

# projecthome

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 11, 2012  
TO: CDBG Commission  
FROM: Jan Reek, Director of Programs  
SUBJECT: CDBG Commission Questions for Prairie Crossing

**Update us with the status of the development; vacancy rate, financial stability, Section 8 usage, etc.**

### Status of the Development:

Prairie Crossing is a well-managed affordable housing community serving households with very low incomes. With a property manager and resident services coordinator on staff, we have developed a supportive atmosphere for families struggling with issues of poverty. Amenities at Prairie Crossing include:

- Tasteful landscaping, with two outdoor common areas with grills and playground equipment
- 24 urban garden spaces, 4 large container gardens
- Holiday parties and community activities, monthly newsletter
- On-site food pantry
- Located on the bus route
- Includes heat
- Hardwood floors throughout
- Off-street parking
- Coin-op laundry
- Free storage lockers
- Worry free renting with bi-annual pest control, lawn care and snow removal, and security services on the property as needed

Vacancy Rate:

Currently 6 units (2 market rate units and 4 project-based voucher units) are vacant (13% vacancy rate). All units have applicants approved for move-in.

Financial stability:

Prairie Crossing has become more financially stable over the past several years as the neighborhood has improved and more qualified applicants are applying for residency. We recently achieved a new level of occupancy at Prairie Crossing. In December 2011, we were fully occupied and were able to institute a waiting list system to deal with the demand. There is currently a list of 45 families/individuals waiting to fill out applications for housing. Of those, 40 are waiting to fill out the Section 8 application. By September, we will be fully occupied again.

In 2011 the operating loss was \$40,534, less than one half of the 2010 loss. We are continuing to make progress in stabilizing the finances of the property, in large part due to the City's support in conjunction with the increased demand.

Section 8 usage:

Four of these units are currently vacant. We also have 9 units where the tenants have their own tenant-based vouchers. The voucher subsidizes rents that exceed those of Prairie Crossing, so we think that it is a vote of confidence that people with vouchers choose to live at Prairie Crossing, when they could live elsewhere.

# Prairie Crossing Overview

## Affordable Housing

- Section 42 low-moderate income housing
- 48 units: 20 with Project Based Vouchers (PBV)
- Diverse resident population
  - Ethnically and racially diverse
  - 59% female headed households
  - 53% have a household member with a disability
  - Approximately 50% have limited English proficiency/literacy issues
- Current/Prospective residents face several barriers to maintaining and finding housing
  - Poor credit history
  - Criminal background
  - Low income/Unemployment
  - Language barriers
  - Chemical dependency
  - Domestic violence
  - Mental health diagnoses

## Resident Services

- Case management services
- Community garden
- On-site food pantry
- Resident events/parties
- Job board and employment assistance
- Monthly newsletter and community bulletin boards

## Resident Service Coordinator (RSC) and Case Management Services

*Supportive services are required for residents in PBV units. Residents in non-PBV units receive services by request or if behind in rent or additional issues develop.*

- Provides eviction prevention and advocacy
- Assists with Section 8 applications and process
- Assists with employment search and job training resources
- Assists with applications/concerns with public benefits (Foodshare, Childcare, Emergency Assistance, Medical Assistance, Energy Assistance, WIC)
- Refers to outside agencies for services (Porchlight, Early Childhood Initiative, Joining Forces for Families, Community Action Coalition, St. Vincent De Paul)

- Coordinates community gardens and on-site food pantry
- Creates monthly newsletter and updates building bulletin boards with community events
- Coordinates holiday parties and events
- Attends community meetings
- Assists residents to improve housekeeping skills and develop good rental history

## Outreach

*Residents are referred to Prairie Crossing in several ways. Below are a few of the most common.*

- Current/Past Residents
- Organizational referrals (Joining Forces for Families, Community Action Coalition, The Road Home, Salvation Army, Tenant Resource Center, YWCA, Dane County Parent Council)
- Community meetings
- Listed in the Tenant Resource Center's Affordable Housing booklet



## Homelessness and Prevention

*The majority of Prairie Crossing residents have been homeless at some point in their lives. Many are homeless directly before their residency begins.*

- Shelters and Transitional Housing (Salvation Army, The Road Home, Porchlight, YWCA, Hope House)
- On the Streets (Living in car, doubling up with friends/family, living in motel, etc.)

### Prevention

*Eviction prevention is the focus of Prairie Crossing's supportive services in an attempt to help residents avoid future periods of homelessness. The RSC assists residents with:*

- Securing financial support with past-due rent
- Mediation between residents over disputes
- Advocating for residents with court dates
- Working with residents on money management skills
- Improving housekeeping skills

*The RSC's work has reduced the number of evictions, preventing the disruption of lives and the unrest caused in the community by unstable families.*

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CROSSING

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Prairie  
Crossing  
Apartments

*Section 42 low-moderate  
income housing with  
Project Based Vouchers*