



Meeting Date: 02/07/06

ACTION	TYPE OF ITEM
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved Recommendation	<input type="checkbox"/> Info/Consent
<input type="checkbox"/> Ord. No(s). _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
<input type="checkbox"/> Res. No(s). _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing (Info/consent)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Prepared By: Arturo Casillas, Housing Programs Manager - Agenda Item No. N-1

Reviewed By: City Manager [Signature] Holmberg City Attorney [Signature] Finance [Signature] Other (Specify) _____

DATE: January 31, 2006
TO: Housing Authority Commission
FROM: S.D. Gonzalez, Housing Director
Housing Department
SUBJECT: Length of Stay in Public Housing

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Housing Authority Commission support the recommended economic self-sufficiency measures that encourage the transition of tenants from public housing.

DISCUSSION

On March 22, 2005, staff presented a report on the length of stay in public housing. The Board of Commissioners (Board) expressed concerns on tenants' length of stay and a desire to have more tenants transition out of public housing. The Board directed staff to review proactive and creative self-sufficiency measures as a means of transitioning tenants out of public housing and to return to the Board with specific recommendations.

The Housing Authority is governed by rules of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which currently do not require the Housing Authority to limit the length of stay in public housing. Some housing authorities, as noted in the March 2005 report, have been permitted to experiment with time limits in public housing.

As requested by the Board, staff is proposing self-sufficiency measures, rather than time limits, as the strategy for assisting residents to transition out of public housing.

The demographics of the local public housing tenant population show that thirty-three percent (33%) of public housing families have been in housing less than five (5) years. Many of the tenants who have been in public housing for longer periods of time are either elderly (23%) or disabled (7% of the households). Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the non-disabled/non-elderly tenant population have been in public housing in Oxnard over five years. Many public housing

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tenants have shown themselves to be hard working, resourceful, and enterprising. As previously reported, the majority of public housing tenants in Oxnard are employed and only 11% receive welfare assistance, a decrease from 30% ten years ago. Approximately 89% of the non-senior/non-disabled families have employment income.

Support services that prepare tenants to compete successfully for the affordable housing opportunities in the City are vital to aid tenants' transition out of public housing. Some of these key services include credit counseling, job skills training and placement, financial planning, down payment assistance, and homeownership counseling. Ongoing programs, such as the Housing Department's Affordable Housing Office counseling and down payment assistance programs, the Family Investment Center, the Housing Authority's Resident Initiatives Program, and counseling and referral assistance from public housing staff, have provided these services. On average 13 tenants per year have been able to purchase homes during the last six years, for a total of 78 families.

To assist resident self-sufficiency efforts during the last year, staff has aggressively sought out and successfully applied for \$465,000 in HUD grants, including a grant for a Public Housing Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Coordinator. This achievement has taken place despite a natural trend of reduced funding for supportive services. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the funds represent new resources available to the Housing Authority compared to ROSS funds received last year. As part of this effort, staff presented to the Board a resolution amending the Section 8 FSS Plan to extend its provisions to the public housing program. The amendment has also been approved by HUD. All of these programs, ongoing, new, and proposed, are essential for enabling tenants to attain economic self-sufficiency and to assist even more tenants to transition from public housing. As such, staff recommends that the Board approve the self-sufficiency program measures discussed herein.

Recommended Economic Self Sufficiency Measures:

ROSS-Resident Service Delivery Models-Family grant program. The Resident Service Delivery Models-Family Program provides \$250,000 in continuation funding for three years for staffing and resources for a teen parent program at Oxnard College, stipends for youth in media apprenticeships, tutoring centers, childcare for training programs, a childcare licensing program, computer repair instruction, on-site youth services, and new self sufficiency training, job placement, and supportive services. Staff recommends continued participation in this program.

ROSS-Neighborhood Networks grant program. Through the Neighborhood Networks Program, \$150,000 is available to renovate and expand existing community computer centers at Colonia and Pleasant Valley Village and expand services to the Palm Vista senior building. A focus of the three year program will be job skills development, including computer assisted GED training and English language development, and job search skills. Staff recommends continued participation in the grant program.

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ROSS-Public Housing Family Self Sufficiency Program. Staff has successfully applied for \$65,000 for a new Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program for public housing residents. Families will receive intensive case management by staff to connect them with local job training, placement, and supportive services. Escrow accounts will be set up for residents to accumulate funds for down payment on a home or to use for other family self sufficiency goals. The program will target forty families at a time. Part of the strategy being reviewed is the possibility of linking up tenants with opportunities for homeownership that will be made available through "the Courts 31-1" and other local affordable housing developments. The Board has supported participation in the program this year. Staff intends to continue to participate in the program in the coming years, and in furtherance of this program, will also be modifying the FSS Action Plan to fully support the FSS Program in public housing.

Family Investment Center (FIC). This program is presently receiving \$41,000 per year from the Housing Authority's Capital Fund for job placement and supportive service link-ups for residents. The program helps public housing tenants and residents of the community with resumé development, employment interview instruction, and dress and grooming guidelines needed to achieve employment. This program assists an estimated 60 participants per year. In the past, staff has utilized funds available after construction projects to fund the FIC Program, which created some funding uncertainties. Staff is proposing to make funding of the FIC Program a permanent line item in the Housing Authority's Capital Fund budget.

Childcare Licensing Program. As mentioned above, the Housing Authority carries out a Childcare Licensing Program, where residents are able to obtain a state license for home-based childcare. Apart from enhancing residents' opportunities for self-sufficiency, some residents have commented that this training has enabled them to be better parents. Tenants who complete this program also provide childcare for other tenants involved in work activities. Since 1999, approximately 100 residents of public housing have completed their state licensing under this program.

College Support Program. Through the Resident Initiatives Program, many residents participate in child development classes at Oxnard College through the Housing Authority's College Support Program. Residents are reimbursed for tuition and books, and have goals to complete enough child development college credits to be eligible for employment in local childcare agencies.

Homeownership Counseling Program. This program is funded by the Housing Department's Affordable Housing Office. Staff proposes to continue this program on an annual basis. When matched with down payment assistance, this program provides an effective means for some families to transition from public housing.

Legislative Program. Staff will be providing input to our federal representative on the 2007 Legislative Program and HUD budget. The recommended legislative program will be presented to the Board for approval within the next two months. Staff proposes to review, and if desirable,

encourage our representative to expand self sufficiency pilot programs such as the Moving to Work and "Graduation" from Public Housing programs so that the Housing Authority is able to participate in the two programs. To date, the rules of the programs exclude the Housing Authority.

The Courts 31-1 Project. The completion of this project will remove 260 dwelling units from the public housing stock inventory, a reduction of 33% of the units. The project will provide 23 affordable housing units for purchase with a preference being given to residents of public housing. The project will provide additional opportunities for 80 below market rentals. The 260 units removed from public housing will be replaced with 260 affordable units, including possibly 221 new project based Section 8 vouchers.

Section 8 Homeownership Program. Two hundred and twenty one (221) of the replacement units for the Courts 31-1 will receive project based housing assistance vouchers under the Section 8 Program. After 12 months, depending on availability of tenant-based Section 8 vouchers, tenants will be able to transfer out of the project, if they desire. Staff also proposes to review the feasibility of establishing a Section 8 homeownership program where these tenants would be able to use their Section 8 assistance to purchase a home.

Other Efforts:

Staff is also presently working on a proposal to the Board and City Council to provide local in-lieu fees on a one time basis as matching funds for the Federal Home Bank of San Francisco's Individual Development Account (IDA) Program. If approved, this program could assist 30 residents of public housing with up to \$30,000 in down payment assistance to purchase homes in the Courts 31-1 project and at other local affordable housing developments, by providing a 6 to 1 ratio grant. Down payment and closing cost assistance for low and very low income households purchasing a new home is one of four criteria approved by the City Council in June 2001 for the allocation of in-lieu fee funds. Home purchases by 30 low income and very low income public housing residents will help the City meet its affordable housing goals.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact other than as discussed herein.