

2009

Herman Goldstein

*Award for Excellence in
Problem-Oriented Policing*

City of Antioch
Community Action Team Program
[C.A.T.]



AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

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SUMMARY

City of Antioch Community Action Team Program [C.A.T.]

In July 2006, the Antioch Police Department found it necessary to change the way of addressing criminal activities and other quality of life issues facing the community due to an outcry from the community and a negative image of the community that was developing. Two significant issues facing the police department and community were a perceived increase in overall crime, especially violent crimes and neighborhood problems resulting from rental and non-owner occupied residences.

In the infinite stages of developing a three year Strategic Plan to address short and long term strategies to deal with the many issues being faced, the Chief of Police developed a special four person Community Action Team (C.A.T.) to address the “now” issues with a specific focus on problem residential rental properties, other problem residences and homeless/transient population issues. The C.A.T. has served as the benchmark for the Police Departments efforts in a “crime suppression and reduction” approach to mitigating criminal activities and quality of life issues. It is serving as a model for the Police Department not just in “responding to crime,” but “proactively reducing crime.” The way in which we deliver services is founded in our belief in the Community Policing model.

The seeking of community input was paramount in the development of the Police Departments three year strategic plan. Immediate results that were recognized by citizens related to the C.A.T. efforts provided a platform for expanding the concept and heightened community awareness and interaction with the department and the City Council. This has been most noticed at "Quality of Life" forums that have been structured quarterly. Although there were many citywide criminal and non-criminal issues that were addressed, problem rental properties, especially those that have Section 8 tenants, and reform of the Contra Costa Housing Authority have been and continue to be a major desire of the community assuring a higher quality of life for those who choose to make Antioch their home.

The model is a continual work in progress and has demonstrated the need, ability and success of partnering with other entities to successfully meet the demands of the citizens of Antioch. Engaging the Community into action has proved to be the catalyst for attaining needed support of the police department and moving the community into a positive light promoting personal accountability and the need to treat others with respect.

FRAMEWORK QUESTIONS (SCANNING)

In 1993, Community Policing was introduced to the citizens of Antioch with a focus on impacting the quality of life. In its infancy stages, the community policing philosophy was only utilized in specific target areas within the city, which were found to generate higher calls for service and /or crime rates. However, this endeavor was very labor intensive and only provided services to a small percentage of the overall city. During the 1990's, the City of Antioch continued to face growth and expansion in the southeast area of the city with continued commercial and residential dwellings being built. As a result of the growth, criminal activity levels and quality of life issues began to increase in many areas outside the realm of Community Policing directed services. In 2001, Community Policing was implemented citywide with the entire Field Services Division espousing the philosophy. It was paramount that Community Policing strategies be developed and instituted throughout the city to address potential future issues proactively.

During the years 2001 to 2006, the continued growth was occurring and police staffing levels were not continuing at the same pace. Although officers were tasked with Community Policing projects and responsibilities, increased calls for service were minimizing the abilities for officers to undertake and develop long term problem solving strategies on given assignments.

In July 2006, the Antioch Police Department found it necessary to change the way of addressing criminal activities and other quality of life issues facing the

community due to an outcry from the community and a negative image of the community that was developing. Two significant issues were a perceived increase in overall crime, especially violent crimes and neighborhood problems resulting from rental and non-owner occupied residences.

In the infinite stages of developing short and long term strategies to deal with the many issues being faced, the Chief of Police developed a special four person Community Action Team (C.A.T.) to address the “now” issues with a specific focus on problem residential rental properties, other problem residences and homeless/transient population issues. Although the C.A.T. was one of many strategies being developed, it has served as the benchmark for the Police Departments efforts in a “crime suppression/reduction” approach to mitigating criminal activities and quality of life issues. It is serving as a model for the Police Department not just in “responding to crime,” but “proactively reducing crime.” The Community Action Team (C.A.T.) was comprised of a Sergeant and three officers. Quality of life issues related to criminal behavior, blight and code enforcement issues were the impetus for the creation of the Community Action team (C.A.T.). From its inception, C.A.T. focused on “problem housing” and quality of life issues related to the homeless. One might ask what constituted a “problem house”. For the sake of brevity, a “problem house” is described as a residence that has generated an inordinate number of calls for police services, in which the violators have yet to be held accountable, arrested or charged in connection with the conduct or criminal behavior. In addition, many of these locations have numerous municipal code violations, which contribute to the neighborhood blight and associated criminal behavior in and around the properties.

Approximately two-thirds of the complaints from the community were about homes later ascertained from the Contra Costa Housing Authority to be occupied by Section 8 recipients; although the vast majority of Section 8 residents follow the rules of the Section 8 program.

Other challenges that were tasked to C.A.T. focused on homeless/transient issues, increased vandalism and graffiti in the downtown area and criminal activities affecting commercial properties.

The challenges that were facing C.A.T. were compounded by ever changing demographics and life styles that had become integrated into the community over a period of time. To implement the C.A.T. efforts, a results based approach was undertaken especially as it related to dealing with Section 8 rental properties. Knowing that the solutions would require a multi-faceted approach with the assistance of various outside agencies, it was learned that a key stakeholder and necessary partner was the Contra Costa Housing Authority. It was this partnership that would promote the greatest impact on problem solving, yet has proven to this day to be the biggest challenge faced by C.A.T. and the City of Antioch.

For the Antioch Police Department, the development of our Strategic Plan not only serves as the foundation for how we will provide police services in the now and in the future, but also serves as the department's vehicle for accomplishing needed change. The way in which we deliver services is founded in our belief in the Community Policing model. The critical aspects of community oriented policing are problem solving, a focus on service delivery at the neighborhood level, and community partnerships.

The seeking of community input was paramount in the development of the Police Departments three year strategic plan. Immediate results that were recognized by citizens related to the C.A.T. efforts provided a platform for expanding the concept and heightened community awareness and interaction with the department and the City Council. This has been most noticed at “Quality of Life” forums that have been structured quarterly. Although there were many citywide criminal and non-criminal issues that were addressed, problem rental properties, especially those that have Section 8 tenants, and reform of the Contra Costa Housing Authority have been and continue to be a major desire of the community.

THE INITIATIVE (ANALYSIS)

The C.A.T. tasked with identifying and finding permanent solutions to difficult problems and societal issues, soon learned that working closely with the Contra Costa Housing Authority, the Antioch Neighborhood Improvement Services Unit, the Antioch Code Enforcement Unit, Probation, Parole and most importantly, the citizens of Antioch was essential to finding short and long term solutions.

The Police Department rapidly realized that a significant portion of problem houses were in fact properties owned by landlords who were participating in the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program, which is managed by the Contra Costa County Housing Authority (CHA). The CHA receives federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the purpose of administering the Section 8 program. The City of Antioch currently has over 1470 rental properties participating in

the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program which is the most of any city in Contra Costa County.

The Community Action Team began working with personnel from the local CHA office and quickly realized the CHA office was understaffed, inexperienced and had no complaint or fraud investigation units. The Community Action Team has been and continues to be diligent in investigating and preparing cases for the CHA. In most of these cases the CAT officers incorporate HUD violations in an effort to assist the CHA with their Section 8 revocation proceedings. From July 2006 to April 2009, C.A.T. referred 146 cases to the CHA.

It was deemed a priority by the Chief of Police and the City Council that a solution to this problem be developed. In the interim, C.A.T. continued to conduct activities and preparing cases for the CHA, most often doing the work that CHA staff is responsible for. Approximately 80% of two C.A.T. officers time was being directed at Section 8 violations. Media attention on program mismanagement and HUD audits resulted in a change of the leadership in the CHA office. Under the new leadership, headway has been made as the CHA is in the process of hiring two background investigators to conduct pre-screening of Section 8 applicants. This will greatly assist C.A.T. and other municipalities in assuring that applicants meet and adhere to Section 8 program requirements.

The C.A.T. is continuing its efforts at addressing problem properties and taking appropriate actions for those who are violating the law and diminishing the quality of life for others living in the area. At the same time, C.A.T. is now able to spend more time

addressing homeless issues and working in partnership with Crime Prevention personnel in implementing Business Watch programs assuring that problem business owners are held accountable in much the same fashion as homeowners and renters.

Having C.A.T. in place with the ability to respond and address citizen calls for service and concerns on a consistent basis, and reducing the number of calls for service to problem rental properties, has been paramount in enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of Antioch and is one of many solutions to a societal issue.

The effectiveness of a program can be measured in many ways. However, the success of the C.A.T. program is best demonstrated by: 1) the ability to reduce calls for service and criminal activities at specified location; 2) the ability to obtain community engagement and foster partnerships; 3) being able to foster and establish formidable and sustaining inter-disciplinary collaborative partnerships with community based organizations; and 4) continue to be the cornerstone for other planning strategies in the City of Antioch towards improving the quality of life and continuing the efforts of reducing crime.

Although problem houses were and are a significant component of the C.A.T. focus, efforts have been directed at addressing “quality of life” issues relating to homelessness, Business Watch, multi-density dwellings and other types of violations.

The C.A.T. personnel are focusing on long term solutions to “homeless” and “perceived homeless” issues surrounding the downtown area of the city, in particular the business district. As the “homelessness” issue is a societal dilemma, it is necessary

that problem solving occur with other stakeholders to move towards a “problem solving” model rather than the continuance of a vicious cycle. Working with available regional community health services has been paramount in addressing “homeless” issues.

Project Reunite was instituted to begin a process where “homeless” individuals are reunited with family members. The first success case involved a “homeless” person being sent to family members in Texas where he was reunited and has successfully become employed. The voluntary program is dependent upon donations and community support.

Another undertaking is the Serial Inebriate Program which involves police personnel interacting with the District Attorney and the County Health Department in developing a diversionary program to address “homeless” persons who are continually being arrested for being under the influence of alcohol. Approaching the matter from a mental health perspective is another example of long term problem solving.

The C.A.T. officers are working with various businesses throughout the community promoting “Business Watch” philosophies as well as addressing various quality of life issues including loitering by “homeless” and other persons. Major shopping center complexes and the downtown commercial area continue to be the focus. Additionally, business owners are expected to comply with promoting positive quality of life atmospheres and taking a proactive role in being a partner with the police department.

The C.A.T. is working in partnership with the department's Crime Prevention Community Service Officer is addressing various issues that are inherent with multi-density dwellings. The Antioch Crime Free Multi-Housing Program is in the formation stages and is a partnership process in addressing rental issues inherent with multi-housing units. Additionally, a monthly apartment managers meeting is held promoting working relationships and partnerships with various stakeholders assuring the highest degree of quality of life issues for tenants and surrounding neighbors.

The following are examples of other strategies that have been developed and instituted to foster community engagement, input and buy-in to create long term partnerships with community, business, faith-based and other stakeholder groups/organizations promoting proactive approaches to improving the quality of life in Antioch:

- **Quality of Life Forums-** quarterly City Council Town Hall forums providing information to the citizens and serving as a platform for concerns and opinion to be voiced.
- **Coffee with the Cops-** designed to allow citizens to interact monthly with police managers and coffee establishments in the city.
- **Youth Intervention Network-** Combines best practices and programs by networking them together to provide a continuum of support to youth and young adults most at risk for committing and/or becoming victims of violence.

- **Antioch Children’s Health Alliance-** group of parents and youth, community-based organizations and city agencies that have come together to address ways to improve the health of Antioch families.
- **United Citizens for Better Neighborhoods-** a grass roots group of citizens who have engaged the community to promote an improved quality of life in neighborhoods and making individuals responsible for their actions.
- **Contra Costa Housing Authority-** fostered a working relationship with the Police Department to assure accountability for Section 8 renters.
- **Neighborhood Improvement Services-** fostered a working relationship with the City of Antioch NIS program to promote the highest degree of accountability and follow through with violators.
- **Media Marketing-** obtained positive media exposure including newspaper articles, television news coverage and Congressional recognition.
- **Business Watch-** implementation of Business Watch program with Crime Prevention personnel addressing crime, graffiti and homeless/transient issues.
- **Political Action-** Congressional reform for Section 8 programs.

INITIATIVE EVALUATION (RESPONSE)

The most significant success of the C.A.T. team has been their work to uncover abuses of the H.U.D. Section 8 housing voucher program in Contra Costa County and reduce calls for service at problem rental houses in the City of Antioch. The evidence developed by the C.A.T. team has led to U.S. Congressional reforms involving the operation of section 8 programs nationwide. The C.A.T. team has also

served as a neighborhood problem solving example for other policing agencies. Those agencies include the Oakley, Livermore, Concord, Fremont, and Brentwood Police Departments.

One of the challenges that has surfaced during the tenure of the C.A.T., has been the criticism and challenges to their actions from those who chose to violate the law and special interest groups representing those individuals. The Police Department has remained committed to carrying out it's effort in reducing criminal activities based on a complaint driven model. Although time consuming and often creating a heightened sense of frustration, it is these challenges that have proved to be most responsible for the community engagement taking on a pro-active approach in supporting the Police Department and making it known that the citizens will prevail in improving the quality of life for those who choose to reside, work and visit and live in Antioch.

Perhaps the team's strongest attribute has been their continued perseverance in the wake of adversity; never failing to adhere to their primary goal of making Antioch a safer place to live, work, and play. This can best be supported by the fact that C.A.T. has received accolades from U.S. Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher, the California Peace Officer's Association, the Antioch City Council, the Antioch Chamber of Commerce, the United Citizens for Better Neighborhoods (UCBN) and the citizens of Antioch.

A significant objective was to identify the Police Department costs in providing police services related to Section 8 violations. Incorporated in these costs are direct and indirect departmental labor costs. Direct labor costs include the staff time directly

related to the service provided and these costs include salary and benefits. Indirect costs relate to staff time consisting of supervision, departmental administrative activities, which can include clerical staff, materials and supplies and portions of a department head. Additionally, indirect costs can include, but is not limited to; City Management, City Attorney, Finance Department, Risk Management, etc. It was determined that the estimated cost to the City was approximately \$320,000. Although an allocation policy agreement was to be negotiated with the CHA, it did not come to fruition. However, the CHA's hiring of two background investigators will serve to mitigate the need for a policy agreement and will be considered a significant result of the C.A.T. efforts.

The following is an overview of C.A.T activities and results through the end of calendar year April 2009:

C.A.T. Statistics

July 2006 to April 2009

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| • Total cases investigated | 357 |
| • Section 8 properties | 172 (48.2%) |
| • Rental properties | 93 (26.1%) |
| • Owner occupied properties | 57 (16.0%) |
| • Others (commercial, etc) | 35 (9.8%) |
| • Section 8 properties referred to Housing Authority | 146 |
| • Total arrests | 248 |
| • Total Citations | 356 |
| • Total meetings/citizen contacts | 813 |

In evaluating the success of the C.A.T., statistics have provided a base of its success. However, the real measure of success has been the engagement of the community in not only supporting the C.A.T. and the police department, but the concerted effort in striving towards improving the quality of life in the City of Antioch. The successes have been acknowledged from the local to the federal levels. At the same time, the C.A.T. has served as a catalyst for the development and fostering of other long term relationships developing a proactive strategy in promoting healthier quality of life issues assuring that Antioch is a place where the citizens feel safe, desire to live and raise their families.

LESSONS LEARNED (ASSESSMENT)

The C.A.T. has provided an opportunity for the Antioch Police Department to evaluate how service is to be provided for the next several years. The paramount lesson learned is that the decision to move towards a “crime solving” operational philosophy is both challenging and labor intensive. The “mindset” change that is occurring did not happen quickly and is an on-going process.

The development of a Strategic Plan has been key in supporting the operational philosophy, but the actions of the C.A.T. have demonstrated that positive change can occur if the desire and willingness to endure are accepted. The successes have far outweighed the challenges put forth by those who do not have a desire to promote healthy life styles and promote respect for others.

The “Community Policing” philosophy must be espoused for long term sustainable successes to occur. The C.A.T is a true example of how a small unit can foster partnerships and engage community members towards a common goal in the promotion of an improved quality of life. A lesson learned is that the Antioch community was desirous of positive change and was willing to get involved to be part of the process.

The fostering of partnerships has been deemed to be a core element of the C.A.T. success and at the same time has been the vehicle for the development of other programs and activities promoting positive change. The lessons that have been learned are many, but the most encouraging lesson learned is that the citizens really do care about their community, their police department, and are willing to seek change striving for an enhanced quality of life.

In order for positive change to continue, sustainability of joint efforts by developed partnerships must continue and the on-going evaluation of the department’s Strategic Plan is vital.

ATTACHMENTS



*Certificate of Special
Congressional Recognition*

Presented to

Antioch Police C.A.T. Team

*in recognition of outstanding and invaluable
service to the community.*

October 24, 2006

DATE

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Elton Auscher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

U.S. Congress Recognition of C.A.T.



SE Antioch: Section 8 Property:

- Section 8 home. The authorized head of household has prior felony convictions for drug sales and fraud.
- She committed fraud when she tried to obtain Social Services aid, and she is on probation for the fraud conviction.
- The home depicted in the next slide has an approximate market value of \$1 million.
- Gas City Drug Sting Operation: An occupant of this same property was arrested for drug possession.
- Prior Section 8 property had 50 police CFS in 2 years.



Section 8 Fraud Facts

Another Million Dollar Home



- Section 8 voucher property. Recipient also renting home across the street.
- Parolee/290 brother-in-law staying in rental home provided by recipient.
 - Rental home has a pool, waterfall, hot tub, and a basketball court.
- Section 8 recipient receiving state aid for 6 foster children. (\$1,500 - \$1,700 per child)
- HOHH receives \$108,000 - \$122,000 of state aid annually.
- 2007 Mercedes SLK 350 in garage. Recipient said it was a gift.
- Section 8 recipient has employed a:
 - Housekeeper
 - Landscaper
 - Pool Service Worker
 - Nanny to help with foster children care

Section 8 Fraud Case

Section 8

Rental



\$75,000 Gift



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Antioch, California

Antioch's \$1 million Section 8 home

TJDSO/WILLE
by Dave Roberts
Staff Writer

A million-dollar home in Antioch with a built-in swimming pool was recently rented by a tenant receiving a taxpayer-subsidized Section 8 housing voucher. The garage contained a \$75,000 Mercedes SKL350, a Bentley and a custom motorcycle worth close to \$100,000.

It's an example of the Section 8 fraud and abuse described by Police Chief Jim Hyde in a presentation at the Jan. 27 Quality of Life Forum. Photos and descriptions of the luxurious home left many in the audience gasping, chuckling and exclaiming "wow."

Referring to the \$75,000 Mercedes, Chief Hyde reported that the Section 8 recipient "said it was a gift," which caused the audience to erupt in laughter.

The Section 8 tenant was receiving state

see Fraud page 14

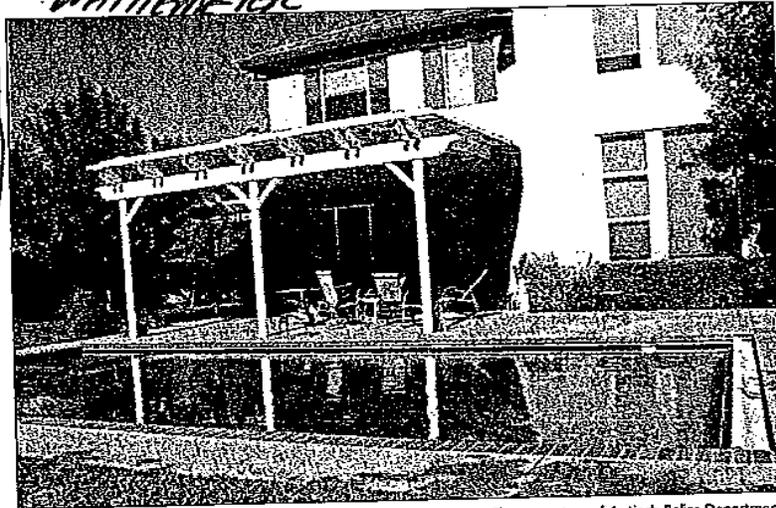


Photo courtesy of Antioch Police Department

This million-dollar home in Antioch was recently rented by a tenant receiving a Section 8 housing subsidy. A \$75,000 Mercedes was in the garage.

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ANTIOCH PRESS
COMMUNITY

February 16, 2007

Fraud from page 1A

DOWN
aid for six foster kids amounting to \$1,500 to \$1,700 per child per month – or about \$108,000 to \$122,000 annually, according to Hyde. He added that the tenant employed a housekeeper, a landscaper, pool service and a nanny to help with the foster children.

In addition, the housing subsidy recipient rented a home with a pool, a waterfall, a hot tub and a basketball court across the street for a brother-in-law who is a paroled sex offender.

WHITENEYER
The Section 8 recipient also had prior felony convictions for drug sales and fraud, committed fraud in the process of obtaining social services and is now on probation for fraud, according to Hyde.

• Prior to moving to the million-dollar home, the person lived in another nice-looking Antioch home to which police had been called about 50 times over two years by neighbors complaining about music and concerns about drug activity.

Following "a Gas City sting operation, because of complaints about activities going on at that business, an occupant of this residence was arrested for drug possession," said Hyde. "So it confirmed a lot of neighbor complaints about late-night traffic in and out of the residence."

But none of that activity or history resulted in the Contra Costa County Housing Authority preventing the person from continuing to receive a Section 8 subsidy while living in the million-dollar home.

"What we've also discovered through this process is some gaps in the system, not only at the county level but also at the federal level," said Hyde, who called for

WHITENEYER
"The problem is the system needs some oversight. When you talk to the HUD auditors, they tell you it is a problem nationwide. But they have not seen the extent of the problem any place in the country other than here (with) the abuse of folks moving into million-dollar homes and so forth and receiving these services."

Police Chief Jim Hyde

better criminal screening of Section 8 tenants.

"The other thing you need to remember too is we don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water. The Section 8 program helps many needy people across this country; it helps the elderly, the disabled, single moms with kids.

"The problem is the system needs some oversight. When you talk to the HUD auditors, they tell you it is a problem nationwide. But they have not seen the extent of the problem any place in the country other than here (with) the abuse of folks moving into million-dollar homes and so forth and receiving these services."



Photo courtesy of Antioch Police Department

A \$75,000 Mercedes SKL350, above, was in the garage along with a Bentley and a custom motorcycle worth close to \$100,000.

Hyde said he has met with county housing authority officials to see how they can better screen for criminals receiving taxpayer-subsidized benefits. He said such a screening program has been conducted in Sacramento's public housing projects.

"Just because you're poor doesn't mean you have to live next door to a criminal," said Hyde. "And that was the problem with the public housing facilities in the city of Sacramento. It was very dangerous, a lot of homicides and so forth.

"In a two-year period of instituting this program for public housing, many of those neighborhoods became safer than the surrounding neighborhoods. We actually saw that. It's called 'weed and seed.' You weed out the problems, you seed in programs to help families and kids. They became very much safer than the original picture."

Although the Contra Costa County Housing Authority is not supposed to allow criminals into the Section 8 program, "What we've discovered is ... what they assumed was a criminal history check, the Internet service that was being done was

actually a credit check," said Hyde. "So that's where we look at the breakdown of the system in having a criminal history check brought in the process. The county has come forth to work with us on this endeavor."

He has proposed a six-month pilot partnership in which the city and county split the cost to hire two retired police officers for four days a week to do criminal history checks on Section 8 tenants in Antioch.

That proposal is backed by several Antioch City Council members. County Supervisor Federal Glover expressed an interest in it but declined to commit to it, saying it would be placed on a Board of Supervisors' agenda. He did pledge support, however, for helping with code enforcement in Section 8 housing.

To see photos and statistics from Chief Hyde's presentation at the forum, go online to www.ci.antioch.ca.us/community/announcements/QOLF4-PD-up date.pdf. (Note that "announcements" is misspelled if you're typing this address into your browser.)

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS & EVENTS

COMMUNITY

“ (This) is probably not a surprise for a lot of the community members in those neighborhoods. ”

Jim Hyde

Section 8 problems clustered in southeast

by Dave Roberts
Staff Writer

In its first half-year of operation, the Antioch Police Department's Community Action Team dealt with more than 100 complaints about residential problems, nearly two-thirds of them involving Section 8 tenants or landlords – and many of those in one area of the city.

“We are seeing a cluster around the southeast Antioch area of what I call an over-concentration of Section 8 voucher problem property homes,” Police Chief Jim Hyde told the audience at the Jan. 27 Quality of Life Forum.

“We have good properties with Section 8 vouchers across the city. But we are seeing a clustering of the problem voucher properties in the southeast Antioch area. Which is probably not a surprise for a lot of the community members in those neighborhoods.”

Fifty-one of those Section 8 rental complaints were referred to the Contra Costa County Housing Authority for follow-up enforcement. So far there have been seven terminations of Section 8 eligibility

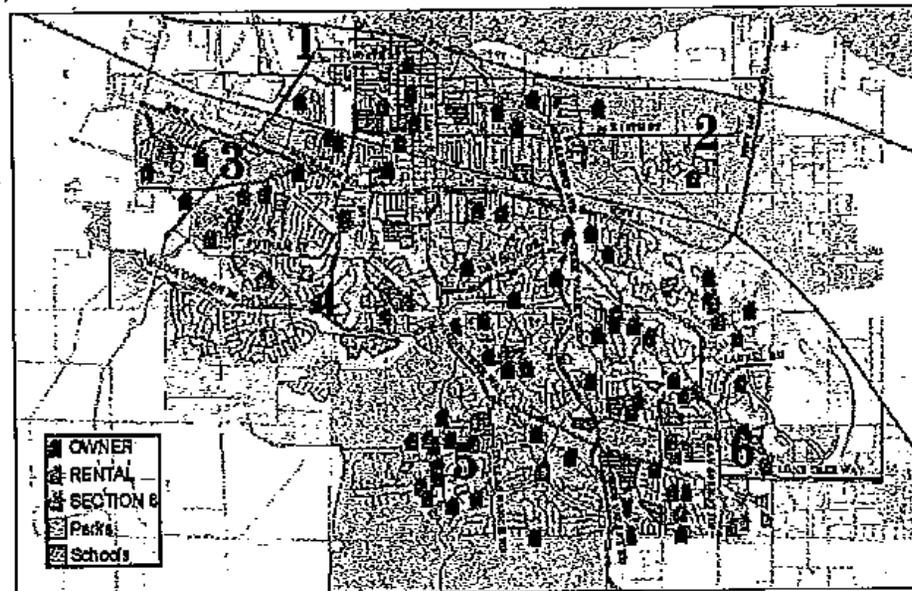
and 19 more set for revocation hearings as a result of the crackdown.

Overall, there were 71 arrests for problem properties and 108 citations issued by the Community Action Team. But that's not all that they were doing from July to December of 2006.

“The CAT Team also spent a lot of time meeting with neighborhood residents” to discuss problems and concerns, Hyde said, citing 208 citizen meetings in that six-month period.

“We are starting to get attention for the good work of the CAT team. The cities of Brentwood, Fremont and Livermore have come and visited the CAT team. And also looked at the code enforcement team that's being built and working on issues around code compliance and neighborhood improvement.”

Hyde discussed some of the other proactive measures his department has undertaken, one of which is the Deer Valley Safety Plan, focusing on the Deer Valley Plaza shopping center. It has been the scene of fights, loitering and rowdiness by youth, making some older residents afraid to shop, dine or attend movies there.



Graphic courtesy of Antioch Police Department

The red house icons show the Section 8 problem properties that the police Community Action Team responded to in the second half of 2006.

“We continue to meet with the business in the plaza ... on different strategies ... to look at what types of things we can do,” said Hyde. “There’s the safety issues, but also there’s the perception issues that this is a horrible location.”

“We are actually looking at different things we can do out there, positive family events at the plaza. So there’s been talk about some type of kids’ events, also some type of farmers’ market, just promoting

the safety with family-focused events.”

Another program Hyde implemented since coming on board last summer is the Cops and Coffee outreach at various coffee shops in Antioch, usually on the third or fourth Saturday of the month.

“One of our community members who attended a workshop I was doing at a coffee shop, Alicia Coleman Clark, came up to

see Section 8 page 7

The Community Action Team's work in dealing with neighborhood problems is drawing the attention of surrounding cities and Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher.



Photo courtesy of Antioch Police Department

Section 8 from page 4

me and said it would be helpful if you had a handout and I can probably build that for you; I can put it together," Hyde told the forum audience, which included Coleman Clark, who was greeted with applause.

"That's a nice thing about this community is people want to roll up their sleeves and help," said Hyde.

During the Christmas season, police officers, staff and volunteers reached out with donations and presents for 20 needy families including 58 children.

Another program Hyde has introduced to Antioch's police department is the California Army National Guard Peer Support Program, a law enforcement tool for about four decades.

"The idea is to train co-workers to help each other through difficult times," said Hyde. "An example: in law enforcement nationwide, for every officer killed in the line of duty, three take their own life. That's our little dark secret about the police pro-

fession. So what can we do to reduce that? The divorce rate for first-time marriage for law enforcement couples nationwide is 70 percent, for second marriage - 90 percent.

"This is a program we will be implementing in our police department. It's not just shootings and so forth that the officers deal with but the daily life stuff - 'my mom died' or 'my kid has cancer' or all of these other things. That's the idea - to take care of the work force so that they stay here and can take care of you."

At the end of his presentation, Hyde received big applause that turned into a standing ovation for Antioch's finest when Mayor Don Freitas said, "We're very proud of our Police Department and all of the officers standing in the back (of the room)."

Forum moderator Larry Bienati seconded that sentiment, saying, "Your chief and his team have accomplished that in the first six months of his administration. Imagine what the future holds."

Verbal shootout at the Forum

Dave Roberts

Published 02/02/2007 - 9:31 p.m.

County Supervisor Federal Glover defended his handling of the Section 8 issue in front of a mostly hostile standing-room-only crowd packed into the Antioch Senior Center Saturday morning.

It was Antioch's fourth Quality of Life Forum in the past half year, but the first in which Glover stood up and addressed those in attendance. Many of them are members of the community activist group United Citizens for Better Neighborhoods (UCBN) and are angry that charges of racism have been leveled at Antioch's efforts to correct subsidized housing problems.

Mayor Don Freitas set the tone for the often combative two-and-a-half-hour meeting by reading from a letter written by Richard Rainey, regional director for U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD), that pointed out mismanagement in the Contra Costa County Housing Authority (CCCHA) and criticized the Board of Supervisors for lack of oversight of the authority.

Rainey's letter points out that the housing authority must reimburse HUD \$166,000 for failing to properly administer the program, that HUD may remove the county supervisors as the oversight agency, and that the authority's management has been rated "troubled ... for the second consecutive year."

Freitas then read highlights of the recent HUD audit of the housing authority that cited the lack of "reasonableness" in rental rates the authority allowed for some Section 8 properties.

"As you go through this document it just basically is like an onion - you pull back the leaves and the stench just gets worse and worse and worse," said Freitas as some in the audience groaned.

"The reason why I raise this is primarily because (UCBN leader) Gary Gilbert has been vilified by many people that the information he was providing (about housing authority mismanagement) was wrong. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm here to tell you as mayor of the city that Gary Gilbert was more than correct in these assessments."

Addressing the racism charge, Freitas said, "Those accusations are completely and totally false. And I'm repeating again, they are completely and totally false." Many of the more than 200 people in attendance erupted in applause.

After presentations by other city officials, CCCHA Executive Director Rudy Tamayo defended his handling of the Section 8 program. He said that the HUD concerns were mainly due to missing paperwork comparing rental rates, and the authority is working to put that documentation together.

Tamayo complimented Antioch officials and residents for being so active in identifying problem Section 8 tenants in the city.

"In Antioch we have terminated 57 Section 8 participants in the last six months," he said. "That's pretty remarkable considering there's a lot of citizen participation in monitoring the program. Not a lot of communities are willing to do that. It is a compliment to the city and the CAT team (police Community Action Team) for us having such a high success rate in getting participants off of the program that are defrauding the program."

After Tamayo sat down, the tension level in the room began to rise as Glover stood up to speak.

"Let me first off say that I didn't think I was coming here for 'us' versus 'them.' Because that certainly is not what has taken place with the county and the city of Antioch," said Glover.



Federal Glover, left, faces a mostly hostile crowd.

"There are nationwide problems with Section 8. And those are problems that will not be corrected on the local level. Section 8 here locally is in control of eligibility, trying to make sure that the upkeep of property is done through an annual inspection."

Glover pointed out that the county has been responsive to Antioch residents' concerns by opening a branch office here last summer. He said that the supervisors are taking the problems pointed out by the HUD audit seriously and "we will do what's necessary in terms of correcting it. Because we do want to be a quality program."

Glover complimented Antioch residents for being so actively involved in the issue and emphasized that the county and city must work together to deal with the problems.

"Those issues will not be resolved with one agency working and pointing fingers," he said in what might have been a reference to Mayor Freitas' finger-pointing to start off the meeting. "We look to partner with the city of Antioch in making sure that fraud and other issues that are taking place within the program are being dealt with."

Tensions ratcheted up considerably when Glover implied that some Antioch residents want to eliminate all Section 8 residents from their neighborhoods, whether they're causing problems or not.

"When we say that the program is totally bad, (we're ignoring) the 95 percent of good people that are working and going to work every day. I'm not saying that you have made those statements, but there's a perception of that," said Glover. "So let's deal with the 5, 6 to 10 percent of those individuals that are making the program bad. Let's deal with those; let's weed them off the program."

With that the crowd started to get angry and began to interrupt, one woman saying, "That's what we are trying to do."

Glover responded, "You know what, I've been very courteous and listened to everyone else. The mayor blasted me when I came in, an individual who's known me for years and knows my integrity. And to lay it out there like that, I am somewhat disappointed with our mayor. But that's neither here nor there, because I have been elected to deal with you the citizens. ..."

Glover said Antioch's quality of life relates to not just Section 8 housing but also dealing with gang activities, for which he's put together a task force along with working with school districts to provide more after-school programs.

Glover received a smattering of applause as he concluded his remarks. That smattering was in contrast to the standing ovation after Gilbert finished speaking.

"You should be, quite frankly, ashamed of yourself," Gilbert said to Tamayo. "You've lied to the City Council, you've lied to the residents. You've said the whole time you've been paying reasonable rents. We know that's not true. The report has proven that's not true. So please don't stand in front of this group and make us look like idiots."

Gilbert then turned his sights on Glover.

"Quite frankly, if the Board of Supervisors had been doing their jobs in monitoring the housing authority, we wouldn't be in this mess," Gilbert said to Glover. "If you've mismanaged this program, what other programs has the county Board of Supervisors been messing up for the last couple of years?"

"And I'm really sick and tired of you blaming this community that we're a bunch of racists. You started that. You started that comment. This city never started that comment. You brought that issue to the forefront. I have an article right here if you would like me to read it for you.

"What you tend to forget is that I was the first person that contacted your office and asked you for your help regarding this situation. You didn't contact me, you didn't contact any of the members of my group to deal with it. So don't stand and look me in the eye like you've been involved in this process the whole time. You haven't done anything for this community."

Gilbert concluded by reminding Glover that HUD is demanding repayment of \$166,000.

"How are you planning on paying it, Mr. Glover?" asked Gilbert. "I have a really good suggestion for you: fire this man (pointing to Tamayo) and fire Mark Stephenson who's sitting over there and screwing up this program. Or, quite frankly, take back that 60 percent raise that you guys (the county supervisors) just gave yourselves."

Councilman Brian Kalinowski also expressed disappointment with Glover's performance on the Section 8 issue, although not in quite so strident terms.

"I'm glad Federal is here today. I really hope that this is the start of a new beginning," said Kalinowski. "There is a lot of frustration based on what has happened in the past. I supported you (Glover) in 2000 and I supported you in 2004 for re-election. I was there for you. But I have to be honest, over the last eight months I felt like you have let me down."

Kalinowski asked Glover and the other supervisors to split the costs with Antioch to hire two former police officers to do criminal background checks on Section 8 tenants so that they can be removed from the subsidized housing program if they are found to have records.

Kalinowski also said that a two-hour meeting he had with HUD officials revealed that the Section 8 mismanagement is just the tip of the iceberg with the housing authority, which also administers public housing projects in the county.

And Kalinowski addressed the racism charge leveled against Antioch.

"I don't know where it started, but we need to end it here and we need to end it now," he said. "When I came before your board, on the staff report and in the dialog it referred and alluded to this being an issue of color or discrimination just based on the demographics in the city of Antioch.

"I submitted to you then and I submit to you now that that is in fact a slippery slope. If I am going to be thrown under the bus addressing an issue based on color, religion or any other issue, I take offense to that."

That was greeted with big applause, and one woman yelled out, "We're owed an apology."

Councilman Reggie Moore made an upbeat statement, saying he's never been more proud to live in Antioch as a result of what he's heard at the forum. He defended the Section 8 program for helping the needy while stating that we must also "weed out waste, fraud and abuse by those in the program."

Councilman Arne Simonsen began by complimenting Glover and Tamayo for being there: "One of the toughest things in politics is to be able to have that very thick skin and show up into the lion's den. It's a very difficult thing to do."

Simonsen also made the radical request that the housing authority engage in civil disobedience by refusing to allow very expensive homes to be rented out to Section 8 tenants, despite federal guidelines that allow any property with fair market rent to be included in the program.

Simonsen also noted that Antioch is not the only city with Section 8 concerns.

"We don't want to sit there and squeeze the Jell-o and have it pop out in Oakley or Brentwood or Pittsburg," said Simonsen. "This is a regional program and we want to work together, and the housing authority is the center of this whole thing. To Federal and Rudy, I know you want to move forward. Be bold; take action."

Glover then made final remarks, responding to some of what had been said.

"I am bold. I do have thick skin, and I am not above criticism. I feel that we are working to address those issues," said Glover. "We gave authority to our director to work closely with the city of Antioch to resolve these issues. I have heard your call; I've heard it well today. I don't agree with some of the things that were said but we don't have to agree on everything.

"I got to ask you the question, though, when you talk about racial issues that are out there, I need to know how I played the race card, especially as it relates to Section 8, when the largest percent is Hispanic, next to that is Caucasian, and third African-Americans.

"Anyone in this room that knows me knows that I don't play the race card, knows that the race card is the farthest thing for me. God knows I've had much opportunity to play the race card, but that is not who I am.

"I'm working for each and every one of you. If you have not seen that, you will in the future. You need to engage me, that when your issues are not being heard that you make that personal call. So I am committed to working with this council. I appreciate the comments, some of them, and will take the others very seriously. So thank you for allowing me to speak."

Those remarks earned Glover respectful applause. But then Mayor Freitas concluded the session with one last shot across the bow.

"There was a movie over 20 years ago called 'Network.' A very famous saying is, 'I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it any more.' I don't apologize for being angry. Because I am very angry," said Freitas. "Because I hear from my citizens in our neighborhoods about the problems, and, unfortunately, the reality is that a lot of them are Section 8.

"I have to tell you, speaking as an elected official, talk can be very, very cheap. But in literally eight months, through your involvement, the City Council has prioritized in expending the resources to respond to community needs. Not everybody agrees with the direction of the City Council, but I believe it's the right direction."

Section 8 homes lead complaint calls

By Simon Read
CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Contra Costa Times

Article Launched: 04/26/2007 03:09:57 AM PDT

Antioch police say that nearly two-thirds of the problem properties they encountered in one six-month period last year were subsidized rentals for low-income families, commonly referred to as Section 8.

The analysis comes from the Community Action Team, or CAT, a special police unit that works with city code enforcement and the Contra Costa Housing Authority to deal with eyesore properties and criminal behavior.

"When we first developed the CAT, it was designed to deal with problem properties and homeless issues," Antioch police Capt. Steve McConnell said. "We soon found out that the problem properties we respond to – 65 percent total – turn out to be Section 8 homes."

The July-to-December data showed that the CAT responded to 101 problem properties, 63 of which were Section 8 rentals, according to Antioch Police Chief Jim Hyde.

"Keep in mind, our investigations are complaint driven," McConnell added. "They come to our attention via complaints from the neighborhood."

Crime related to Section 8 properties ran the gamut from armed robbery and burglary to drug dealing, McConnell said. He added that the CAT has also found numerous Section 8 program violations, including voucher recipients allowing unauthorized friends and family members to live with them.

"There are a lot of people on the program who shouldn't be," he said. "We came across one guy in federal custody who was receiving a subsidy."

Advocates for Section 8 participants cautioned against reading too much into the statistics.

"No, they're not all perfect, but they don't create any more problems than anyone else who rents," said Julie Spezia, executive director of Housing California, a nonprofit organization that works to increase affordable housing statewide. "It's really sad when people choose to vilify people who have the same values we have but just happen to have a lower income. It's unfair."

McConnell said Antioch police are working with the Contra Costa Housing Authority to obtain a list of Section 8 properties in Antioch so that they can be tracked more easily.

"They're working out the legalities of it," he said. "There are issues of confidentiality that have to be looked at."

In Alameda County, the housing authority provides an updated list of Section 8 properties to law enforcement agencies.

"I haven't reviewed what Alameda County's housing authority or police departments do," said Rudy Tamayo, executive director of the Contra Costa Housing Authority. "I'm aware they may have nonconfidentiality and nondisclosure agreements in place, which we're trying to work on right now."

Tamayo said he could not comment on the Antioch Police Department's numbers.

"I haven't seen all the statistics or complaints that have come in," he said. "Those that I have seen relate primarily to code enforcement. It's very difficult to respond unless I see the complaints and have our staff evaluate them."

The housing authority is working to gain access to court and police records across the state for "annual recertification checks" for Section 8 recipients, Tamayo said.

"We have to do checks on 6,400 recipients," he said. "We're trying to set up a schedule that would be the most cost effective."

Section 8 housing has been the source of much controversy this past year in Antioch. Critics contend the program is

contributing to crime and blight, while city leaders and police have been critical of the housing authority's handling of the program.

Out of 33,630 housing units in Antioch, 1,470 -- or 4.37 percent -- are home to subsidized tenants, according to a November report by county housing officials.

Antioch Mayor Donald Freitas said the city has been asking the housing authority for a list of Section 8 properties in town since last summer.

"Here we are at the end of April," he said. "They've been checking the legalities of it for at least 10 months. We've met with representatives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development who have indicated such information can be provided. This is just another example of the county housing authority dragging its feet."

Freitas said that while he appreciates the work of the CAT, the fact that such a task force had to be created in the first place is a point of contention.

"The biggest concern I have as mayor of this city is that four or five officers who should be on the street addressing crime are instead doing the work of the Contra Costa Housing Authority," he said. "We don't get one penny from the housing authority for them to do this. Diverting our police services so they can do the work of the housing authority is just plain wrong."

Simon Read covers Antioch. Reach him at 925-779-7166 or sread@cctimes.com.

Housing Authority chief takes step back

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• Section 8 problems in Antioch force Tamayo to return to his previous post of deputy executive director at the agency

By Ryan Huff and Simon Read
CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Contra Costa Times

Article Launched: 05/09/2007 03:03:28 AM PDT

MARTINEZ -- Contra Costa Housing Authority's executive director resigned from the agency's top post Tuesday after months of scrutiny from county supervisors frustrated with a subsidized housing program that Antioch city leaders say is rife with fraud, run-down properties and rude neighbors.

Rudy Tamayo, who has led the authority for the past 15 months, will return to his old position of deputy executive director, the agency's No. 2 post. He submitted a resignation letter Tuesday, the same day that supervisors scheduled his second closed-door performance evaluation since February.

Asked whether supervisors forced out Tamayo, Supervisor Federal Glover of Pittsburg said he could not discuss the details of personnel matters. But, he added, "I'm not objecting to his resignation."

Glover, whose district includes Antioch, has taken political heat from constituents who have complained about neighborhood turmoil with low-income families who participate in a subsidized housing program commonly referred to as Section 8.

Improving the program for participants and neighbors promises to be a key campaign issue for Glover and others who run for the District 5 supervisor seat next year.

A federal audit in December complained of sloppy record keeping and found the county ignored important factors such as location and quality of a unit when determining subsidized rents for low-income residents.

Tamayo has been on the receiving end of repeated public scoldings from county supervisors on problems with the Section 8 program.

He said his new assignment will give him more time to focus on boosting housing programs instead of working on budgets and community outreach.

"I do plan on having more of a role with getting into the nuts and bolts of these programs," he said. "Whoever comes in as executive director will have my unconditional support."

The Housing Authority, a county entity governed by the five supervisors and one resident commissioner, could name Tamayo's successor as soon as next week.

Tamayo's annual salary will drop slightly from \$116,388 to a maximum of \$102,312 in the deputy executive director position.

Subsidized housing for low-income families has been a source of much controversy during the past year in Antioch, where critics contend the program is contributing to crime and blight.

Nearly 1,500 of Antioch's 33,630 housing units are home to subsidized tenants, according to a November report by county housing officials.

Antioch police said that nearly two-thirds of the problem properties they encountered from July to December were subsidized rentals.

City leaders have not been shy in calling for Tamayo's resignation.

Antioch Councilman Jim Davis said he is optimistic about a new Housing Authority executive director.

"I'm encouraged we'll have changes and corrections made," he said. "It is unfortunate that it came to this, but we brought

our concerns to them a year ago."

Police Chief Jim Hyde said the timing of Tamayo's demotion is "very appropriate."

"The fact that 65 percent of our problem properties have been Section 8 homes with criminal behavior is a sign the system is in need of an overhaul," he said.

Hyde said the subsidized housing program is a much-needed program in any community, but poor local management has opened it up to fraud and abuse.

"What I'd like to see now is a rebuilding of the relationship between the Housing Authority and cities in Contra Costa," he said.

After Tuesday's announcement, Supervisor John Gioia of Richmond said he would like the county to work on that relationship.

"The Housing Authority needs to be productive in working with Antioch," he said. "And if you don't have strong leadership, the problems you have become even greater."

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House approves legislation aimed at overhauling Section 8

• ANTIOCH: Subsidized housing program is a growing concern among residents

By Simon Read
CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Contra Costa Times

Article Launched: 07/20/2007 03:07:17 AM PDT

The U.S. House has approved a bill to reform the Section 8 housing program by revising the formula for calculating rents and expanding opportunities for family self-sufficiency. It must now pass through the Senate.

Section 8, a federally subsidized housing program that helps low-income families rent private homes, has become an issue of growing concern in Antioch during the past year. Residents and city officials have complained of program abuse and mismanagement.

The bill, passed on a 333-83 vote last week, was sponsored by Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Los Angeles. Waters' spokesperson could not be reached for comment.

"We voted for this bill," said Kevin Lawlor, spokesman for U.S. Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Alamo. "We supported the provisions because we feel they're good for Antioch."

Last year, city officials approached Tauscher and sought federal help in resolving Antioch's housing concerns. One issue raised by residents and officials was the values of the vouchers, which -- in some cases -- allow Section 8 recipients in Antioch to move into upscale housing.

"We've been put into the rent structure for places like San Jose and San Francisco," Councilman Arne Simonsen said. "The rents in those places for something small are very expensive, where the same amount of money out here gets you a very big house."

In a letter sent in September to Alphonso Jackson, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Tauscher expressed her concern that the Bay Area's government-subsidized housing program was not being run in a manner that adequately reflects the area's fair-market rent values, or the amount properties would generally command when placed on the rental market.

"In Contra Costa County alone, housing markets vary dramatically with multiple micro-markets. I am concerned that the Oakland-Fremont Metro HUD area, which includes Contra Costa County, is too large and thus the FMR is skewed because disparate communities are included in one large metro area," she wrote.

If the bill is approved by the Senate and becomes law, it will ensure voucher payments are more closely calibrated to rental costs in local communities, officials said.

"Certainly, if this legislation becomes law, Ellen will work with HUD to determine the geographic areas that make sense for our region," Lawlor said.

The Section 8 Voucher Reform Act would also enable local housing authorities to more easily work with nonprofit groups and private owners to create new and redeveloped housing stock for affordable use, officials said. Blighted housing stock could be transformed to mixed-income housing under the management of a nonprofit group ensuring that the new housing would be well maintained and cared for.

Joseph Villarreal, the new executive director of the Contra Costa Housing Authority, was on vacation and could not be reached for comment.

Simonsen said he was pleased to see federal officials addressing concerns long held by Antioch.

"Section 8 should provide shelter and reasonable accommodations," he said. "It should provide a clean, safe and comfortable place to live -- but not luxurious accommodations."

Section 8 reform bill

Contra Costa Times
Contra Costa Times

Article Launched: 07/21/2007 03:05:02 AM PDT

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S subsidized housing program, known as Section 8, soon is likely to get a much-needed reform. It's one that should bring some relief to Antioch, which has suffered from problems with Section 8 tenants.

For too long, there has been a flawed formula for calculating fair market rents, which determine the ceiling on the housing subsidy for low-income families.

The regions that are used to set values for vouchers are too large and often include communities with widely varying rents.

For example, Antioch is part of an East Bay district that includes upscale sections of Silicon Valley and other more expensive areas.

As a result, the Section 8 rental subsidies are so generous that families are able to move into luxury homes in Antioch.

The high subsidies mean that many homes in Antioch have become Section 8 rentals. About 1,500 of Antioch's 33,630 housing units are occupied by subsidized tenants.

However, according to Antioch Police Chief Jim Hyde, last spring, 65 percent of the problem properties in his city were Section 8 homes with criminal behavior.

He said the system is in need of an overhaul. Hyde is right. It is inexcusable to have such a large number of Section 8 home tenants causing problems.

Fortunately, things have taken a couple of turns for the better. The Contra Costa Housing Authority, which oversees Section 8, got a new executive director, Joseph Villarreal, a few months ago. He has been more cooperative with Antioch officials.

Also, the U.S. House of Representatives has approved a bill to revise the formula for calculating fair market rents. The legislation, sponsored by Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Los Angeles, passed 333-83.

If the measure passes the Senate and becomes law, it will ensure that subsidies are more in line with rental costs in local communities.

Rep. Ellen Tauscher's spokesman, Kevin Lawlor, said she will work with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development to determine the geographical areas that make sense.

That should lower the rent subsidies available for Section 8 homes in Antioch so that low-income families can have a decent place to live, but not in expensive homes.

The lower subsidies would allow more families to be helped with the same funds and ease Antioch's and other cities' concerns about the Section 8 program.

Editorials

Section 8 reform bill

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New housing director gets earful

Page 1 of 2 Pages

Minotte R. Cuenca

Published 07/13/2007 - 3:53 p.m.

Contra Costa County Housing Authority Executive Director Joseph Villareal met with the United Citizens for Better Neighborhoods (UCBN) group on Saturday, and got a better feel for the daunting task ahead to restore credibility to the county's beleaguered subsidized housing program known as Section 8.

Villareal's 12 years of experience as Housing Director for the city of Oakland as well as for Alameda County came in handy when he faced a slew of concerns and queries about Section 8 problems in East County. His predecessor, Rudy Tamayo, stepped down recently after numerous problems were discovered in the Section 8 voucher program.

Antioch and Brentwood residents expressed concerns about fraudulent and abusive tenants and unscrupulous landlords as well as an inefficient and understaffed screening bureaucracy.

"The Housing Authority now has an opportunity to create a model. We need a visionary that will think outside the box to create change for the whole program," said Anna Morris of Antioch. "It is broken, there are loopholes. People know the system and are two steps ahead."

Antioch resident Tim Campbell said, "Though the problems stem from the federal and county levels, local focus should be in getting the bad Section 8 people out, and screening them more rigorously. The Housing Authority gives free money, and that needs to not be there. Hardworking people should not be victimized by slackers. How do you not make lifetime Section 8ers out of people without incentives to get out of housing?"

According to Bob Munton, "The bottom line is: How does someone get to rent a \$3,800-a-month, five-bedroom home, with six cars, for only \$600 a month? The rest is paid by Housing? How does someone get a \$3,200 subsidy? If there are guys that can stay there, I would like to stay there, too."

Villareal, who was gracious under pressure, responded, "There have been five major shifts in legislation in Housing. Monies get cut back; there is less staff.

"There are good and bad low-income people just like there are good and bad high-income people. We have the ability to get rid of fraudulent and criminal tenants now. We also have to crack down on landlords that are just making money on this."

Villareal agreed to put stricter screening and follow-up procedures in place.

Acknowledging the strides that UCBN and the Antioch Police Department (APD) have made to enforce and curb housing law violations, Villareal said he looks forward to the support of the group and the community as a whole.

"The APD is working closer with Section 8 now. Hopefully, Brentwood and Oakley (police departments) will follow too," said Villareal.

After the meeting, UCBN founder Gary Gilbert said, "Mr. Villareal listened attentively to our concerns and ideas and we greatly appreciated his open and honest demeanor, which was greatly lacking in his predecessor, Rudy Tamayo.

"In addition, Mr. Villareal impressed upon us his willingness to work with UCBN, the Antioch Police Department, and our city leaders, and we have offered to support and assist him any way we can as he moves forward to correct the problems that have been created in our neighborhoods by some participants of the Section 8 program.



New Contra Costa County Housing Authority Executive Director Joseph Villareal listened to concerns from the United Citizens for Better Neighborhoods group.

"UCBN will continue to remain active in monitoring the Section 8 issue on behalf of all East County residents, and we will continue to work closely with several members of Congress to reform the Section 8 program."

For Section 8 queries and concerns, e-mail Villa real at jvillarreal@contracostahousing.org, or UCBN at ucbn@ucbn.us.