



## HACSC Reduces Section 8 Tenant Rent, Lifts Moratorium on Rent Increases for Landlords

Some better news for our Section 8 tenants and landlords came last month when our agency's Board reversed some of the tough changes it made last year to the Section 8 program because of federal sequestration budget cuts. Hoping to ease at least some of the hardship on tenants, the Board reduced tenants' share of housing costs from 35 to 32% of the household's monthly gross income, effective September 1. In addition, the one-year moratorium on rent increases for landlords will end on July 1, a move the Board hopes will encourage landlords to continue renting to their Section 8 tenants.

While Congress continues forcing public housing authorities to ride a federal funding roller coaster, our Moving to Work (MTW) program flexibility has allowed HACSC to adjust -- and re-adjust -- the Section 8 rent calculation in order to maintain rental assistance to all voucher holders. We know that last year's rental assistance changes were hard for many clients, most of whom are living on fixed incomes with barely enough money for food or medicine. Because the Section 8 program is 100% federally funded, any funding shortfall has a direct and immediate impact on the fragile population it serves, especially here in Santa Clara County where rent and the cost of living are among the highest in the nation.

Though Congress has substantially restored HACSC's Section 8 funding for 2014, 2015 federal funding levels are unknown. Recognizing the Section 8 program's vital role in the county-wide safety net, the most recent adjustments to our program will allow the agency to continue to replenish minimal reserve funds in order to avoid, once again, having to consider the option of dropping families from the Section 8 program. About 17,000 Santa Clara County households are dependent on the \$204 million in federal rental payments each year.

HACSC's Board will continue doing what it can to reduce the burden on low-income families. It has directed HACSC staff to explore the possibility of further rent reductions for seniors and disabled people on fixed incomes.

Thank you for partnering with us in our mission to keep families housed.  
Alex Sanchez, Executive Director



## MTW: Local Solutions to Affordable Housing

The Moving to Work (MTW) program's advantages were never more apparent than last September when Section 8 program changes allowed HACSC to maintain rental assistance to all voucher holders (about 17,000 households) despite the 2013 federal sequester that otherwise would have required the termination of almost 1,000 families from the program. But for the availability of MTW reserve funds, flexibility in use of funds, and the ability to implement changes to the rental assistance program, HACSC would not have been able to continue vital rental assistance and community programs already underway in Santa Clara County.

Created by Congress in 1996, the MTW program gives HACSC and other MTW-designated housing authorities the flexibility to make strategic program and policy changes to meet the specific affordable housing needs in our local communities. HACSC was selected for the MTW program in 2008.

As the nation's 10th largest public housing authority, HACSC is joining other MTW agencies in working to protect and expand the MTW program. Congressional support for making the MTW program permanent and expanding it is essential to fostering new approaches to provide housing assistance to low-income families.



## HACSC Improves Energy-Efficiency, Sets New Standards of Environmental Sustainability for Affordable Housing

### Property Spotlight: Clarendon Street Apartments, San José



We're excited to report that a new 181-kilowatt solar system at our recently renovated Clarendon Street family apartments in San José (near Cupertino) is now 100% producing into the Pacific Gas & Electric grid. This large solar system has the potential to offset 100% of the property's electrical usage for all 80 units and the common area. HACSC intends to use a portion of the PG&E solar rebate (which could amount to about \$392,000, depending on actual performance)

to provide the entire property with wireless high-speed Internet access. The residents also have benefited from the covered parking that was installed to hold the solar panels. Clarendon Street Apartments was fully renovated in 2013 to provide improved energy-efficiency and on-site amenities. In addition to a new community room, all apartments were refurbished with new carpet, vinyl, cabinets, bathrooms and air conditioning as well as solar heating for a total project cost of \$12.5 million.

HACSC has made environmental sustainability a priority as it rehabilitates affordable housing units throughout Santa Clara County. Clarendon Street, Rincon Gardens Apartments in Campbell and Cypress Gardens Apartments in San José are a few of 11 HACSC- owned or - controlled properties that have had recent major rehabilitation thanks to public-private partnerships including the use of federal low-income housing tax credits.

Other environmental upgrades at HACSC properties have included tankless water heaters; dual-pane, energy efficient windows; low-VOC paint and carpeting; motion-sensing and photovoltaic-powered lights as well as LED parking-stall lighting; Energy Star appliances; and low-water, low-maintenance landscaping.



Photos: Clarendon Street Apartments, San José

## Tenant Satisfaction Survey

As the delivery of quality service to clients remains paramount to HACSC, the agency conducts an annual survey of its residents. The survey asks residents about all aspects of the physical condition of their homes and the quality of the services they receive. Survey responses provide a snapshot of residents' level of satisfaction and highlight common issues and concerns across properties. The results also provide insight into particular strengths or weaknesses at individual properties, directing HACSC and property managers where to focus attention and resources.

The results of the 2013 survey were outstanding. Residents gave high marks on their housing experience. For example:

- 88% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "I am satisfied with the value of my apartment for the rent I pay."
- 85% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed: "This housing provides a safe, secure environment."
- 89% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed: "I would recommend this housing to a friend or family member."

The surveys were distributed by mail in four languages, and an independent consultant analyzed and reported the results. Almost 1,200 households responded to the 2013 survey for a response rate of 44%, up 6% from 2012.