

NEWS FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS IN THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Welcome, New Owners and Managers... and Continued Thanks to All!

Over the past six months, nearly 2,000 low-income families and individuals joined the Section 8 program...thanks to you! Because of the tight rental market, we were encouraging these folks to "lease-up in place" - in other words, use their vouchers where they were currently living rather than trying to find a new place. This strategy worked well for about half our participants.

One such renter is Lillian Livingston, age 85. She had been on the waiting list for seven years and was grateful her name reached the top of the list. A dental assistant for 33 years who raised her children alone after a divorce, Mrs. Livingston was accustomed to being self-sufficient. But now in retirement, all she has is her Social Security, most of which was going toward rent for her one-bedroom North Park

apartment where she's lived for 21 years. When she learned recently her rent was going to increase by \$100 (to \$750), she knew she was in trouble. She was already "going without" by skipping needed car repairs and getting her groceries from a food bank. She didn't want to move, because she loved her spacious, lovingly decorated home. Plus, she had friends and her church in the area and enjoyed living near shops and the library. But, with no family nearby, she was running out of options. All her relatives, including three children, eight grandchildren, four great-grandkids, and even one great-great-grandchild, live far away. But thankfully, she now has her voucher, which her landlord accepted, enabling her to remain in her home. "The first thing I did was go out and get my brakes fixed," she said.



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Renovation Grants for Disabled Renters

If you have physically disabled renter (8 or otherwise) who live within the City of San Diego, they may be eligible for grants up to \$1,000 to make modifications to your unit (with your permission), such as making it wheelchair accessible. For more information, please call Lyle Knudson, 619/578-7521.



Continuing Improvements

Lynda and Martha

Do you remember the TV show, “Cagney & Lacey”? The concept of that program was two women detectives who made a difference. Well, the Housing Commission has taken it’s own “show” on the road: the Lynda and Martha “show”. This dynamic duo of solution sleuthers may not be on TV (yet!), but they’ve certainly got a program worth tuning into. Our owner liaison, long-time employee Lynda Taylor, and marketing specialist Martha Brownlee have been working hard to get the word out to owners about our streamlined services as well as to quickly answer questions and resolve problems. Currently, they are also planning this year’s workshops, with topics to range from rent increases to tips for new participants. So please feel free to share your suggestions and concerns with Lynda (619/578-7680, lyndat@sdhc.org) or Martha (619/578-7648, marthab@sdhc.org).



Lynda Taylor (left) and Martha Brownlee

Keeping Pace With the Market

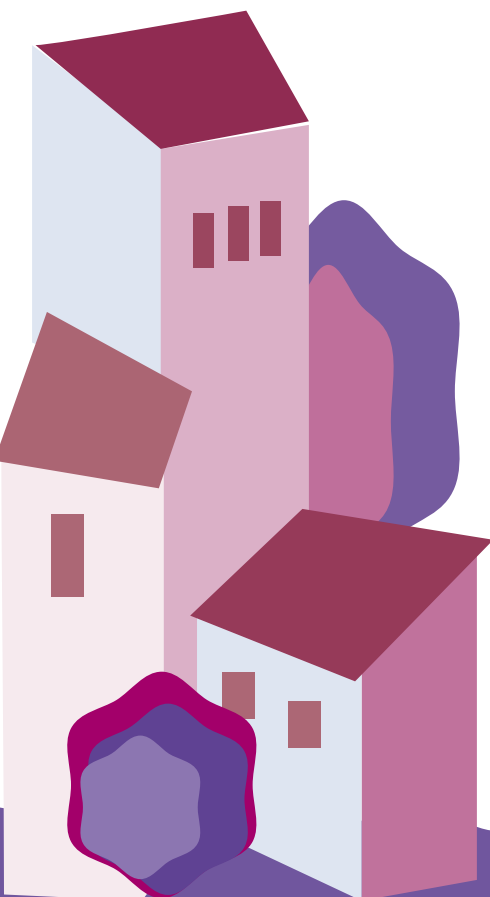
We know you like getting guaranteed monthly rents...and the security of knowing the Housing Commission will help you with pre-screening and leasing up quickly. But did you also know we make it our business to help you stay in (the rental) business? We work hard to keep our rent payment standards right up there with

today’s market. Case in point: we worked with HUD to raise rent limits three times last year. So when you’re ready to rent your unit, all you have to do is help us ensure the rent is reasonable for the neighborhood and that you’re not charging more than for unassisted tenants in the same complex. (We make exceptions if you want to set a higher rent because it’s a nicer or bigger unit, or if you’re offering better amenities.)

P.S.: Here are some tips for helping speed up the “rent reasonableness” part of

the inspection:

- Be sure to fill out the “comparable rents” section of the Request for Tenancy Approval form.
- Take a peek in the classifieds to see if your proposed rent is similar to the “going rate” for similar units in your area.
- Tell us if you disagree! If we say your rent’s not “reasonable” and you think it is, just tell us (and give us examples of similar places nearby that are renting at that rate, please). We promise to listen!



Sailing Through Your Property Inspection



On Closer Inspection...

What's up with these annual inspections, you may ask. Why are they necessary? Because HUD asks us to ensure that health and safety standards are met. That's not only good for your tenant but helpful for you, too. For example, if we see that your water heater doesn't have a pressure relief valve, it could burst – even be a potential fire hazard – so taking care of it could save lives, not to mention money. Besides, inspections are only once a year (at initial lease-up, then a year later), unless a problem occurs and we need to do a special inspection. (By the way, as part of our new “fast-track” program, we can now do those initial inspections before you've even selected your tenant.)

To the right is a check-off list to help you with your next inspection. (Note, items that most frequently cause inspections to not pass are in italics.) For more info about inspections, see below.

Inspection Staff

“Fast track” pre-inspections

Steve Callow.....619/578-7675

General inspection questions

Gary Baxter619/578-7607

Scheduling follow-up inspections

.....619/578-7650

(For move-in and special inspection questions, please call the tenant's housing assistant.)

Inspection Checklist

- ✓ **Doors.** Make sure doors to the outside have properly working locks. At least one exit door must be accessible to the outside without the use of a key.
- ✓ **Ceilings, walls, and floors** should have no large cracks, holes, peeling paint, leaks, or serious structural defects. Carpets should lay flat. (Note, we check for lead paint problems, but we can also help fix them.)
- ✓ **Windows and screens.** If windows are accessible from the outside, they should have *permanently installed working locks*. They also need to be in good condition without cracks or leaks. (Hint: cracks and gaps can be fixed with silicone or weather stripping.) If screens are present, they should fit properly with no holes or tears. Please make sure each bedroom has at least one window that opens (sometimes they're painted shut), and that *if iron bars are installed they have a “quick release” capability and take only one step to open (for example, with only one handle to lift)*.
- ✓ **Smoke detectors.** Each floor should have its own working smoke detector.
- ✓ **Kitchen fixtures and appliances** should all be in good working condition, including: faucets (should run hot and cold without dripping or leaks), oven/stove (*all knobs and burners should be present* and working, and the stovetop free of grease), refrigerator (make sure it's clean, and that the lights turn on and the doors shut properly), dishwasher, garbage disposal, lights, drawers and cabinets. Water heaters need to be working (and if placed in the garage, need to be placed on a platform 18 inches off the ground), have earthquake straps, and a properly installed pressure release valve (with a discharge line directed downward that reaches six to 24 inches from the ground).
- ✓ **Heating.** A *permanent (vs. portable)* working heating system needs to be in place.
- ✓ **Electrical switches and outlets.** Make sure that fuse boxes and wires are covered and that outlet cover plates are in place and not cracked.
- ✓ **Bathrooms** should be clean and free of mildew. Faucets, toilets, and light fixtures must work. *Also, be sure to reconnect the vent if your previous tenant disconnected it because of the noise.*
- ✓ **Exterior.** Last but not least, we'll take a look outside to make sure there's a working mailbox, that the address is visible from the street, fences are in good condition, and that there isn't any chipped or peeling paint or graffiti. (For free graffiti-removal service, please call 619/525-8522.)

Gettin' Stuff Fixed

When inspection time draws near for your existing tenants, repairs are sometimes needed. But just like the regular rental market, repairs aren't always the owner's responsibility. Although you'd be the one to take care of repairs caused by normal wear and tear and, say, most plumbing repairs, some repairs fall to the tenant – for example, if their kid flushed a toy down the toilet or tossed a football through a window. So rest assured, if we come out for an inspection and see something that needs fixing, and it's the tenant's fault, we'll ask the tenant to fix it.



The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Owners in the News

Two of our rental property owners were featured in the news recently. The story of owner Daniel Bauer appeared in the Housing Commission CEO's San Diego Daily Transcript "Good Neighbors" column. Mr. Bauer, who sells motor homes, had learned about the program from one of his customers – a gentleman whose down payment came from cash saved up from renting to Section 8 households. Bauer was so impressed he was inspired to purchase a rental property and lease it to a family with a voucher. His plan is now to gradually purchase as many as ten homes and rent them to Section 8 households. Also in the news was David McBride, who was interviewed for a story in the San Diego Union-Tribune. Mr. McBride – who is now leasing three of his four properties to Section 8 renters – was quoted about how he decided to accept vouchers after learning about program improvements and how Section 8 families are just regular people struggling to get by. "These are people who are just down on their luck," he said, adding, "Plus, so far, I've had good success with the program."



VIEWpoint is published by the Rental Assistance Department as a way to keep rental owners/managers updated on issues and policies regarding housing assistance programs. If you have any ideas for future stories, or if you have any suggestions about our programs, please contact Owner Liaison Lynda Taylor at 619/578-7680; lyndat@sdhc.org.

Don't Wait to Take That Check to the Bank—Let Us Do it For You!

You've heard it from your tenants and maybe even from us sometimes: "The check's in the mail." So you wait until it gets to your mailbox so you can take it to the bank. No longer! We now offer direct deposit, launched January 1. Since then, over 1,000 owners have signed up. Benefits include saving time and getting paid faster. (We deposit your check every month on the first.) Note, we still have to cut checks for the first month your tenant leases up, but direct deposit is available for all payments after that. For more information, or to request a direct deposit form, please call Cris Bolton, 619/578-7688.



Good Neighbors
San Diego
Housing Commission

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A state agency authorized by
the City of San Diego