

Desire Area Resident Council
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The Honorable Sue Kelly
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations
2129 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
May 25, 2001

Re: Response Letter

Dear Sir,

Pertaining to our conversation on the above date, I am responding to the inquiry of your office. In reference to the information requested, my response is as follow:

I. Living Conditions at Desire

In 1992, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development had the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing to do a Case Study and Site Examination Report on Desire Neighborhood. The Commission sites numerous factors leading up to the current distressful conditions at Desire. Their report stated there were 900 hundred residents occupying Desire's 1,800 units at that time. Currently there are 70, residents on site. Due to the aggressive recommendations of Gilbane-CAM's program manager in August 13,1999, to revised Desire's residents plans especially relocation plans. In spite resident's oppositions to relocate without the Community Supportive Services, a sound design, and construction scheduled in place prior to relocation any of Desire residents.

H.A.N.O. grew very leery of Desire residents' needs of preventive maintenance, election to draw back much of its needed manpower, and chose to wait on HUD to approve funding through (HOPE VI.). For this cause there is addition distress, which have ascended upon our families and the neighborhood. Now for the past five years, this distress has departed with an estimated 830 beloved residents, who while under duress

relocated into other minority neighborhood. Most residents anticipating relocating back on site after the completion of the new units were hit with a sudden ray of light that had shine through residents' deep depression and oppression. The people hearts rejoice as their souls (lives) began to come alive again at the scent of water call freedom and pursue of life, but as if for a moment we bathe.

Interim Director Benjamin Bell at that time heard the cried of seniors and other residents; he implements a plan to turnover eleven apartments. Eleven residents were places out of harms way into phase (3) from an inconsistence demolition schedule. Also while operating as interim director Mr. Bell, held an on site town hall meeting with about two hundred residents in attendance. Most residents complain about maintenance response. Names of residents were taken in attempt to address their problems. But again, someone tired his hands and hope was deferred and made residents sick. Desire residents are left awaiting the America Dream, and the pursue of happiness though its (Hope VI Grant) Homeownership Opportunity for People Everywhere to alleviate the distressful conditions in which it did promise. Listed below are the HopeVI Program Objectives.

- 1). To foster innovation and comprehensive approaches to the problem of severely distressed public housing development and their residents.
- 2). To address the current problems and pursue successful solutions in the boldest and most effective manner.
- 3). To produce public housing communities that will inspire their residents and their neighbors.
- 4). To address the condition of people in public housing developments, and not merely the brick and mortar.
- 5). To have the broadest possible effect in meeting the social and economic needs of the residents and the surrounding community.

II. Promise / Covenants Broken

- 1). The M.O.U. Agreement between the Authority and D.A.R.C effectuated in June 1996.
- 2). On August 12, 1999 at a meeting with the Desire residents, HANO, and Gilbane CAM (Desire's Hope VI Program Manager Matt Power) where residents expressed their concern **against** the revised relocation plan. The plan would remove all residents off site prior to the construction of any new units. HANO and Gilbane have continued to move all residents off site and against the promise made under residents relocation plan 1994. Though letters were sent out in Sept. 1999 to residents in phases (3) that wished to remain on-site until phases (1) were completed, the transition component was changed without informing the Residents Council or residents. As of today, there is no new construction at Desire.
- 3). HANO did not secure a Community and Supportive Services Provider during the Hope VI Planning process. If this entity were in place it would have addressed issues 4 & 5. under the above mention Hope VI Program Objectives under the Grant agreement

Prepared residents for homeownership and economic development opportunities. The Case Management Component would have addressed the mental and social stress incurred with moving residents from one distress public housing community to another distress public housing community. It would have also help residents deal with moving into the so-called “middle class” neighborhoods through the HANO Section 8 Program. Instead residents moved into neighborhoods only to find they were not welcomed or wanted. We believe that Social workers and Professional Medical caretakers should have been involved to assist the residents with the mental and social stress caused by abrupt displacement and not knowing what to expect once residents left the housing community.

4). The Desire Area Resident Council is the representative elected to express the concerns of the resident of Desire. During the beginning of Desire Hope VI planning process, residents believed that the Hope VI Program was to build a community for them and their families. However, the political process has robbed them of their hope and the HOPE VI program. It would be a disaster to rebuild the community without the initial residents. It is simply ashamed that the residents of Desire have endured six years without any of the Community and Supportive Services Programs.

New units will someday be built under the mix-income neighborhood concept, which only calls for 265 public housing units. Since our residents have not received proper economic/financial training they cannot afford to purchase these new homes once they are constructed. Now we have a hardship because the residents are in a financial hardship because they not ready financially to move in the Homeownership units neither the tax-credit units because of delay of the CSSP.

At this time we would like recommend that our plans be amended to included at least 800 more public housing units. It is justifiable because at this time many residents can only afford to pay 30% or less of their income towards rent or a mortgage.

Note: Desire Hope VI Grant Agreement, Article IV: par. 4: Covenants and Conditions: The Grantee will ensure that persons displaced by reconstruction activities funded under the Hope VI Grant will be eligible under the revitalization Plan for occupancy of the replacement units.

Recommended Operational Changes At HANO

1. HANO, should use force account budget for preventive maintenance activities in Desire.
2. HANO, must secure capital funding to complete all redevelopment activities in Desire and other public housing communities.
3. HANO, must monitor the level participation of residents in all of the stages of redevelopment, (planning, implementation, and actual construction).
4. HANO, should provide technical assistance and training to all resident leadership groups (RC, RMC, and RAB etc.) to ensure meaningful participation in partnership capacity with HANO.

5. HANO, should implement Resident Management initiatives to assume management of Desire upon completion of the development and to sphere-head self-sufficiency for Desire residents.
6. Facilitate on -going training of residents real estate, marketing, and other homeownership strategies.
7. Immediate implementation of the allocation of funds in the Hope VI Grant for soft cost to support self -sufficiency for residents.

Sincerely,

Deborah Davis/ President