

 **Public Housing Association of Residents (PHAR)**

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Dear Fellow Residents,

We are the 2013 PHAR Interns. Our mission is to educate and empower low-income residents to protect and improve our own communities through collective action. In this letter we are talking about RAD- Rental Assistance Demonstration. We have learned a lot about RAD through our program and what we have learned we want to share with our fellow residents of public housing.

RAD is the conversion of public housing into project based housing. It is not guaranteed. It is an experiment that could possibly end public and affordable housing in Charlottesville. CRHA has been considering applying for RAD, but did not in 2013 thanks mostly to many residents like you who have spoken out.

… but… RAD IS NOT DEAD!

CRHA is still considering RAD because redevelopment needs to be done. Housing authorities have to apply and be approved by HUD for a RAD conversion. HUD only allows for a set amount of units to be converted nationwide (for now) and that limit (called a “cap”) has been reached. Even though CRHA did not apply, and might not be approved if they do, Congress may raise the cap, and RAD may become the “wave of the future” for public housing across the country.

CRHA did not apply because they weren’t ready and nearly 100 residents spoke up against it saying that they needed to know more, and that there were still too many unanswered questions, and the Residents Bill of Rights for Redevelopment was being ignored. As interns, and as residents, we thank you for standing up for our communities! There is strength and power in numbers and when residents organized we made a difference!

We have learned a lot about RAD here are the main points: CRHA has not planned this out, plans need to be made with resident input, and everyone needs to know the plan. We need to know what sites would be converted, whether they will be Project Based Vouchers (PBV) or Project Based Rental Assistance (PBRA). Both are under different rules and regulations than current public housing. We need to know what the differences are and how they affect residents! CRHA needs to have some kind of plan for RAD or residents can’t support it, and HUD would not approve it.

While we know very little about the specifics of RAD, we know there are some dangers:

* If they convert to PBV, and convert all 376 units (this is what they are leaning towards) then at least 50% (half) of each site must be designated for use by elderly and disabled people. This will drastically change the makeup of public housing sites, and will leave families unable to access affordable housing.
* Under both PBV and PBRA, decision making leaves residents out of the loop, and excludes the resident advisory board (PHAR) and residents from making input.
* Ownership, management, maintenance, or other duties could be under a third party (not CRHA)
* Minimum rent increases could be made with no say so from residents.
* RAD relies on “mixed-income” development (higher income residents and private housing) to raise the kinds of funds it will take for redevelopment. This could potentially bring in market rate housing into our public housing sites, and decrease the amount of lower-income residents and housing opportunities in our neighborhoods (gentrification).
* Because of mixed-income development and RAD, some units will be moved to other sites. One for one replacement is supposedly guaranteed, but RAD allows for the units to be replaced elsewhere. If they wind up converting half to elderly and disabled a lot of families will be shifted out of their current communities.
* Resident protections will be reduced, and there are problems with grievance procedures under both PBV and PBRA. Filing grievances is one of the most important options for residents when they have conflicts with CRHA.
* Waiting lists for housing will be continually closed, with those on the bottom remaining on the bottom of the list as CRHA favors mobility vouchers first and foremost (people moving out). This will affect both the previously public housing waiting list and the Section 8 waiting list.
* There are too many unanswered questions. As interns we have identified 143 questions that have yet to get answers, and the questions keep coming!

There is a danger in CRHA decision making when not everyone is well informed. The biggest unanswered questions are:

* Convert to PBV or PBRA? They have indicated that they think PBV is best, but have given no reason as to why they think this.
* Which Sites will be developed first? Will it be the sites with the most need, or the sites which are the easiest?
* Will sites be rearranged?
* Will there be mixed-income and market rate housing?
* What are the effects on residents and resident protections?

…And the biggest question of all…

* WHAT IS THE RELOCATION PLAN???

The future of RAD is uncertain. Congress might allow more housing authorities across the country to apply and be approved for RAD, but they might not. Funding from HUD and Congress is always uncertain, so it is hard to know how much RAD might benefit the CRHA’s finances. We know that CRHA is still thinking about RAD, and what we do now as residents will have an effect on the rest of the country. If RAD is “the wave of the future” as some have said, then we need to make sure that residents don’t get trampled in the process, and that residents have a say in the decision making about their neighborhoods.

A CALL TO ACTION!

As interns and residents we have taken action. We have educated residents about RAD and encouraged residents to speak up and attend meetings and other actions. Residents put a stop to RAD for 2013 by getting involved and showing up. We thank you and ask that you continue to show up, speak up, and act out when necessary. You can get involved by:

* Joining the next PHAR Intern Program
* Call or e-mail PHAR (434) 984-3255, brandon@pharcville.org
* Stay updated by visiting the PHAR website [www.pharcville.org](http://www.pharcville.org) and finding us on facebook.
* Attend CRHA meetings- next meeting is February 24 at 7 pm at City Hall

If RAD has to happen we can influence decisions that affect residents all across the country and here in Charlottesville by standing up for the Residents Bill of Rights for Redevelopment, getting guarantees for resident protections like grievances, resident organizing, and protecting low-income communities from being eliminated and gentrified.

…BUT…

Only If We Organize!

If RAD is the future then getting residents involved now will make sure that it is on OUR TERMS, and what we do now will affect residents in the rest of the country where RAD is already underway.

Standing Together as Residents,

The PHAR Interns

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