

**THE RESIDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE
FAIRFAX COUNTY REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY
3700 Pender Drive, Suite 100
Fairfax, Virginia, 22030-7442**

January 10, 2012

Ms. Paula Sampson, Director
Department of Housing and
Community Development
3700 Pender Drive, Suite 300
Fairfax, VA 22030-7442

Dear Ms. Sampson:

The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority's (FCRHA) Resident Advisory Council (RAC) has reviewed the FCRHA's draft Annual Plan Update for Fiscal Year 2012. We submit our comments in accordance with Section 511 of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. The Capital Fund Program was presented to the Council on October 18, 2011.

The Council bases its recommendations on a consensus of members present at Council meetings from October 2011 through January 2012. The Council's specific comments and recommendations are as follows:

Section 6.0, including sub-sections – PHA Plan Update:

The Council reviewed and affirmed the content of Section 6.0 of the plan with the following comments to Section 6.0.7 – Community Service and Self-Sufficiency and Section 6.0.8 - Safety and Crime Prevention.

- 6.0.7 The Council would like to see more staff interaction with the FSS program participants in order to help them meet their goals and objectives.

Staff Response:

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program is a voluntary program to provide support to individuals with goals to move to self-sufficiency. Fairfax County's FSS program is managed by the Partnership for Resident Opportunities, Growth, Resources and Economic Self-Sufficiency (PROGRESS) Center at the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). All participants are encouraged to meet with the FSS Coordinator quarterly to review their goals and are regularly invited to participate in additional programs. FSS participants are able to contact the FSS Coordinator to schedule appointments between quarterly meetings to discuss their goals and/or obtain further resources to help reach their goals. This past year, the PROGRESS Center provided information to FSS participants on Credit Smart classes and also the Adult Career Pathways program at the Northern Virginia Community College.

- 6.0.8 The Council would like staff to look into the following ideas to enhance the assessment of safety and crime prevention as well as to obtain feedback on Fairfax County Public Housing properties:

Have a more visible presence of Property Managers on Public Housing properties.
Have staff develop surveys to obtain resident feedback on safety and crime issues on Public Housing properties.
Have Property Managers and/or Resident Management Aides go door-to-door and hand out surveys or provide them during annual re-certifications with a stamped self-addressed envelope attached.
Provide drop boxes on the properties for community members to return surveys.
Have managers set up specific quarterly meetings on crime and safety. Include local police and any neighborhood watch groups. If there are not watch groups in the area have police provide information on how to start one.
Look into providing signs and other safety items to property neighborhood watch groups.

Staff Response:

Each Property Manager now has a functional site-based office at one of the Public Housing communities in their portfolio, as well as designated site office hours for one-on-one interaction with Public Housing residents. Although HCD does not have the resources to have staff at each Public Housing property every day, we believe this approach will lead to better communication with residents and our Property Management Division. Property

Management staff is currently preparing notices to residents that include the locations of site-based offices, office hours, and Property Managers' contact information.

The Property Management Division is currently working on a Public Housing communication plan that will include the use of resident surveys. The first series of surveys is expected to be delivered to residents in March 2012. The Public Housing communication plan will include various ways to distribute the surveys, as well as options for how residents can return the surveys to the Property Management division. The Property Management Division is also working with the PROGRESS Center to identify and address the need for additional Management Aides, which are Public Housing residents employed by HCD to work with Property Managers to enhance communication at the properties.

In reference to the Resident Advisory Council's comment on HCD's quarterly meetings, the Property Management Division will hold quarterly meetings for properties in each Property Manager's portfolio in 2012. Again, the Public Housing communication plan will address strategies to ensure residents are aware of the meetings, which will focus on a variety of topics, including crime and safety concerns. Professionals from various groups or agencies will be invited to speak at the meetings, such as the Police Department, Fire Department, PROGRESS Center, county human service agencies as well as contractors that may be providing services at the properties. The quarterly meetings will also serve to encourage our communities to either start or rekindle neighborhood watch programs and improve communication between HCD and residents. Providing signage and other safety items to Neighborhood Watch participants will be considered and discussed at the quarterly meetings.

Section 7.0, including sub-sections and attachments associated with this section– HOPE VI, Mixed Finance Modernization or Development, Demolition and/or Disposition, Conversion of Public Housing, Homeownership Programs, and Project-Based Vouchers:

The Council reviewed and affirmed the content of this section of the plan.

Section 8.0, including sub-sections – Capital Improvements:

The Council reviewed and affirmed the content of this section of the plan.

Section 10.0 – Additional Information and Attachments:

The Council reviewed and affirmed the content of these sections of the plan.

If you have any questions regarding our comments or recommendations, please contact me at 703-690-5221. Thank you.

Sincerely,
/s/

Vivian Barrett, Chairperson
Resident Advisory Council