

UPDATE ON THE RENOVATION OF FORT CUMBERLAND HOMES

We are getting close to finalizing our financing and starting renovations at Fort Cumberland Homes. This document will serve to update you on many of the details which were presented at the resident meeting conducted on October 17, 2019.

All tenants residing at Fort Cumberland Homes in January 2017, as well as those who have moved in since then, have received two documents: 1) The RAD General Information Notice (GIN) and 2) the RAD Information Notice (RIN). (If anyone did not receive these please contact Debra Brooks.) The purpose of those documents is to advise you of the plans to renovate the development and convert it to a new form of subsidized housing, as well as your rights.

Our housing staff is working daily with all of our development team to bring this large renovation project to a reality. Multiple divisions of HUD have been involved in guiding and approving the conversion process, as well as assuring that no one loses their housing and your rights are protected. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development is arranging the financing of this project, as well as providing some funding and will monitor the construction process. In addition to the routine conference calls and meetings with DHCD, their officials have traveled to Cumberland and visited the site. EADS Architects and East Hills Engineering have completed 90% of the design and specification process. The Belt Group, who will serve as the general contractor, has submitted their pricing for the project work and is preparing for construction. Rounding out the development team is the Cumberland Housing Group, serving as owner and developer with technical and financial assistance provided by the Chesapeake Community Advisors of Baltimore.

PROPOSED CHANGES & IMPROVEMENTS

General

- Twelve units are being downsized from 2BR to 1BR units to address the need with the second bedroom being converted to storage
- Building #9 will be converted into a Community Center featuring: a kitchen, table and chairs for resident and council activities; a rear patio; a computer center; site office; and new mailboxes mounted under a porch for protection. A rent collection box will be present on site to place your rent payments instead of traveling to the main office.
- Four physically handicapped accessible and two hearing impaired units will be created

Exterior:

- New roofs with three separate colors and soffit, fascia, gutters and spouting
- New 6 panel front and rear entry doors, hardware and locks
- Porch over the unit front entrance with a ceiling light to be on dusk to dawn
- Vinyl siding replaced with colored Hardy Board siding
- New large rear patio with device implanted in concrete for chaining down grills, bikes, etc.
- The panel under the ground floor windows to remain but will be painted to match siding and doors for that building
- Dumpster improvements: the dumpster in front of building 3 and 9 will be eliminated; the dumpster area at building 5 will be enlarged to two dumpsters and a recycling center with a privacy panel installed around and above; the dumpster at building 1 will be relocated to the area near the playground in front of building 1
- New project signage and aluminum fence to replace area at Lamont Street/Blvd area

- Walks at the rear of some buildings will be removed to afford more green space
- New electrical distribution lines and a small section of storm water drains
- New walks and repaving in many areas
- Additional video surveillance to provide nearly 100% coverage of development
- Clothes lines, storage sheds and fences will be removed
- Housing will perform all mowing work moving forward
- Tenants will not be permitted to have anything on their front porch or in the grass.
- The rear patio will be limited to an outdoor patio set (table and chairs designed for outdoor use), one grill and one bicycle per tenant-nothing else.

Interior:

- New cabinets, counters, wall coverings and appliances in kitchens
- Washer and dryer hookups to be located side by side with some units receiving small closet
- New shower surround, medicine cabinet, floor and wall finish in bathrooms
- New no wax luxury vinyl flooring throughout the unit
- Electrical upgrade to unit with additional fixtures and LED lighting
- New individual unit-controlled heating and central air conditioning

All renovations have been engineered and designed based upon or in accordance with Local, State and Federal laws, Uniform Building Code, National Electrical & Plumbing Code, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development housing rehabilitation requirements, and Americans with Disability Act/Section 504 Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards.

Moving Forward

As we work through the final stages of the conversion, financing and construction plans, we are being told to plan for a “closing” on all of these items in the 1st quarter of 2020 with a planned construction start date around April 1, 2020. We will have a dedicated Relocation Coordinator who will be working with each tenant to prepare and complete the relocation and conversion process including the coordination of moving activities, the transfer of utilities, change of addresses, execution of new lease documents, etc.

Over the past two years, new move-ins have only been processed for special circumstances so as to provide a supply of vacant units. We are approved by HUD to have up to 30 vacant units (which may be increased later) which will provide units for initial construction and for temporary tenant relocation where necessary. Temporary relocation is anticipated to be limited to less than 10 families for a period of 4-6 months. Most tenants will only move one time to a new renovated unit.

ALL TENANTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO MOVE FROM THEIR CURRENT UNIT which is permitted through your lease. Only a very small number of tenants will return to their original unit. All qualified tenants wishing to remain at the current Fort Cumberland Homes development will be able to do so.

All tenants will be notified in writing 90 Days prior to their planned move date. The Relocation Coordinator will meet with each family to complete a relocation worksheet of needs and develop a plan for all move related activities. The Coordinator will again meet with the tenant on or near the 60, 30- and 5-day periods to assure that all items are completed and the tenant is ready to move. Housing will be providing boxes, tape, markers, etc. needed for you to pack your personal items.

Professional movers will be contracted by Housing to perform the physical move of your belongings. All costs associated with the move will be paid by housing.

Renovations will be starting in buildings with a large vacancy to minimize temporary relocation needs. Future permanent placement will be based upon family size and the construction schedule. When renovations are complete on one building, current tenants will be relocated to that building and will then be a resident of River Bend Court and a participant under the HUD Section 8 Project Based Rental Assistance/Tax Credit. Once the last current tenant has been moved into a permanent rehabilitated unit, Public Housing will cease to exist at this development. The Cumberland Housing Group will still be the owner and the General Partner in RIVER BEND COURT, LP.

These two programs operate similar and almost exactly the same for the tenant. Rent is still calculated as 30% of income but there is no longer a flat rent or cap. Since residents will have control of their heat and air conditioning, they will be responsible for paying the Gas bill in addition to the current Electric bills. New Utility Allowances have been calculated based upon the new equipment to be installed and will be subtracted from the 30% rent calculation and therefore you should see no major change in your rent.

Important: Tenants who may have an unpaid Columbia Gas account will need to contact the company to determine if you owe and how much. You will then need to get the amount paid or you will not be able to get the gas hooked up which means no heat. We are advising you of this now so that you will have at least nine months to pay off any balance owed.

In Conclusion

We are excited about the opportunity to perform some much-needed major renovations to this development and to enhance the interior living conditions for your family. We are also looking forward to enhancing the site appearance through this complete makeover.

We understand that this conversion and renovation will result in some turbulence in your life and you may be unhappy about not returning to your current unit. We apologize for those issues but the new unit and improvements will be worth it.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact your Property Manager, Debra Brooks, or the Director of Property Management, Carole Moreland.

Reminder

Columbia Gas is beginning to replace all gas lines through the development and eventually to each unit. Construction will begin November 18th, and will likely be finished by February, 2020. This will result in some areas that will be restricted access as equipment and materials will be left onsite. In addition, the areas of construction will have torn up ground, loose gravel and some portions of sidewalks will be removed. If the areas are coned off in any way, all tenants and visitors will not be permitted to walk through those sections for safety reasons.