

UPDATE

Message from the Executive Director



2010 is a year of upgrades and improvements as the BHA is abuzz with construction. Throughout BHA's complexes and developments, work is underway – important

improvements that are increasing the energy efficiency, ADA compliancy and overall look and functionality of BHA's properties. Many of the improvements – such as window caulking, new boilers and heating systems – are funded by BHA's own massive Energy Initiative. Other significant upgrades are being achieved with ARRA Stimulus Funds - some from BHA's allocation and some won in a national competition – including new boilers, windows, roofs, parking lots, and stairs.

At the Gary Crooks Community Center, renovations will create a new computer lab, classroom space, lobby, and meeting space for residents. A new office for BHA's Stable Families program will provide dedicated space for social workers to help residents in crisis and at risk of eviction. In the renovations, the Center will also receive new HVAC and electrical systems, as well as a redesign of Resident Services office space. Accessibility improvements to the bathrooms, parking, doors, and the front entrance will bring the building into compliance with federal standards. The Community Center will remain open during construction, which is expected to be complete by this autumn.

Of course we have our challenges with the rate of poverty growth that puts a strain on

our Section 8 program but I'm pleased with our staff effort to find unique and creative approaches to meet the needs of our community. With BHA's new Stable Families program we're serving those in crisis and on verge of eviction. In addition we're utilizing Family Unification Funding to help families of those formerly incarcerated.

In the months to come we'll work on a community policing effort, a ribbon cutting at The Franklin and The Eleanor and the development of a new health care facility. Stay tuned as our authority continues to be a partner in Bridgeport development and resident services.

Nicholas A. Calace

COMMUNITY POLICING

If you're old enough to remember the cop on the beat who knew you by name you then understand the basic concept of a joint effort between the Authority and the Bridgeport Police Department. The program will bring the Police Department, the Authority and residents closer together. The tried and true system of having police who are sensitive to the community walk the beat at housing complexes to serve the community is now in development. The BHA will invest 50-thousand dollars for the effort and is in discussion with Police Chief Joseph Gaudett to work out the particulars. The program will go beyond the beat and include road trips where police take youngsters to sporting events and outings. Also police, residents and the Authority will regularly meet to discuss safety issues.



BHA ENERGY INITIATIVE

They look like an army of rectangular cubed soldiers standing at attention ready to infiltrate Bridgeport public housing units. They're lined up outside of buildings waiting for the command. Fact is they are brand new energy efficient General Electric and Frigidaire refrigerators prepared to attack energy waste while saving taxpayer dollars. In all 2,459 new refrigerators are being installed until May. They're being installed in six Bridgeport Housing Authority Complex' and in scattered site units.

BHA Executive Director, Nicholas Calace said, "The new refrigerators will be a quality of life improvement for the residents while reducing energy consumption and saving money on electric bills". The BHA's Energy Initiative is the largest single investment ever in Connecticut public housing energy efficiency and has brought jobs to Bridgeport while improving resident quality of life by making 2,500 apartments more energy efficient. The 22-Million Dollar Energy Initiative is decreasing the city's carbon footprint while injecting funds into the local economy.

The Energy Initiatives in the plan were also supported by a million dollars in weatherization sponsored by United Illuminating. The program improved resident quality of life with: the new refrigerators, windows, cooling systems, fluorescent bulbs, weatherization (window caulking, door seals, and insulation), water saving devices (showerheads, aerators, low flow toilets), boilers, security lights with motion sensors, and an internet based energy management system. It is expected that all improvements involving new equipment will be accomplished by June where in the past it may have taken decades to complete these kinds of improvements.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS

In contract talks when you walk away from the table and no one is completely happy that's probably a good thing. That's what happened recently as we were able to sign collective bargaining agreements with all four of our unions and the components of those agreements have been initiated. While bittersweet for all we gave fair raises and they gave us concessions that help us maximize our funding. The agreements allow us to pull in the same direction as we continue to serve our residential base with quality customer service.

Section 8 on the Web

People looking for more information on the Section 8 program now have an accessible web page to get what they're looking for. The new Section 8 web page on the BHA website has landlord registration forms which are downloadable. The new Section 8 page on the Bridgeport Housing Authority website has been revamped to be more



interactive and a place to find various Section 8 applicable forms. The Section 8 page can be navigated through bridgeporthousing.org.

In general the growth in the poverty rate and increased rental costs have made things more challenging but we continue to hold our own. Iris Santiago, Director of Housing Choice Vouchers says current Section 8 activities include the creation of project based vouchers. Those vouchers will help the Authority provide units to fulfill consent decrees which require the availability of apartments to make up for the ones removed when Father Panik Village and Pequonnock Apartments were demolished.

Currently 100 project based units scattered throughout the city, many with supportive services for homeless and the disabled, are in the pipeline or already constructed. Another 185 units are in process. Requests for proposals have been submitted for the new sites.

ACCESSIBILITY

BHA is boosting its accessibility for residents with disabilities with its current renovations to apartments, community centers, parking, entrances and more.

Nearly complete BHA's new senior/supportive housing facility (The Eleanor and The Franklin), located at the former Park City Hospital, includes 24 fully accessible 1-bedroom units. The accessible units in The Eleanor and The Franklin are in the lease-up process. Additionally, BHA is renovating three accessible units in Marlboro Court and two in Presidential Village.

BHA has also begun renovations to the Gary Crooks Memorial Center, including accessibility improvements to bathrooms, parking, doors, and the front entrance. Equal Opportunity Compliance Officer Blanca Carrasquillo says the BHA is even making the internet more accessible by providing updated applications for apartments. In addition the BHA is working with case workers to make certain homeless individuals receive mailed information at the addresses of agencies that serve them.

Development

Bids have gone out for our project on Albion Street which is a combination Health Center facility and 35 units residential property. We expect to break ground on that project in June. We're also producing an application for what HUD calls Choice Neighborhoods, formerly known as Future Hope 6, which helps authorities redevelop antiquated complexes. If approved we could consider redevelopment of Marina Village as a less dense more mixed development project.

By the time you read this newsletter The Franklin and the Eleanor's administration office will be open for business and ready to accept visitors, probably folks wanting to sign up to become residents of the new facilities. The 33-million dollar redevelopment project at the former Park City Hospital site will produce 110 affordable housing units in two different and completely separate facilities in the single building; an apartment complex for low income and disabled households known as "The Franklin" and a second complex the tower known as "The Eleanor" for senior citizens.

Leasing, in fact, has already begun and people are expected to start moving in by July. The tenant selection process is complicated due to all of the different requirements for the distinct groups such as the elderly, the homeless and the Authority's own replacement unit program. The Authority went the extra mile to make certain existing BHA residents would have fair access to all the waiting lists.

BHA focus on Customer Service

In an attempt to become more interactive and responsive to residents the BHA has begun a pair of initiatives that should help in that effort: A new work order tracking system and a new initiative to bring maintenance, management and residents to the table. We aim to bring management, maintenance personnel, and residents closer through better response times, regular roundtable discussions with Resident Affairs Boards, and regular tours by our site managers and staff through the complexes to get to know residents and their issues better. In fact, Wardell Moore, BHA Director of Asset Management says he's developed a monthly schedule for his site managers and foreman to walk the complexes with residents to regularly discuss issues. Those managers meet with Wardell monthly as well as with Resident Affairs Boards

Also, in response to resident concerns about work order status, BHA has implemented a new work order tracking system. Whenever a resident places a work order - day, night or weekend - the resident receives a tracking number. This tracking number confirms the work order submission and allows our residents to follow up on its status. Foreman will be responsible for quality control on those orders and Wardell and site managers will oversee the new work order program.

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