper ads, word of mouth from friends – and a drive through neighborhoods of interest to identify rental units. We currently have over 900 participating landlords. For households who elect to move with a Section 8 voucher, the BHA relocation consultant will also assist in identifying potential homes that meet your criteria.

2. Why are there different rent and security deposit amounts on the “Available Unit Listing” report?

The amounts listed for requested rent, and requested security deposit are reflective of the market, and will vary from unit to unit. It is not unusual for the amounts to vary as they reflect what the owners are requesting for their particular units. Amounts may vary based on the size of the unit, the amenities offered, and the needs of the owner.

3. Can I move to another city? If I do, can I later change my mind and move back to Berkeley?

The great thing about the Section 8 Tenant Based Voucher program is the choice that it provides the assisted family. BHA normally requires that a family reside in Berkeley for the first year, unless the family lived (or worked) in Berkeley at the time they applied for assistance. However, since all Public Housing residents currently reside in Berkeley – you can exercise “portability” and move to another city immediately. We caution you to carefully consider your choice – as you will likely be required to sign a one-year lease.

After the initial year lease, you can request to move (a) within that same jurisdiction, or (b) to exercise portability to return to Berkeley, or (c) move to yet another city. However, if you elect to leave the project and subsequently decide to return, your ability to rent one of the rehabilitated 75 units is not guaranteed, and it is highly likely that all 75 units will be occupied.

V. OTHER

1. Why are we receiving annual recertification packets?

There are two purposes for the recertification packets:

- i. If it is time for your annual recertification (as a public housing resident), we will use the information to update your income, assets, expenses and rent and determine the level of Section 8 assistance you will receive.*
- ii. If it is not time for your annual recertification, the data will be used to determine the level of Section 8 assistance you will receive. Your rent will not be adjusted unless you qualify for a rent decrease.*

2. Will there be a tenant liaison?

We are seriously considering adding a liaison to our team. We see value in having someone whose expressed role is to make sure we hear you, and respond fully to your concerns. No one has been selected as yet, but we will keep you informed.

3. What will happen to BHA employees?

Following the transfer of the Public Housing units to private ownership, BHA will continue to operate a Section 8 Voucher program, providing

rental assistance to approximately 1,900 low- and very-low income households in the City of Berkeley.

4. Will BHA host a Saturday meeting?

We received inquiries from a few families whose work schedules prevented them from attending the March 14th mid-morning session or the March 15th early evening session. Please call 981-5483 or email bha@ci.berkeley.ca.us by March 31, 2012, if you would be interested in attending a Saturday session.

**If you have a question/concern that was not address above it is not too late.
PLEASE call 981-5483 or email bha@ci.berkeley.ca.us and
we will address your concern in a future update.**

