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Needham Housing Authority (NHA)

Section 22 Conversion: Resident Q&A

Issued June 2024

On June 11th and June 13th, 2024, the Needham Housing Authority (NHA), together with its development consultant, the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA), held resident meetings about the conversion of NHA's federal public housing portfolio to the Section 8 voucher program via a Section 22 Streamlined Voluntary Conversion application to HUD. The properties being converted consist of Seabeds Way, Captain Robert Cook Drive, and High Rock Estates. Below is an overview of questions received from residents with responses from NHA.

Interpreters present on June 11th, 2024 for Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive residents

- Angela Tashjian: Russian
- Joel Chu: Mandarin
- Karla Hanify: Spanish

Interpreters present on June 13th, 2024 for High Rock Estates residents

- Angela Tashjian: Russian
- Joel Chu: Mandarin

RESIDENT QUESTIONS

Question #1

Can NHA provide information about the conversion in simple plain language?

Answer

NHA has prepared a Resident Guide to the Section 22 Conversion (attached) that is intended to provide residents with accessible information about the conversion process. With any questions, please contact Chris Moyer, Project Manager, Cambridge Housing Authority at cmoyer@cambridge-housing.org.

Question #2

Will Seabeds Way stay housing for seniors and disabled individuals?

Answer

Seabeds Way currently serves older adults and disabled individuals, and NHA intends to maintain this resident population post-conversion. NHA wishes to note, however, that Seabeds Way is technically "general occupancy" housing, meaning that it could serve a family population. In the long-term, NHA may revisit the population served by Seabeds Way after its Linden and Chambers Street redevelopment has advanced and brought a significant

number of new, fully accessible affordable housing units for seniors and disabled individuals into use. Any such change would be preceded by a robust resident engagement process.

Question #3

Who or what is Faircloth?

Answer

Each public housing authority has a cap or a maximum number of federal public housing units it may own and manage. This cap is known as the "Faircloth limit" or a housing authority's "Faircloth Authority." The restriction was established by the Congress in 1999 to limit the number of units under a housing authority's ownership to its existing unit count at the time. Today, NHA's Faircloth Authority is 136 units. This aligns with the number of units in its federal public housing portfolio, consisting of the 76 units at Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive, and 60 units at High Rock Estates. The Section 22 conversion will convert each of these 136 units to the Section 8 voucher program, but will allow NHA to retain all of its Faircloth Authority. This means that after the conversion, NHA will be able to access future federal funding to build and operate 136 new units of affordable housing in the future.

Question #4

If someone wants to take the mobile voucher provided by Section 22 and leave the NHA property, can they?

Answer

Yes. Mobile Section 8 vouchers resulting from the conversion will allow residents to leave the NHA property and take the voucher subsidy with them to rent an apartment from a private landlord. NHA will be seeking consent from residents to "project-base" the mobile voucher so that the subsidy becomes linked to the NHA unit. Project-basing vouchers will help NHA secure sufficient funding to address capital improvements at Seabeds Way, Captain Robert Cook Drive, and High Rock Estates. NHA will provide more details when seeking consent at future meetings in Fall 2024. A HUD representative will be present at the meetings.

Question #5

How many resident consents for project-based vouchers are needed for the project to proceed?

Answer

NHA is not required to obtain consents for the Section 22 conversion to move forward. However, consent will be needed to project-base the vouchers. Project-basing the vouchers will help generate enough income at the property to take out a loan to finance the Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive modernization project and future High Rock Estates redevelopment. Without enough households to consent to project-base the voucher to their existing unit, it will be difficult for NHA to finance significant improvements. However, if a few residents opt to leave the NHA property and use their mobile Section 8 voucher to rent from a private landlord, NHA will be able to proceed with a renovation project.

Question #6

Can the mobile voucher be used at the Linden Street redevelopment?

Answer

NHA's goal is to have as many of the units in the new Linden Street development to be deeply affordable. This will require the use of project-based vouchers attached to the new Linden Street units. For this reason, there may be a very limited opportunity to use a mobile voucher at Linden Street.

Question #7

What has happened to design feedback that residents previously offered about the Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive renovation project?

Answer

NHA appreciates the feedback you provided to the architects for the Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive modernization project. The architects at BH+A are analyzing all responses so that they can incorporate comments into the overall scope of the project. NHA anticipates that BH+A will provide an update to residents about the design and scope of work in Fall 2024.

Question #8

Will the Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive modernization project include elevators, greater airflow in apartments, sustainability, and improved hot water systems?

Answer

NHA and the architects at BH+A are working to determine the final scope of the Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive modernization project. A key goal of the project is to improve airflow, heating, and cooling by replacing existing building systems with ones that are more energy efficient such as Air Source Heat Pumps and Energy Recovery Ventilation. This will allow residents to have greater control over heating and cooling comfort in their units. Other anticipated scope includes improvements to bathroom and kitchen flooring, appliances, and finishes, as well as solar panels. Installation of elevators at Seabeds Way is being considered. However, the existing design of Seabeds Way is such that the unit-to-elevator ratio in each building would be very low, making it extremely cost inefficient.