

Stakeholders Briefings

March 12, 2009

Remarks by Charles Woodyard, President/CEO

INTRODUCTION

Our purpose today is to talk about one of CHA's most important developments in recent memory: Moving Forward. We're here to brief you on this exciting initiative ahead of its introduction to the broader community, which is beginning in the form of a mass media, social marketing campaign. More on that in a minute.

MOVING FORWARD

CHA is one of 30 housing authorities across the country participating in the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's "Moving to Work" demonstration program, which allows us to test innovative methods to improve housing services and better meet local needs. The Charlotte effort is called Moving Forward and its main goals are to:

1. Promote employment and self-sufficiency for our residents.
2. Expand housing choices for low-income families.
3. Achieve administrative cost efficiencies and savings.

The major areas of emphasis include:

- A new, incentivized work requirement for residents that will provide an increase in their household income and give them training and support, with the help of community partners, to enable them to STAY employed. (The work requirement will apply ONLY to all non-elderly, non-disabled residents.)
- Rent simplification that creates a strong financial incentive for residents to increase their earnings.

- Tiering system that delivers specialized services based on each family's profile and capacity, designed to help them become self-sufficient as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- Collaborating with other organizations to address the academic, health, and social wellbeing of youth who live in our properties.
- Providing funding to non-profit partner agencies to subsidize rent for participants in their self-sufficiency programs.
- Assessing what is the best property model – mixed-income vs. all public housing -- for residents, the agency, and the community.
- Promote increased earnings and self-reliance, thereby preparing families to move to unsubsidized housing in a reasonable timeframe.

Let me comment further on the employment requirement of the Moving Forward initiative, to make sure everyone understands. CHA has always had a work requirement for a small cohort of our residents. The new policy is designed to broaden that requirement to all of our able-bodied residents and augment it with support services and incentives. Our goal is to help them find and keep jobs, without penalizing them financially by taking a higher percentage of their income for rent.

The new work requirement will be implemented over the next three years. CHA will assess all unemployed residents except the elderly and disabled. If they are prepared for work, they will be urged to look for a job; if not, they will be given support and training.

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The Authority does not have enough funding to entirely provide these services, so we'll pursue partnerships to help meet residents' needs. Support we'll provide includes employment services, vocational training, GED and ESL training, child care and transportation subsidies, drug/alcohol rehabilitation and mental health counseling.

Conditions are tough out there. So in 2009, no resident will lose a rent subsidy if he or she can't find a job. During the first year, we'll give them time to address employment barriers and to better understand the policy. In 2010, adult residents will be expected to make efforts to become employed and/or prepare to find jobs, under the supervision of case workers. Only in year three, beginning in April 2011, will the head of each household be required to work 30 hours per week for the family to retain its rent subsidy. And even then, if the head of household is enrolled in training, education and/or legitimately pursuing employment, the family will not be evicted.

We believe this new approach is compassionate and fair, and will prove to be far more effective over the long term at moving our residents to self-sufficiency, sooner. And the Authority is committed to seeing that happen.

SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Moving Forward represents a major change in how CHA does business. We also see it as an opportunity to redefine public perceptions about our residents -- low-income individuals and families -- and build support for serving them.

The Moving Forward brand was created to show progress and value in the minds of Housing Authority residents, as well as everyone who lives in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. It represents shared intent or purpose, forward movement, and the image of affordable housing as a vital safety net and platform for building or rebuilding lives.

Affordable housing has an important role in addressing social ills and serving the greater good, such as:

- providing shelter for the homeless, disabled and seniors;
- keeping families together;
- assisting the poor in becoming economically independent;
- supporting our economy by providing affordable and convenient work force housing; and
- offering a safety net for anyone who, through some misfortune such as losing a job or suffering a major medical problem, may suddenly need an affordable place to live.

The unfortunate truth is there are long-held and damaging stereotypes about affordable housing and the people who live there. We must correct these misperceptions if we're going to make progress on serving those in need.

For example, many people believe that there is more criminal activity in and around affordable housing sites. But the facts say otherwise. From 2004-2007, the rate of major crime (defined as homicide, robbery, sexual assault, aggravated assault, felonious larceny, burglary, and auto theft) increased citywide by 3.75%. During the same four-year period however, the major crime rate in all CHA properties decreased by 11.3%.

To build broad public understanding and support for Moving Forward and what it offers, we have launched a social marketing campaign. It makes the case that all of us, regardless of socio-economic status, share the need for housing to function and have prosper. Without a safe, clean and affordable place to live, the poor have a much more difficult

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time surviving and becoming self-reliant. And that has implications for every resident of this region – because it affects local quality of life and involves many issues including economic development, public health and safety, and education.

The campaign theme is: With housing, there's a way, and it illustrates positive outcomes that individuals achieved through affordable housing. The campaign tells stories of six subjects; three residents, and three others who are directly involved in affordable housing in the region – an elected official, non-profit executive and a former resident who is now a homeowner, successful author and motivational speaker.

For example, "With housing, there's a way to... :

- to keep my children safe.
- to find a good job.
- to leave the shelter.

We've also launched a Web page on the CHA Internet site with more information about the campaign and the Moving Forward initiative.

The social marketing campaign will run in the next six weeks across a wide variety of media, including cable TV, radio, outdoor, print and inside buses and the light rail cars.

Moving Forward will help address the huge challenge of breaking the cycle of poverty in this community. For our region's economy to reach its full potential, we believe the initiative must succeed. The employees and board of the Charlotte Housing Authority are committed to making that happen, and we welcome the support and involvement of everyone here today and of all Charlotte-Mecklenburg citizens. Thank you for coming today, and we look forward to reporting back to you soon on our progress.