

NHA-RUTGERS' PUBLIC HOUSING SUMMIT PROVE TO BE A WINNER

Our Public Housing Summit hosted with Rutgers-Newark on June 12 was very successful.

Seasoned scholars from the university and housing executives from Washington, Delaware, Philadelphia and various parts of New Jersey came together to engage in important conversations about an array of issues and research on public housing.

Sen. Robert Menendez was our keynote speaker. Menendez, who chairs the Senate Sub-Committee on Housing, Transportation and Community Development, spoke optimistically about the future of public housing policies. The senator said he plans on calling a committee hearing to discuss the Section Eight Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA), a proposal to reform both the Section 8 and public housing

programs.

The housing panels included historical and cross-national comparisons of affordable housing; town and gown relationships; public housing redevelopment and resident relocation; future of public housing policy and successes and failures of mixed-income housing.

NHA Executive Director Keith Kinard said the summit "served as an effective conduit to exchange information between the academic community and housing professionals. I thought it would be interesting for people who actually do the research on public housing to come together with people who work directly in the field of public housing." Kinard was also a panelist on the town and gown relationships portion of the summit.

Steven J. Diner, chancellor of Rutgers-Newark campus, said the conference is exactly the type of affair an urban university likes to be involved in and is appropriate to do. "Nothing excites our faculty more than knowing their expertise can be put to use in the city of Newark." Diner said.

The summit was the first of its kind hosted by NHA and Rutgers-Newark.

Left, top row - Rutgers professors dt oglivie and Kyle Farmbry; Keith Kinard and Carl Greene, executive director of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, Sen. Menendez. Bottom row: Steve Diner, attendees.



NHA RATINGS GROW FOR PHYSICAL CONDITIONS UNDER FEDERAL PHAS

A recent report showed the quality and maintenance of our public housing conditions have dramatically improved over the past year.

In the report performed by independent contractors for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, NHA saw its score go up for physical conditions under the federal Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) from a 15 out of a possible 30 last year to 24 out of 30 this year. That's an improvement of 63 percent.

Executive Director Keith Kinard said, "the boost in the housing authority's physical condition score reflects NHA's focus on improving the condition of the properties.

"The overall PHAS score goes beyond physical conditions to also measure housing authorities' performance in three other key areas: financial condition, management operations and resident satisfaction and service," Kinard said.

When considering all four areas, NHA's score showed an 8 percent increase from last year, rising from 74 to 80 percent.

Not very long ago, these scores would have been unthinkable in Newark. In 2005, the agency's overall performance rating was an abysmal zero and the agency was labeled as "troubled" by HUD.

Since Kinard took the agency's helm three years ago, the housing authority PHAS scores have significantly and steadily increased.

NEW PUBLIC HOUSING TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT DRAWS CHEERS

Raven Williams received a first-time satisfaction using a private entrance leading to his new one-bedroom rental town home. "I love it," Williams said. "I love everything. I don't have to be worried about people in the hallway."

Williams, 61, resides in Park Place, our newly built 100 percent public housing townhouse development located at 534 South 12th Street. A grand opening ceremony with an open house tour was held on June 16 and featured Mayor Cory A. Booker, Chairman Modia Butler and other Newark dignitaries.

The development features 45 one, two-and three-bedroom rentals and boasts gracious living space, granite-look countertops, frost-free refrigerators, central air conditioning and washer and dryer hook-ups. Centrally monitored and fiber-optic linked security cameras are also featured. "I feel like I am really blessed," Williams said. "Feels like my own home."

Featured also are a 3,600 square foot state-of-the-art conference center, three tot lots and a sculpture garden. Jerry Gant, a local artist, designed the sculpture featured in the garden. Claremont Construction Group built the development and Comito & Associates, a local architectural firm, designed it.

Rooftop solar panels will be installed in August, reducing energy cost by up to about 35 percent for every home.

NHA Executive Director Keith Kinard said, "Park Place is high-quality construction and intelligent design. We strive to weave attractive affordable housing developments into existing neighborhoods. Park Place is more than just a roof over the heads of our residents. It offers an environment that is children-and family-friendly." Mayor Booker called Park Place a reflection of "a Newark that is to come."

Top row: Our beautiful row townhouse, Jerry Gant and Newark dignitaries in sculpture garden. Bottom row: town houses, Raven Williams.



COMINGS AND GOINGS

The Newark Housing Authority welcomes Marvin L. Walton as our new chief financial officer.

Walton joins us from the Housing Authority of the County of Cook, the second largest affordable housing provider in Illinois, where he served as chief of staff. Prior, he worked at the Chicago Housing Authority as the director of the Office and Budget and Management and as chief information officer. Walton brings more than 13 years of public housing and public entity management experience to NHA.

A native of Garysburg, a rural part of North Car-



Marvin L. Walton

olina, Walton earned an undergraduate degree and Master of Science in agricultural economics from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, N.C.

Walton said some of his goals in his new position are maintaining adequate cash balances to address the needs of the agency and developing a highly-skilled and professional workforce.

Welcome Marvin, to our team of Believers!

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark (BGCN) has a longstanding history with the young people of NHA's public housing communities. So when the organization needed a new home for its administrative offices, it was only fitting for the club to lease vacant space at NHA's head-

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COMINGS AND GOINGS - Continued

quarters. On June 15, BGCN relocated its offices to the 4th floor at 500 Broad St.

"The space is great," said Felix A. Rouse, chief executive officer of BGCN. "All of our staff are very pleased and the NHA has been great to work with in getting the space to meet our needs."

BGCN, who boasts about 4,000 members, has club locations at 422 Broadway and 1 Avon Avenue. This year during the summer months, for the first time, those sites will remain open for two extra hours from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. for teens ages 14 to 18,



Rouse said. Serving dinner for the youth is also something new that will take place this summer at those sites.

"It's all about the children," said Rouse, a life-

Left: Felix A. Rouse and Salma Choudhury-Muro, chief operating officer at BGCN.

long Newark resident raised in the city's South Ward. He, too, was a member of the club when he was a youngster. Rouse said it was because of his involvement in the Boys & Girls Clubs he was able to receive a scholarship to finish high school at a prep school in Connecticut. Thereafter, he went on to obtain an undergraduate degree and a Master of Business Administration from Ivy League schools University of Pennsylvania and Cornell University. Rouse held a vast array of positions at the club and took the helm as chief executive officer in 2005.

BGCN offers a wide range of positive activities, from after school tutoring to learning important life skills and leading a healthy lifestyle. Anyone between the ages of 6 to 18 living in Newark or neighboring communities can join the club for \$15 per year. The club locations are open year-round. For more information about the Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark call (973) 242-1200, or log on to www.bgcn.org.



Our mission is to invest in our families by building and maintaining affordable housing to encourage economic independence and healthy communities.

We will achieve this mission through our Agency Goals.

- **B**uild, maintain, and renovate housing communities to the highest standards.
- **E**xpand affordable housing options for families utilizing a high quality Housing Choice Voucher Program
- **L**ink with our employees, our residents, and community partners to support our mission.
- **I**mprove **E**fficiency, program compliance and accountability in everything we do.
- **I**nvest in innovative crime prevention and quality of life strategies.
- **E**xpect results!

Building Believers

NHA DEVELOPMENTS

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For the past three years, the Newark Housing Authority has made tremendous strides in an effort to advance the quality of life for city residents by building, renovating and maintaining high-quality, affordable housing. For example, in the past couple of weeks, we have opened Park Place, a brand new, beautiful 45-unit public housing development, celebrated the extreme makeover of an outdoor space for the residents of James C. White Manor, which rivals any private market building. In the coming weeks, we are also looking forward to opening Oak Brook Square, another spectacular public housing development with 43 units, and breaking ground on Montgomery Towers, an all-new 80-unit mixed-income development being built on vacant land.

As we move further into the year 2009 and continue to deal with tough economic times, the NHA recognizes that homelessness is a real issue and we have been working diligently to be a part of the solution. To this end, we have recently awarded 200 project-based vouchers to several developers to build units, many of which will prevent homelessness. We are also looking into ways to make homeless families successful through targeted supportive services. Additionally, our own future development plans include units for homeless individuals and families integrated into our new developments, as well as, talking independently with religious institutions about faith-based housing. Over the next five years, we will see over 100 units dedicated to solving this problem that are either NHA properties or supported with our vouchers.

In spite of all this, a local group is concerned about our future redevelopment plans. Recently that group called for a demolition moratorium by HUD for severely distressed Baxter Terrace and the rest of Newark, because, the group



believes, those apartment units should be preserved. This is a misguided and misinformed viewpoint. Why would I say that? Because the NHA is planning to provide more housing options and opportunities to low-income families than what was being used prior to demolition. I am not aware of anyone who has actually been to Baxter Terrace and seen the reports of what it would cost to "fix it" who say, "let's keep it." More importantly, the high density of extremely low-income families, high level of crime, and general poor quality of life further validate the decision to demolish and redevelop. We cannot permit outside interest groups to condemn our residents to live in subpar housing to further their own personal or political aims.

Even though we are still struggling with finances due to the lasting impact of deep federal cuts from the Bush years, our objective is to ensure that the NHA helps to move this city forward. As such, we have been aggressively applying for grants to help build even more housing. The housing that we will continue to build will be both high quality and less dense while promoting economic independence and healthy communities.

Keith Kinard



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