



Access BHA: Improving Accessibility for All

Frequently Asked Questions for Residents in Elderly/ Disabled Developments

What is Access BHA?

The BHA recently signed an agreement with HUD to make 5% of its units and its common area spaces handicapped accessible within 5 years. Access BHA is the plan BHA is developing to achieve this goal. This plan will mean that 267 apartments in the family developments and 100 apartments in the elderly/disabled developments will be upgraded so that they are fully handicapped accessible. Common areas at developments throughout the city will be upgraded so they are handicapped accessible as well.

Who is going to live in the new accessible units?

There is a consistent and unmet need within the current BHA resident and applicant population for accessible units. Some who require accessible units are currently living in non-accessible units, while those on the wait list who need the units often endure a longer wait. In addition, the BHA hired an independent consultant to conduct a comprehensive survey of area housing patterns. The survey concluded that 4.8% of families eligible for public housing in Greater Boston are in need of accessible units. To raise public awareness of the new units, the BHA will conduct an extensive outreach program through regional advocacy organizations.

How did the BHA decide where to upgrade units?

The BHA has a preliminary construction plan and used the following criteria to determine which developments would be the best location for creation of accessible units:

- Layout of the development buildings and grounds
- Ease of access to the units
- Number of accessible units currently at the development
- Ease of renovating a unit
- Accessibility to medical facilities and public transportation
- Demand for accessible units by size and location

How did the BHA decide which specific units to upgrade?

In most cases, existing wheelchair units will be renovated to bring them up to current federal accessibility standards. Some of these units will be combined with adjacent studio apartments to form much-needed accessible two-bedroom units for residents who need personal care attendants.

How will this affect me?

- There may be construction going on at your site
- Previously planned capital projects will be delayed at many sites
- Residents waiting for transfers and applicants will need to wait longer
- About 5% of residents citywide will have to move temporarily or permanently

Will I have to move?

Probably not. However, a small percentage of residents (about 5 percent of households citywide) will need to move, either temporarily or permanently, so that their current units can be upgraded. The BHA is currently developing a relocation plan in consultation with development LTOs. Under the plan, residents who are asked to move may choose to relocate to an appropriately sized available unit at their current site, receive a Section 8 Voucher, or move to another BHA development.

Will anyone help me move?

Yes. The BHA will provide moving assistance at no cost to the resident. This assistance includes moving all of a resident's belongings and making sure that the post office and utility companies know of the move and make the appropriate connections and changes to the resident's account. The BHA also employs a full-time relocation specialist who will meet with residents personally and make sure that all aspects of their move are worked out.

Will residents be able to participate in the architect/contractor selection process and the design work?

Both design and construction work will be publicly advertised and awarded in accordance with public bidding requirements. The residents will be involved early in the design process through their elected task force representatives. They will meet with BHA staff and the designer to help structure a project to meet resident needs and satisfy code requirements.

When will construction start?

Each development selected for Access BHA improvements has its own design and construction schedule. Construction work will typically start at each development twelve to fifteen months after the architect is given the notice to proceed. The BHA will provide notification of the construction schedule to residents well in advance of the anticipated start date.

What plans are there to limit disruption for residents?

As with any construction project, there will be disruption associated with this work. In order to reduce the level of disruption, the work will be phased so that all units to be upgraded are not under construction at the same time. Additionally, the construction contract will contain strict guidelines to help keep areas safe and clean. Residents will be involved in developing those guidelines through task force participation in the design process. BHA will have staff on-site to assist residents and to monitor the work.

What about delayed capital projects? How will we know what they are?

Given the expense of this project (about \$52 million), the BHA will have no choice but to delay some previously planned capital projects unless it receives additional funding. Your site manager and other BHA staff will be meeting with your tenant representatives about specific work that will be done at your site and about capital projects that will be delayed. The BHA will keep all residents informed about construction schedules and capital improvements as this project goes forward.

How will this project affect residents waiting for transfers and applicants waiting for housing?

This project will impact the BHA's ability to house people on the waiting list as quickly as it has in the past. In order to provide open units for those residents affected by the project, the BHA will need to stop making housing offers at certain locations. This will also impact residents waiting for transfers.

