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Press contact:

Office of Communications – Chicago Housing Authority
Matthew Aguilar: (312) 935-2646; maguilar@thecha.org

CHA closes last building at notorious Cabrini-Green; demolition set to begin in early 2011

All families received relocation assistance that included counseling and moving services; families can have an option to return once property is redeveloped

CHICAGO (Dec. 9, 2010) – The Chicago Housing Authority announced today that the last high rise at its north side Chicago Cabrini-Green development is closed.

The occupancy of 1230 N. Burling had dropped to the single-digits in recent days, as lease-compliant families have taken advantage of their considerable relocation options: either moving to a public housing unit in a new mixed-income or rehabilitated public housing community; or accepting a Housing Choice Voucher, which would allow them to move into an apartment that is managed by a private landlord.

A team of CHA and social service professionals ensured that the remaining families understood those options, and took great care in making the emotional and sometimes difficult transition as comfortable as possible.

All families received relocation assistance that included housing counseling and moving services and all families can elect to have an option to return to the Cabrini area once the property is redeveloped. A Working Group, composed of community residents, stakeholders, Aldermen, and CHA is currently discussing the redevelopment plan for the area on which 1230 N. Burling sits.

Demolition on 1230 N. Burling is expected to begin in early 2011.

“We are certainly empathetic to the families who have called Cabrini-Green their home for so many years,” CHA CEO Lewis A. Jordan said. “Change is not a simple proposition, and having to leave decades of memories behind cannot be an easy thing. However, CHA is confident that these families will find brighter futures in their new homes – whatever their choices happen to be. The reality is that 1230 N. Burling is in disrepair and CHA, in good conscience, could not allow good people to stay there any longer than what was necessary.”

At its peak, 1230 N. Burling housed 134 families. But 1230 N. Burling – like the recently closed 1230 N. Larrabee and the Cabrini Extensions - began falling into disrepair in the 1970s, about the time the Cabrini development became enveloped by crime and drugs. In the end, the structures were a shell of what they were decades ago.

As part of its “Plan for Transformation” – the largest redevelopment/rehabilitation of public housing in the history of the United States - CHA has worked to steadily relocate families from the older, dilapidated public housing buildings into suitable, newly constructed or rehabbed properties.

Brenda Lockett lived in the Cabrini high-rises for 40 years before moving six months ago to a rehabilitated unit in the nearby rowhouses.

Originally, she wanted no part of the move. She was reluctant to leave the only home she had ever known.

“It was the fear of the unknown,” Lockett said. “You can live at a certain place for so long that you can get complacent. You get comfortable with what you have become accustomed to. But I didn’t realize when I moved out of the high rises and moved somewhere else that things would begin to look different. “

And now?

“It’s been like a rebirth,” Lockett said. “It’s like a new beginning for me and my family and I can just see great things down the road.”

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