

# Synopsis of CHA Interviews with Stakeholders Regarding Affordable Housing Initiatives and Public Meetings

On May 29th and 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Tim Person, Michele Duffe, and Phil Steinhaus conducted the first round of interviews for the CHA Strategic planning process. We met with a wide range of individuals representing a very diverse group of stakeholders including residents, employees, community and social service organizations and others, a list of the individuals participating in the interviews is attached. The following is a synopsis of those interviews (broken out by group). Another set of interviews occurred on July 10th and 12<sup>th</sup>. The interviews on July 10th were with City Council Persons, Fred Schmidt and Barbara Hoppe; Jim Loveless and Brian Shannon from Job Point; Raymond Warren and his wife Cletie, who own two lots in the target area and are long-term neighborhood leaders; and Tyree Byndom, President of the Douglass Park Neighborhood Association. The interviews on July 12th, there were with eight residents (about 70 had been personally invited by Phil Steinhaus with a signed invitation) all who had been CHA Public Housing residents for five years or more. The residents that came to express their views were: Anna Estevez, Mark Turner, Stephanie Scott, Leslie Scott, Jo Ann Mitchell, and Wajid Nagama.

## **PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS**

The individuals that attended these meetings were generally well informed and had a good grasp of the issues related to the housing authority. Part of this was due to the fact that the first of the two groups were employee/residents of the CHA and a number of them had intimate historical knowledge because they also grew up living in the authority's properties. As a whole, the residents we met with had good insights into the physical (internal and external) needs of the properties; operational and security issues; and what they generally felt would improve operations and resident management. They offered suggestions that were insightful regarding the physical condition of the properties and how that impacts quality of living issues. Some of the suggestions include adding a half bath to 2 and 3 bedroom units, adding storage, improving HVAC circulation, and defining their outdoor space from the public area. One Resident suggested doorbells; visitors now break the screens while knocking on the door

The other group of residents we met with were members of the Downtown Residents Association or had a long history with agency as long term residents. Many of the issues they raised mimicked the remarks of employee/residents group. The single women we met with did not want to leave because they felt safe and liked the location, emphasizing the buses and amenities are not far away.

There were also suggestions that CHA increase the number of units for handicapped and elderly residents in low-rise buildings. This suggestion came from residents in the Oak Towers. They said the Oak Tower apartments are too small with no closets/storage in unit, the AC is not evenly distributed, the residents that have pets allow them to relieve themselves in hallways, and it takes a long time to get from a unit to the outside - something difficult for elderly. They want to be closer to the outside and the high rise apartments do not have balconies.

## **Issues raised by residents:**

- Oak Towers: the AC not evenly distributed, want purely elderly complex, many elderly would prefer not living in high rise,
- Trinity at one time was the worst street, much better now that there is better screening and evictions due to bad behavior,
- The one bedrooms have bathroom that you have to walk through bedroom to get to bath,
- Closets have no doors, everything exposed, no place to put barbecue grill or bike,
- Bear Creek: 3-bedroom units have no windows in Kitchen
- Lincoln & Unity townhomes needs to be demolished and allow relocated residents to come back,

- Communication - deliver flyers door-to-door and put on public access channel
- Half bath on first floor of townhomes
- Add storage closet to building
- Resident meetings are not working- a few people disrupt
- House older residents separate from young families
- Children unattended - need special attention to keep them straight
- Providence Walkway: the AC does not get to 2nd floor; the townhomes HVAC and water heaters are exposed.
- Would like security during the day.
- Add doorbells so screens do not get broken,
- Need exhaust fans in kitchen so smoke alarms do not go off when one cooks and exhaust fans in bathrooms to prevent mold and mildew.
- Douglass Park's evening activity is creating crime problems in the closest complexes; the city needs to disperse crowd in an orderly manner - not so now.
- Need a food store closer- within walking distance or city needs to add bus routes that are more frequent.

The President of the Downtown Resident's Association, Michael Pryor participated in two meetings, one of which was a gathering of interested Columbia residents that were not exclusively focused on resident matters.

Most of the residents expressed their concern that they would not be able to come back because the qualifications or rents would exclude them. The "rumor mill" believes that the properties will be torn down and the land sold to private developers who will build for students and a higher income resident - in other words the students and white buyers are coming because of the location. This rumor is being fed by outside organizations and individuals.

**SUGGESTION:** Create a project Resident Advisory Group as the part of the development process. Mr. Steinhaus should select interested members and ask the Resident Association to have a representative.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANZATIONS/INDIVIDUALS**

Over the four day interview period, we met with a diverse group of individuals representing a number of communities and interests. The largest meeting had over 16 individuals. Not all attendees were necessarily a formal representative of a given organization. This was a very eclectic group. Although a number of the attendees seemed to have a level of skepticism or distrust in the proposed process, overall they had a sincere interest in the welfare of the community, maintaining a diverse population (economic, residential and racially) and the retention of affordable housing in the project area. The primary concerns they expressed: CHA's commitment to retaining their existing housing stock, the aggressive, encroachment into the area of upscale and student housing developments, and the rising cost of property and how to maintain the area's affordable housing. The other concern they had was for the residents living in CHA apartments; they want assurances that the residents will not be displaced because the resident requirements are stricter. We talked about the Uniform Relocation Acquisition and Relocation Act and how the residents are protected. The discussions went very well and most attendees engaged in open, honest dialogue. However, two attendees were somewhat adversarial; Michael Pryor, Downtown Resident Association President, and Mary Hussmann, a Community Organizer for Grass Roots Organizing (GRO). Both had concerns related to the process.

A meeting with Tyree Byndom, President of the Douglass Park Neighborhood, included topics about how to best communicate with neighborhood residents and what are the neighborhood priorities: beautification, safety, and youth and elderly advocacy. The Douglass Park Neighborhood Association has a website created

and maintained by Mr. Byndom. He suggested CHA create a website for this project and keep it updated as we move through the process. The Douglass Park Neighborhood Association has 140 members of which 20 are active; the membership is about 60% black and 40% white; the organization meets monthly and is trying to create block units.

Rev. Raymond Warren and his wife, Cletie, met with us to discuss neighborhood concerns and the acquisition of their two lots at 117 Lynn and 115 Lynn as part of a site assemblage for a future CHA project. Rev. Warren talked about how the Urban Renewal era and the time since have not been beneficial to the black community. Blacks are promised opportunities but they never occur. He would like to see more homeownership by blacks in the neighborhood that is truly affordable. He also believes that new development will reflect positively on existing properties.

Anthony Stanton, Minority Contractors Network, lives on LaSalle Place near the CHA Administration Building. He would like to be part of the planning process, would like to see more home-ownership and have MBE/WBE firms included in the construction.

**SUGGESTION:** Continue dialoguing with this group as a whole with regularly scheduled meetings, keep them engaged. Set up a website for the project and keep it updated. Provide residents with information on the relocation requirements, the milestones in the planning process as they occur.

### **COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

We met with several community based organizations that represent diverse interests and approaches to resolving issues in the Douglass Park Neighborhood and the Columbia community. All were committed to addressing issues impacting the community. The issue of finding solutions to crime and youth programming were two consistent themes. All agreed that the Douglass Park Neighborhood has an overstated reputation for being dangerous and the incidents in Douglass Park tainted the reputation unfairly of the neighborhood. Additional police presence may be responsible for the reduction of crime. Many believe that many of the crimes are committed by persons living outside of the community.

The other issue, which constantly surfaced with the African-American community, is the scars from the Urban Renewal era when property owners, renters and businesses were displaced from the neighborhood. There is a real concern that CHA will repeat the displacement as they renovate and/or demolish their existing housing and add new affordable product into the neighborhood. That wound is deep into the older residents but unknown to Mr. Byndom, Douglass Park Neighborhood Association President. He shared his concern that the neighborhood not become too much different that it is now only the new and renovated housing contribute to the overall quality of the neighborhood.

The Minority Men's Network is an organization of 70 men but they said about 15 are really active. Each contributes \$200 donation per year and the funds go toward education of area youth. They thought the Urban Renewal effort was inevitable because of the condition of the Douglass Park neighborhood and the Sharp End commercial district, small dilapidated homes, outhouses, open sewers etc. but it had a disruptive effect on the black community living there. Also not all the homes demolished were in bad condition. Ms. Annie Fisher, the owner of Beaten Biscuits, had a nice home that was torn down as a part of Urban Renewal. The businesses that were integral to neighborhood were demolished and not rebuilt. People still remember those days and are suspicious that the planning process will result in less affordable housing in Douglass Park neighborhood. They suggested the first project not involve demolition but be new homes, like the McBaine homes.

Every group mentioned the history of urban renewal and how people were removed from their homes. They associated the term "blight" with eminent domain and the loss of control by residents.

The First Ward Ambassadors was started 8 years ago; it has 20 members but 8-10 are active. They work with "at risk" youth. Douglass Park has a bad reputation to outside community but it is not deserved. The Ambassadors want to bring families back to Douglass Park with activities, like Moonlight Hoops paid for by businesses and city. They think it will take real explanations for people to be okay with "blighting" and they are concerned with "bait and switch" or the residents will be moved during construction and the new residency requirements will keep them out.

Mary Ratliff, the statewide President of the NAACP, raised concerns about removing of persons/families from the central core area, the impact of that dilution of the African-American community and the loss of access to public transportation and services. She also wanted our planning process to include consideration for persons with special needs.

Rev. Art Dyer, the Pastor of Grace Covenant Church, moved into the neighborhood 8 years ago, he lives near Oak Towers. Since he moved into the neighborhood other new homeowners have also purchase homes. He helped for the Grace Covenant Community Development Corporation that built the Intersection Community Center 9 years ago. They purchased land and were going to develop a commercial/residential project with a first floor grocery store with a few other spaces for retail tenants and residential tenants above. The neighborhood did not approve of the density and had concerns about delivery trucks etc. Project died and the church owes \$150,000 to a private individual who lent the funds.

Rev. Clyde Ruffin, Pastor of Second Missionary Baptist Church, oldest African-American congregation in Columbia at 4th and Broadway, has a ministry in Paquin Tower. He said that CHA's work with children has been wonderful and will have long-term benefits. Police have also been building relationships residents. In Columbia, crime is associated with Douglass Park Neighborhood even though it is not deserved; need to change perception.

Job Point is a 45 year old, not-for-profit employment center and community development organization. Job Point sponsors the Columbia Builds Youth program that provides employment training for the youth, 18-24 years old, in youth building job skills and helps them earn their GED. Jim Loveless is the Executive Director and Brian Shannon directs the Columbia Builds Youth Program. Their students build homes that are sold at discounted prices with the help of a HOME subsidy. Their main focus is the training of their students and would like to participate in CHA construction, both rehab and new construction. They do not need to build new For Sale homes but can substitute CHA projects that help rebuild the neighborhood; what they do want is their students getting real hands-on construction experience.

The Enterprise Development Corporation's Executive Director is Michael Crist; we met with him twice, first at an initial interview at CHA and the next time at City Hall with some of his board members, Steve Erdle, President of Boone County National Bank; Theresa Maledy, President of Commerce Bank; and Andrew Beverly, President of Landmark Bank. The Columbia Community Development Corporation (CCDC) is a component of Enterprise Development Corporation whose focus has been neighborhood revitalization through the construction of new affordable homes for homeownerships; they have built 30 homes, greatly improving streets In Douglass Park Neighborhood, like Oak Street. The CCDC would like to change their focus from building one or two for-sale homes at a time to being part of a project that has greater impact, which maybe the CHA's plan to do infill rent-to-own homes in Douglass Park Neighborhood and expand the affordable housing for individuals with special needs. The EDC board members requested information about what is needed to help move those agenda items forward. The discussion at the meeting focused on acquisition of development sites but more information is needed for the CCDC to determine their role. At that meeting, Michele Duffe related how a St. Louis not-for-profit development company, Regional Housing Community Development Agency, assists in the predevelopment process for not-for-profit housing entities. They receive contributions from area lenders and they have a line of credit from State Farm to lend

to projects which are repaid through project closings. State Farm lends the money at 1% and Regional Housing Community Development Agency lends it at 4% and is responsible for its repayment. Paperwork is minimal. State Farm receives Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) credit and the program with Regional Housing Community Development Agency has benefited many affordable housing projects in the St. Louis Region.

**SUGGESTION:** It seemed that a number of these groups were already dialoguing with CHA on a regular basis but now the roles need to be identified and committed. As CHA prepares its strategic plan, the potential partners need to be involved so they can decide what and how to contribute.

### **ELECTED/GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS (former and current)**

Included in this grouping were persons that either currently or once held formal positions with the City of Columbia. We met with a former elected official, Almeta Crayton, and a former Columbia Parks and Recreation director and Wynna Faye Elbert. We also met with three of the six City Council Persons: Fred Schmidt, Barbara Hoppe, and Michael Trapp.

Wynna Faye Elbert is also a former CHA resident, suggested a greater outreach to communities, improved sensitivity by the security and police in the area, and more youth programming by Parks and Recreation. She would like Parks and Recreation to reach out to the residents and their families through leaflets not just emails. She feels the Douglass Park neighborhood residents do not frequent the Douglass Park, because they don't know what's going on and "others" are taking over the park.

She also brought up Urban Renewal and concerns that our planning process will create suspicion by residents. Neighborhood had fruit trees before Urban Renewal. When RAIN moved into the neighborhood, no one was consulted. If there is new housing will the "outsiders" move in. Block units once existed but when Parks Department moved out of J.W. "Blind" Boone Community Center they lost connection with the community; there became a disconnect between CHA and Parks and Recreation creating a feeling of "us" and "them".

Almeta Crayton, a former Councilwoman who has lived in the neighborhood since 1990, suggested more programming for youth and jobs to help with reducing crime. She is also an officer in the Douglass Park Neighborhood Association. She was very positive about new homes being built in the neighborhood and adding more mixed-income residents. The McBaine homes improved the streetscape and gave the area an idea of what new investments could look like.

Fred Schmidt and Barbara Hoppe met with us at the same time. They were in agreement that the McBaine Townhomes added to the streetscape and represented a reinvestment in the neighborhood and were sympathetic to the streetscape. Mr. Schmidt stated there is a rich fabric of neighborhood families who have lived in area for generations and know one another really well. He suggested move slow and re-evaluate; build and see incrementally. Ms. Hoppe and Mr. Schmidt suggested leaving the more historic homes alone and only homes in poor condition be demolished for a project. They recommended we keep the City Council informed through email reports. They were both supportive of CHA expanding the affordable housing but wanted to make sure it fits in with the neighborhood streetscape and does not displace residents.

They also talked about the bus system that is owned and operated by the City. They believe the system needs to find sources of income to make the routes and times meet the needs of the population that needs the bus system.

**SUGGESTION:** Cultural sensitivity training should be a CHA/City of Columbia priority. Security/police should

also develop strategic relationships with community based organizations to foster trust throughout the Columbia community.

The dispersal of youth after Douglass Park closes at 11:00 P.M. needs to be more orderly and controlled so that crime incidents do not spill over into the CHA properties.

All design for infill housing should be sympathetic to the existing streetscape. Go slow until community is on board.

## **SECURITY**

Wynna Faye Elbert relayed that the Columbia Police Department had officers dedicated to working in the CHA properties in the 1970's and 80's but were disbanded about 2000 due to budget cuts. Crime grew until the current administration when residents would be evicted if a member of the household was involved in criminal activity.

Mark Brotemarkle is CHA's Director of Security and a full-time police officer in Columbia. His plan is to retire in a year from the Columbia Police Department and work full-time for CHA. Mark felt that better property management with little tolerance for criminal activity generated by residents has greatly reduced the crime problem within the CHA properties. He places security's interaction with the residents as a major priority. He would like to see more diversity training for his department. CHA staff had organized youth activities that have helped reduce crime. The CHA properties have 100 cameras, 16 in each of the high rises, and intend to add more.

Most of Columbia's crime is related to illegal drugs which have also led to increased gun violence. Drugs come down the I-44 corridor from Dallas and Columbia distributes them to mid-Missouri. The Columbia police have put 17 gang members in prison for drug activity. Douglass Park is an area where youth congregate, but they are not mostly CHA residents. The negative activity in the park reflects badly on Douglass Park Neighborhood; the Columbia press reinforces the neighborhood's bad reputation which is not deserved.

## **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

Grass Roots Organization (GRO) organized a public meeting on July 25th to discuss the disposition of the CHA apartment complexes. The CHA was represented by Phil Steinhaus; Tim Person and Michele Duffe, as consultants, participated in the meeting. Tim Person had prepared a PowerPoint presentation regarding the current condition of the Lincoln-Unity buildings, GRO would not allow the presentation to be shown. Attendees were able to pick up brochures showing the physical defects in the buildings and a paper describing the requirements of the Uniform Acquisition and Relocation Act.

The meeting opened with CHA residents asking questions; their focus was obtaining a commitment that they would not be displaced. The non-CHA individuals were concerned that the buyers of the tax credits would control the complexes, not CHA. The meeting ended amicably with a commitment that Mr. Steinhaus would attend regular public meeting to discuss project developments as they occur.

## **OTHERS**

Mr. Steinhaus is an incredible resource. He has good relationships with almost all of the organizations and persons that participated in the interviews. His commitment to employing and empowering residents is a reflection of his dedication. That energy will be a great tool in the development process. He needs to form strategic relationships with the residents that keep him advised of critical issues related to the CHA.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE - FOCUS GROUP & INTERVIEWS - MAY 29-30, 2012**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>GROUP</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>GROUP</b>
<b>Neighborhood Association Meeting</b>		<b>One-On-One and Small Group Interviews</b>	
Lorenzo Lawson	Youth Empowerment Zone	Robert Ross	Minority Men's Network
Nina Wilson- Keenan	North Central Columbia Neighborhood Association	Sehon Williams	Minority Men's Network
Pat Kelly	Ridgeway NA	Wynna Faye Elbert	Community Activist, former Parks & Recreation Neighborhood Svcs.
Dan Cullimore	North Central Columbia Neighborhood Association	Tracy Edwards	First Ward Ambassadors
Pat Fowler	North Central Columbia Neighborhood Association	Rufus Broadus	First Ward Ambassadors
Meg Hegemann	Wilkes Blvd UMC (Methodist)	Scottie Williams	First Ward Ambassadors
Adam Saunders	Columbia Center for Urban Ag	Darrel Foster	First Ward Ambassadors
Justin Thomas	Douglass Park Neighborhood Association	Almeta Crayton	Former First Ward City Council Person
Michael Pryor	Downtown Public Housing Resident Association	Art Dyer	Pastor of Covenant Church (The Intersection CDC)
Jan Henmann	New Horizons Community Support Services	Anthony Stanton	Minority Contractor's Network
Shannon Stewart	Wilkes Boulevard United Methodist Church	Pastor Clyde Ruffin	Pastor of Second Missionary Baptist Church
David Webber	University of Missouri	Jack Clark	Community Housing Options (CHO)
Verna Laboy	Worley St. Park Neighborhood Association	Homer Page	Community Housing Options (CHO)
Tracy Greever-Rice	North Central Columbia Neighborhood Association	Roy Dudark	Community Housing Options (CHO)
Mary Hussmann	GRO (Grass Roots Organizing)	Mary Ratliff	Local and State President of the NAACP
John Buthod	GRO (Grass Roots Organizing)	Wilma Blair	Downtown Public Housing Resident
Linda Rootes	North Central Columbia Neighborhood Association	Stephanie Hursey	Downtown Public Housing Resident
Timm Hudspeth	Community Voice Newspaper	Katie Reynolds	Section 8 Participant
<b>Grass Roots Organizing (GRO) Meeting</b>		Tracy Greever-Rice	Neighborhood Activist, Interim Director of OSEDA
Brenda Proctor	GRO Board President	Michael Trapp	Second Ward City Council Person
Virginia Bzdek	GRO Board Member		
Mary Hussmann	GRO Organizer		
Michael Pryor	GRO Member		
Curtis Edwards	GRO Member		
<b>CHA EMPLOYEES</b>		<b>CHA EMPLOYEES</b>	
Mark Brotemarkle	CHA Director of Safety and Columbia Police Officer	Mary Flemming	CHA Assistant to the Public Housing Manager *
Ida Hatton	CHA Assistant Public Housing Manager/Safety Department ASA *	Jewel Kelly	CHA Section 8 Specialist **
Katie Howard	CHA Intake Coordinator *	Melissa Riechers	CHA Assistant Public Housing Manager *
ElTonya Rhoades	CHA Executive Assistant **	Beverly Thompson	CHA Computer Lab Monitor *
Dionne Richardson	CHA Public Housing Manager *	John Stapleton	CHA Maintenance *
Crystal Skinner	CHA Receptionist *	R.V. Pride	CHA Food Pantry Coordinator *

\* Current Public Housing Resident \*\* Former Public Housing Resident