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CHA's Response to BPI's Mid-Course Report on Chicago's Plan for Transformation September 3, 2009

CHA appreciates BPI's constructive review of the first ten years of the Plan for Transformation. As a longtime partner in shaping many aspects of the planning and implementation, BPI's involvement and contributions have helped shape and improve the Plan for Transformation. As always, CHA is committed to exploring the issues raised by the report with our many partners, including residents, community members, advocates, service agencies, developers, other city agencies and departments and other stakeholders. We anticipate additional consideration of these issues as part of the reflective activities scheduled in this 10th Anniversary year.

While CHA looks forward to a comprehensive dialogue with BPI staff on the specific details of the report; we would also like to take the opportunity to formally comment on the major recommendation categories that BPI sets forth in Part Four. The Plan for Transformation is a large, multi-pronged undertaking, so for each category, we would like to provide updated information and describe programs and initiatives of which BPI might not be fully aware.

Mixed-Income Communities

Although retail development and development of good schools or services in the communities surrounding the mixed-income developments, are largely outside the control of CHA, as are the fluctuations in the residential real estate market; virtually every community surrounding a mixed-income development has experienced positive growth since the Plan began. As important, we are continuing to actively pursue and aggressively engage City and business leaders to facilitate improvements within these areas.

Mixed-Income Development

CHA knows, as BPI points out, that the market downturn presents challenges to the timeline of the original Plan. However, in response to the current market and other external factors we and our partners are committed to realizing the goals of the Plan by adjusting the timelines and

developing creative solutions to meet the new realities. The ultimate goals of rebuilding 25,000 units and ending years of isolation have not changed. Under the Mayor's leadership, and with our public and private partners, we have rehabilitated or constructed 17,000 units or 69% of the goal. It is important to remember that just a few years ago journalists and academics decried the state of Chicago's public housing. Recognizing the need to improve the quality of life for residents and help revitalize neighborhoods, the Plan for Transformation developments include high quality public housing, and affordable homes as well as attractive market rate properties—both for rent and for sale.

The neighborhoods surrounding many of the new developments are starting to flourish with the amenities of urban living. As a group, CHA residents have improved their lives by every measure, from employment rates and income to safety and their satisfaction with the quality of the new housing and communities.

Despite the unpredictability of the real estate market here in Chicago as in the rest of the country, we have worked with our partners such as the City, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Partnership for New Communities to implement creative strategies, such as home buyer assistance and the Find Your Place in Chicago Campaign that have helped sustain the sales of new homes in the mixed-income developments.

Community Development

As noted in the report, the success of any community depends on access to good retail and quality schools. These services and amenities were virtually non-existent in the neighborhoods surrounding the developments that now, in partnership with the City, are being transformed into mixed-income communities. The development at each mixed-income community is guided by a "working group" composed of CHA residents, staff, advocates, BPI, and members of the surrounding communities. Each working group has hoped – and worked to ensure -- that the transformation would lead to increased retail and housing development as well as new parks and schools in their respective neighborhoods. While much remains to be done, much has been accomplished:

Select Retail Accomplishments

- New shopping centers anchored by major grocery stores have been constructed near Parkside at Old Town/North Town Village (the Dominick's shopping center located at Division and Clybourn) as well as at Roosevelt Square (the Jewel Osco shopping Center located at Roosevelt and Ashland). In addition, a major new grocery store has recently been announced to be constructed at a site located near the Westhaven Park and Jackson Square communities. A major retail shopping center is also planned for the areas around Park Boulevard and Legends South.

- Ground floor retail providing much needed community amenities has been constructed at Park Boulevard and Roosevelt Square on CHA land that was previously occupied by old public housing developments.

School-related Accomplishments

The Chicago Public School (CPS) system has measured steady and consistent improvements over the last decade. The schools serving the neighborhoods around the new mixed-income communities have also changed and some, but indeed not all, have improved. While there have been some early successes, CHA is continuing to dialogue with the new CPS team with the understanding that schools are an integral part of attracting and retaining residents in any viable community.

A couple of early examples of CPS/CHA collaboration include:

- The new National Teacher's Academy was built in 2002 and serves children from the Hilliard Towers Apartments.
- A University of Chicago Charter School (Donoghue) was developed near Oakwood Shores.

We will continue our discussions with CPS and others to reiterate the significant role quality schools can play in the success of these new communities.

Community Integration/Developing a Sense of Community

While developing sustainable communities is a goal for CHA, it is not solely the responsibility of CHA to "create" these communities. As the report noted, there is much debate over how "community" evolves. With that in mind, CHA, its development partners, other city agencies and social service providers work together to create opportunities for natural social interaction. For example:

- The 57,000 square foot Fosco Park Community Center which opened near Roosevelt Square in 2004, provides a daycare, indoor pool, gym and meeting rooms. New, expanded or enhanced parks have been built or planned at all of the other mixed-income communities. Already new or expanded parks are in service at Seward Park (Parkside at Old Town), Lake Park Crescent, Park Boulevard and Hilliard Towers Apartments.
- The mixed-income communities host over 300 social and community events each year - including holiday parties and back-to-school events; movie nights, block parties and CAPS meetings. CHA supports these many and diverse ways of building community and encouraging neighbors and other key community members to get to know each other. However, knowing the complexity that is a hallmark of diverse communities, CHA is open to additional recommendations that would help foster greater quality of life for all residents in these communities.

- The creation of the Office of the Ombudsman provides another avenue for public housing residents living in mixed-income housing to formally share their concerns with CHA. We are also exploring ways in which the Office can actively monitor community relations at mixed-income properties and support the developers and communities in their community building initiatives. While this effort is new and may not be perfect, it is constantly evolving.

Traditional Developments

In agreement with residents CHA agreed to rehabilitate some of the largest properties, in lieu of complete demolition. While there may be concerns about this decision, a compromise was necessary to ensure all stakeholders that the goals of the Plan could be attained. As CHA fulfills its obligations and delivers units as promised, we are open to discussions about the future of the traditional public housing properties.

CHA appreciates BPI's view that these larger, more isolated developments appear to "warehouse" low-income families, but we believe that most families do not view themselves in this manner. On a positive note, over 400 families from the wait list have leased newly rehabbed apartments at Altgeld Gardens, one of the more remote CHA's properties. Over 70% of this new population has income from wages. This property also has seen the opening of a new charter school that was the subject of a recent article in the Chicago Tribune.

Supportive Housing

Several other public housing authorities have supportive housing options and CHA agrees that it is likely that a portion of its population could benefit from such program models. We have been investigating the feasibility of adding supportive housing in our portfolio and are considering various financing and service partner options.

Safety and Security

Throughout the report, BPI raises concerns about the safety and security at traditional public housing properties. Although we acknowledge that there are some communities that require special and ongoing attention, in an effort to provide safer communities, CHA requires each private property management company to develop a Security Plan. The Security Plan is reviewed and approved, annually, by the Asset Management Department. At a minimum, each security plan must include a strategy for deploying private security officers, working with the Chicago Police Department and its Community Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) to develop additional strategies to ensure safe communities. Security Plans also include strategies for encouraging resident awareness and fostering greater resident involvement. Each site may also institute a "Tenant Safety and Patrol Program" overseen by the private property management companies, and staffed by residents living on-site. Currently, residents receive rent credits for participation in the Tenant Safety and Patrol Program.

Furthermore, CHA recently renewed an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Chicago Police Department (CPD) to provide specialized policing programs in areas designated by the CHA and CPD as high crime areas and to provide CHA with information on crime at CHA properties. Additionally, CHA will utilize over \$20 million in federal economic stimulus funds to install surveillance cameras at each property.

Relocation and Social Services

BPI raised a number of issues related to social services provided to residents living at both traditional and mixed-income developments and concluded with a few recommendations. While many of BPI's observations were accurate, there were a few items that merit clarification:

Case Management Services

- BPI noted that CHA has not provided a guarantee following the first year of residence and cited examples of Atlanta's commitment to five (5) years of services at HOPE VI redevelopment sites. Although a formal plan has not been published, CHA has demonstrated its commitment through its continued funding of social services for all public housing families. While we are considering further options with regard to the permanently housed voucher population, social services have continued regardless of when public housing families have satisfied their Right of Return under the Relocation Rights Contract.
- BPI states that the initial case management mode needed improvements. During the transition to the FamilyWorks model, CHA took the opportunity to revamp its resident tracking system to focus on outcomes rather than contact or delivery of service, which had been the original goal of the tracking system. With the enhanced data tracking system, as well as our direct oversight of the FamilyWorks program, we are actively engaged in monitoring provider performance and tracking resident outcomes. CHA provides a report of agencies' progress toward forty contract outcomes at monthly service provider meetings. Each provider is able to view other agencies' progress toward contractual goals, which allows for a transparent discussion of challenges and best practices.
- Resident Services implemented new monitoring and evaluation procedures that include risk assessments, quarterly site visits to compare reported activities with documentation in resident files, and additional audits for agencies who submit for incentive payments. CHA will continue to review program results and use the data to make systemic improvements to the service delivery model. Also, it should be noted that, although some FamilyWorks providers may incorporate additional information, the assessment tool, created with guidance from the Opportunity Chicago evaluators, is standard across all agencies.

- CHA recognizes potential concerns with services at mixed-income sites. In response to those concerns, we have also aligned the performance goals of Community and Support Services providers with the FamilyWorks program to create consistent program objectives throughout CHA's case management programs. The new monitoring and evaluation procedures have also been implemented for these providers including risk assessments, site audits, and contract outcome reports distributed at monthly service provider meetings. In addition, CHA staff meets weekly with property managers and providers to discuss resident engagement and progress in meeting the site specific requirements.
- CHA welcomes BPI to meet with Resident Services staff on an ongoing basis to review and make recommendations to improve the enhanced monitoring and evaluation procedures and data collection system for CSS and the FamilyWorks providers.
- CHA also agrees that lower caseloads will most often result in greater participation-as long as the need for service delivery is present. Factoring in current engagement levels, the current case manager to resident ratio of the demonstration project is similar to ratio of the FamilyWorks program. The ultimate benefit of the demonstration will hopefully be a process that can be utilized to assist providers in determining what type of barriers create the intensity of service need, making a review of caseload ratio less effective.
- CHA agrees that the services that supplement the demonstration program are good supports. In fact, independent of the demonstration, in 2006, CHA contracted three providers to offer Transitional Jobs programs. We have since rebid the program and now have four Transitional Jobs providers with 1,000 slots in 2009. In 2007, we launched the Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency program which has grown to include almost 200 residents of public housing with a goal of enrolling 350 within the next 12 months. While the matched savings program is a positive alternative to Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and other long-term savings programs, the demonstration data itself does not show strong support that residents took advantage of this offering as part of the demonstration. The literacy program also is new in 2009, aligning with CHA's workforce development vision for the most in need of workforce development support services.

Mobility Counseling

As BPI indicated in its summary of the Sullivan Reports, CHA initially was not well-equipped to handle the aggressive task of relocating families due to building closure and consolidation at the beginning of the Plan. Since that time, CHA has developed and implemented move-out procedures, including mobility counseling, that have proven successful in supporting families through relocation. CHA's two contracted vendors are experienced in explaining the benefits of opportunity moves, providing unit and community tours, and assisting families to identify the resources of

their new community following relocation. While CHA has not yet considered mobility counseling as a means to relocate families not currently impacted by building closure, we do consider our mobility program to be successful in accomplishing the Plan's relocation efforts. Having said that, we also believe that improvement is both possible and desirable. We look forward to discussing the benefits and obstacles related to BPI's proposal to utilize mobility counseling to offer voluntary moves to CHA families.

Employment

Since the inception of Opportunity Chicago, CHA has utilized a multi-pathway approach to workforce development including but not limited to, training programs, Transitional Jobs (TJ), Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services, and direct placement. In fact, CHA initiated Transitional Jobs and other training programs two years before the implementation of the work requirement. CHA has incorporated a variety of workforce supports and alternatives, including the ability to volunteer for partial fulfillment of the work requirement. We respectfully disagree with Herr's supposition that 50% "can't make it" as steady workers. In fact there has been considerable research generated and posted on the National Transitional Jobs website (www.transitionaljobs.net) that shows that Transitional Jobs programs have a large impact for those deemed to be hardest to employ-the very people Herr concludes will never be a steady worker.

FamilyWorks providers are tasked to assess residents who are unable to be "steady workers", assuming there might be an underlying disability. FamilyWorks providers work with residents to complete SSI/SSDI applications and appeals if they are found to have a disability that impacts their ability to work.

We believe that no one strategy will be right for every resident; thus we must continue to provide multiple options for residents and to continue to build upon their own successes.

That said, despite the economic turndown,

- Nearly 40% of all heads of households are working, a higher percentage than ever before; and
- Incomes of heads of households from work have doubled from approximately \$10,000 in 1999 to an average of \$19,000 per year in 2007, with those living in mixed-income communities earning an average of \$24,000 per year.

Children and Youth

We agree that activities leading to the success of children are important and critical. The recent hiring of a Youth Director and the integration of youth liaisons in the next FamilyWorks RFP demonstrate our commitment to offer a different future. We are also pursuing stronger partnerships with Chicago Public Schools, Afterschool Matters,

Chicago Department of Family and Support Services and others. This past summer we have seen a record number of youth engaged in programming, representing a 40% increase in the number of participants over last summer.

Conclusion

The landscape of public housing in Chicago has changed dramatically over the last 10 years. Properties that were blighted, isolated, and hopeless have been replaced with communities that are increasingly vibrant and viable. These new communities offer public housing residents and their neighbors a greater opportunity to engage in diverse social and economic activities. Is it perfect? No, but CHA continues to work toward the laudable, fundamental goals of the Plan. While we remain committed to producing the 25,000 units, the current time table is equally driven by the urgency to improve the quality of life for residents. We are assured of one thing: the realities of public housing here in Chicago prior to the Plan for Transformation have been drastically improved. We thank all of our partners for their contribution and support to date and look forward to their continued participation as we complete the Plan.