

DEMO APPLICATION FOR BAXTER TERRACE APPROVED, MAJOR CHANGES UNDERWAY



Rendering of a future Baxter Park.

Now that the request to demolish Baxter Terrace (NJ2-05) has been approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), NHA has chosen McCormack Baron Salazar, a St. Louis-based nationally recognized urban developer of affordable housing with extensive experience in the creation and management of large-scale, mixed-income communities, to redevelop the location. Construction on the site has not yet begun.

HUD approved NHA's demolition application in August 2008. That application was approved by HUD because a physical needs assessment report showed that Baxter Terrace is one of the communities in dire need of extensive capital needs improvements and renovations costing over \$68 million, which would only address some of the needs of the site and still leave it below federal housing standards.

Both the NHA and HUD agreed that Baxter Terrace, which consists of 20 low-rise buildings, are obsolete in regards to physical condition, location, or other factors, making it unsuitable for housing purposes. Furthermore, no reasonable program of

modifications is cost effective to return the 68-year-old public housing site to useful life.

Therefore, NHA decided to demolish Baxter Terrace and take a redevelopment approach. The development team, selected in January 2009, will work with members of the community, officials at NHA, municipal leaders and others to establish and reaffirm design and development parameters.

The vision for the Baxter Terrace site is to revitalize the area into a thriving mixed-use property to benefit Newark as a whole. Executive Director Keith Kinard said he looks forward to working with the developers and renewing the Baxter Terrace site for the better. NHA has already started relocating residents. As of Jan. 31, at least 73 residents were relocated. The moving activities are on going. Residents have the choice of moving into other NHA developments such as townhouses and family housing developments and mixed population housing sites or a housing choice voucher. Upon completion of the new Baxter Terrace, residents also can opt to enter their name in a lottery to return to the site.



Our mission is to invest in our families by building and maintaining affordable housing to encourage economic independence and healthy communities.

We will achieve this mission through our Agency Goals.

- **B**uild, maintain, and renovate housing communities to the highest standards.
- **E**xpand affordable housing options for families utilizing a high quality Housing Choice Voucher Program
- **L**ink with our employees, our residents, and community partners to support our mission.
- **I**mprove **E**fficiency, program compliance and accountability in everything we do.
- **I**nvest in innovative crime prevention and quality of life strategies.
- **E**xpect results!

You've got to believe!

NHA Developments

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What an amazing winter, first the election, then the inauguration, and now President Obama has signed the economic stimulus bill into law which will benefit public housing authorities across the nation. This news could not have come at a better time as we face development gaps and a backlog of over \$500 million of capital work.

The bill calls for \$4 billion to be appropriated to the public housing capital fund to enable local public housing authorities to address a nation-wide \$32 billion backlog in capital needs.

The money, which breaks down to \$3 billion of formula funding to public housing authorities and \$1 billion awarded through a competitive process, will assist public housing authorities in rehabilitating and retrofitting public housing units, including increasing the energy efficiency of units and making critical safety repairs. The NHA expects to receive about an extra \$20 million this year.

The goal of this money is to stimulate the economy as well to provide affordable housing. It is truly a win-win.

President Obama signs stimulus bill on 2/17/09



The NHA is prepared to spend the stimulus funds rapidly, pumping at least \$20 million into the local economy. We will also be addressing critical items like facades and roof replacements at our senior developments, ADA accessibility improvements, secure entryway enhancements and overall site improvements. Long-term vacant units will be rehabilitated and put back in service. The NHA also will apply for the competitive funds proposing energy efficient improvements and other items that we hope will win extra funding.

Let me be clear, the money from the stimulus package is a big help to NHA but as historic as it is, it is not enough. NHA still has over \$500 million of physical needs. That's one of the reasons that the NHA has recently submitted six applications to the NJ DCA for Neighborhood Stabilization Program grants. We want to stabilize and revitalize many neighborhoods across this City that are impacted by foreclosures, but we can not do it alone. We will need local, state, and federal assistance to remake many of our most challenged neighborhoods.

I look forward to working with the new HUD Secretary, Shaun Donovan, and the Deputy Secretary, Ron Sims. These are both great picks by President Obama and I welcome their help along with that of our great delegation including Senators Menendez and Lautenberg and Congressman Payne in accomplishing the transformation here at NHA.

We have come far, but we still have much more work ahead of us.



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NHA'S HCVP IMPROVES CUSTOMER SERVICE

Moving forward, the Newark Housing Authority has been working diligently to beef up customer service within the Housing Choice Voucher Program. In June 2008, Quadel Consulting Corporation of Washington, DC, began working under contract, with the authority to run its housing voucher program, (sometimes referred to as the "Section 8 voucher program").

Quadel has put new standards into place including returning all telephone calls within two business days. Getting calls returned in one day is the goal for next year. Furthermore, the average monthly complaining customer service calls have dramatically dwindled and people are getting questions answered swiftly.

"I am pleased with the progress we've made in the voucher program," said Tory Gunsolley, chief administrative officer. "Our main focus right now is to

break away from the label of a 'troubled' program by providing the highest level of service to our many participants," he said.

"The program's goal is to consistently improve and always maintain a superior level of service while resolving issues and processing information accurately and efficiently," said Patricia Madison, managing director of the voucher program.

The voucher department is also working to expand and improve the number and quality of special programs and increase outreach efforts to prospective owners and landlords throughout Newark.

Property owners' and tenant information sessions continue to be scheduled in the months to come (the schedule is

on NHA's website). On Feb. 12, a general information session was attended by some 15 landlords. Attendees received an overview of what property owners' responsibilities are, as well as, what NHA's major responsibilities are as the voucher program administrator.

Generally, during these sessions, property owners learn the benefits of participating in the voucher program and are provided essential information such as, what to expect during a Housing Quality Standards inspection or how to properly complete a Request for Tenancy Approval. Tenant information sessions are also held regularly. Voucher holders receive updated information explaining their rights and responsibilities while in the program.

Board of Commissioners Chairman Modia "Mo" Butler said he supports the direction NHA is moving in. "Providing good customer service to our many participants, owners and those who wish to conduct business with NHA should always be our top priority," he said.

The voucher program department also is working towards recruiting more families into the Family Self-Sufficiency program. Those families that participate in the program make a commitment to self-reliance and economic improvement. Families enrolled in the FSS program receive services such as educational counseling, job training and assistance with credit repair. For participating families, as income increases, the NHA deposits the difference in family rental payments into an interest-bearing account.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program has made available at their office, located at 500 Broad St., second floor, and on the NHA's Web site, more services, information and forms to better meet the needs of customers. The goal of the voucher program is to continue to improve program management and service delivery to make the program experience optimal for voucher holders and property owners alike.

BAXTER TERRACE ELDERLY RENOVATION IMPRESSES RESIDENTS



John Whitley, a longtime resident of Baxter Terrace Elderly, said he is thrilled about the new stunning community rooms.

"I am pleased with what they are doing. Newark Housing Authority is going the right way," said Whitley, who attended a renovation celebration on Feb. 11 at the site on Summit Avenue. The event, also attended by Mayor Cory A. Booker and Central Ward Councilman Charles Bell and a host of other local dignitaries, featured live music and refreshments.

The elaborate makeover at Baxter—which consists of two high-rise buildings with 250 apartments in total—includes the transformation of a former storage area into a game room and living area. It features buffed and shiny linoleum flooring, stylish stain-resistant furniture, a pool table, modernized communal kitchen with stainless steel appliances, two bathrooms and seating area with a flat screen television and a fireplace.

In the adjacent building, there is a new full kitchen, a dining area, a seating area with cable television and computers with internet access.

Twenty-four hour security guards and high-tech security systems with cameras will monitor all doors, hallways, common areas and inside elevators and stairways.

Whitley has already volunteered to be a community room attendant for the building he lives in, 9 Summit St. Attendants, for several hours, provide daily coverage of the community room. Attendants ensure that those utilizing the community room act in accordance with the rules and regulations.

Resident Pearlline Brewer said she is also impressed to see the improvements and hope residents maintain it.

As for Felix Camacho, a community room attendant, the community rooms allow people from the two buildings to bond a form relationships in a comfortable setting. "I like that they are getting this placed fixed," Camacho said.

"They have really done a beautiful job," said resident Etta Bullock.

Executive Director Keith Kinard said it makes him feel good to know that the elderly are in high spirits. "This is another way of providing our seniors with a better quality of life," he said.

"Making residents happy is what it's all about," said Commissioner Gloria Cartwright.

The Baxter Terrace Elderly renovation is part of a larger renovation program addressing the common areas at senior buildings. Eleven senior buildings have already been renovated. The remaining 11 are scheduled to be completed by September 2009.



(above) Suleima Baker, Patricia Madison and Monica Taylor reviewing the performance of the HCVP.

(at right)
back row
(left to right)
Juan Morillo,
Felix Camacho
front row
(left to right)
John Whitley,
Pearline Brewer,
Etta Bullock

