



BALTIMORE
HOUSING

SHEILA DIXON
Mayor

PAUL T. GRAZIANO
Executive Director, HABC
Commissioner, HCD

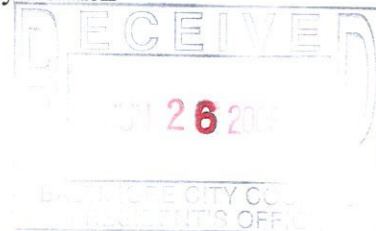
MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
c/o Karen Randle, Executive Secretary

From: Paul T. Graziano, Executive Director

Date: June 25, 2009

Re: **City Council Bill 09-0122R Informational Hearing - The Housing
Authority of Baltimore City**



The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) has reviewed City Council Bill 09-0122R, which was introduced for the purpose of requesting the Executive Director of HABC to report to the City Council on the physical condition, public safety, and availability of HABC housing in Baltimore City.

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City provides federally-funded public housing programs and related services for Baltimore's low-income residents. HABC is the fifth largest public housing authority in the country and, in its Public Housing program, serves over 20,000 residents in more than 10,500 housing units. HABC's inventory includes 28 family developments, 17 mixed population buildings, 2 senior buildings and scattered sites throughout the City. Additionally, HABC's Housing Choice Voucher Program (generally referred to as "Section 8") provides an additional 12,000 families with rental housing subsidies each year.

Our strategy under the Moving To Work (MTW) program has been to temporarily redirect HCVP rental dollars toward the renovation of long-term vacant public housing units and the retrofitting of units for persons with mobility impairment. This has allowed us to increase dramatically the number of households served in public housing and to then accelerate HCVP leasing starting in the fall of 2007.

At present, HABC has 10,578 units in service with 10,367 of these units currently occupied. This calculates to a 98% occupancy rate. An additional 381 units will be in service over the next 2- 3 years once renovations are completed. This includes 53 units in which work is already underway. Once completed, these renovated units will add to the approximately 1500 units that have been renovated since July 1, 2005. Another 616 apartments have been retrofitted for persons with mobility impairment since 2005 with an additional 20 units scheduled for retrofit in the coming months. Finally, a remaining 954 units have been classified as nonviable and have been scheduled for demolition or disposition.

Like any other landlord, HABC is required to maintain its property and complete repairs in a timely fashion. In order to serve our residents effectively, our work

Comments



order center must be contacted by a resident to report the problem and our staff must be afforded access to the unit. In addition to calls for service from our residents, HABC performs thousands of scheduled and staff initiated work orders each year. During Fiscal Year 2009, HABC has completed to date 136,420 repair work orders including 899 requests for emergency repairs such as no heat conditions. Emergency repairs are completed in less than 24 hours. The average response time for a non-emergency repair is 6.13 days which exceeds HUD's standard of 25 days on average.

In order to ensure quality control and measure customer satisfaction, HABC conducts telephone surveys with residents. Weekly, our staff contacts approximately 75 residents who received maintenance within the preceding two week period in order to survey the tenant's level of satisfaction with the work performed. Consistently, our residents report high percentage levels of satisfaction with the completion of repairs and the professionalism of our staff.

Beyond our current inventory, HABC is dedicated to creating new affordable housing opportunities for City residents at a wide range of incomes. In the last several years, we have completed five (5) HOPE VI projects and instituted a special mobility HCVP program to obtain these goals. Working in concert with both our residents and our sister agency, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), we are committed to developing new public housing units in mixed income communities on a number of redevelopment sites including:

- O'Donnell Heights
- Somerset Homes
- Fisher's Cove
- Westport Homes

There are specific legal and fiscal constraints that limit HABC's ability to create new housing on these and other sites. Primary among these limitations is the restrictions imposed by the Thompson Consent Decree. The decree, which was the result of litigation initiated by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), prohibits the use of public housing capital or state partnership rental housing funds for the construction of new public housing units on a site that is located in an impacted area. An impacted area is an area with a high percentage of minorities, poverty and assisted housing. Most of the City is considered impacted and therefore it creates great challenges when pursuing redevelopment. For example, the former Claremont Homes/Freedom Village site was redeveloped into a vibrant new community now called Orchard Ridge, but has fewer affordable housing units and has no public housing units as a result of the ACLU's refusal to authorize the use of public housing funds.

In addition to legal constraints, HABC also must contend with insufficient funding to meet our over \$800 million required to address the capital needs of our inventory. We receive approximately \$15 million a year to use for capital projects. Regardless, we remain devoted to preserving all viable public housing despite the capital shortfall.

Notwithstanding our challenges, HABC's goal is to replace lost public housing units through the production of new homes for existing public housing residents and others with incomes that would qualify for public housing. In our redevelopment efforts, HABC will strive to create vibrant, mixed-income neighborhoods that will benefit both local residents and the wider community.

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City is prepared to provide more detailed information at the hearing and has no objection to adoption of City Council Bill 09-0122R.

PTG:pmd

cc: Ms. Angela Gibson
Mr. Andrew Frank
Ms. Diane Hutchins