



HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE
CITY OF MILWAUKEE

Cavalier Johnson
Mayor

Willie L. Hines, Jr.
Secretary-Executive Director

Board of Commissioners

MEDIA SUMMARY

Addressing Resident Concerns

HACM is working to address the issues our residents have raised. We will continue to partner with residents to address their needs with the resources HACM has available. If any Commissioners are interested in more details about our future communications, please reach out to us.

The following information has been shared in one form or another with all of our stakeholders. We will continue to keep the Board of Commissioners up-to-date on future communications.

April 3, 2023 Update

In response to the press event being held today at the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee's (HACM) Mitchell Court building, HACM is releasing the following statement.

As part of ongoing efforts to maintain HACM properties for the health and safety of our residents, HACM conducts annual inspections according to its standards and those of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These inspections are conducted during the first five months of each year. Residents of Mitchell Court were notified on February 17, 2023 that the annual inspection process would begin on February 20, 2023. Most residents passed their inspections, but some did not and have received notices to cure the situation so they can pass the inspection.

The reason for the notices is to help residents achieve compliance with their lease, not retaliation or eviction. HACM's goal is to keep our residents housed in safe, healthy environments.

Additional updates are listed below.

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Safety & Security

In July 2022, in response to resident concerns regarding criminal activity in Mitchell Court and in the surrounding neighborhood, HACM took a number of steps.

- HACM took eviction action against residents who we could document were violating their lease by allowing unescorted guests, misusing access cards, encouraging trespassing by non-residents, or bringing drugs, prostitution or other crimes into the building.
- HACM requested additional patrols in the area by the Milwaukee Police Department.
- HACM augmented our public safety temporarily by hiring contracted security staff beginning in July for the hours in which the majority of the issues were occurring (6PM to 2AM).
- Fourteen (14) HD Cameras were installed in common areas to allow for more thorough monitoring of entrance and exit points.
- The laundry room and main lobby stairwell doors were keyed, allowing only residents with a key access.
- A security gate was installed in the rear stairwell to block ingress from anyone who attempted to make entry without a key.
- Key card scanner was added to the elevators.
- Door monitoring sensors were added to all exterior doors.
- LED lighting was added to enhance lighting in the parking lot.

From March 2022 to March 2023, Public Safety saw a significant 36% decrease in calls for service for the Mitchell Court building. The additional security measures taken, while costly,

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provided a significant relief to residents and to Public Safety’s need to respond to calls for service.

Pest Control

HACM recently obtained competitive quotes for additional pest control inspections and remediation. We have since reviewed the responses to the Request for Services Pricing and have determined that Lincoln Court and Mitchell Court have the funding to proceed with engaging a third-party vendor to provide secondary pest control services.

March 26, 2023 Update

The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee’s (HACM) highest priority is to provide excellent service and quality affordable housing options to more than 10,000 households throughout Milwaukee. HACM takes residents’ concerns very seriously. We are aware of issues raised by residents, many of which have been resolved, and others that we have been actively working to address. When other matters are brought to our attention, we will address them as well. HACM’s mission has been to provide critical affordable housing to Milwaukeeans for nearly 80 years. Despite significant underfunding for affordable housing, we have continued to be resilient in advancing our mission and providing opportunities for our residents to thrive. We will continue to find solutions to ensure safe, healthy living environments for our residents.

Like housing authorities across the country, HACM has been challenged over the past several decades by inadequate funding for operations and maintenance, capital repairs and improvements, public safety, and supportive services. This is both a local and national crisis. Funding for affordable housing across the nation has dwindled while ongoing and deferred capital/maintenance needs have continued to grow. HACM and other housing authorities have consistently advocated together for increased funding for affordable housing. Unfortunately, HACM has to work with the funding it has available and use it to serve the greatest needs across our affordable housing portfolio.

Additionally, it is important to recognize that HACM, like other institutions, companies, places of worship, and communities, has been adversely impacted over the past three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, this impacted service delivery. We are restoring all

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operations to pre-pandemic best practices while also incorporating lessons learned to improve operations. HACM is committed to providing high-quality housing services in our community.

Safety and Security

Providing high-quality affordable housing in safe communities requires a partnership between HACM, residents, and law enforcement. Some HACM properties have faced heightened security concerns due to increased crime in surrounding neighborhoods, non-compliance with building safety protocols, and other challenges.

When HACM notes significant criminal activity, HACM takes a number of steps. First, HACM takes eviction action against residents who violate their lease by bringing drugs, prostitution or other crimes into the building or have guests who do the same. Second, HACM requests additional patrols around our properties by the Milwaukee Police Department. Thirdly, HACM is increasing the security of our properties with additional cameras and by securing perimeters to prevent outsiders from entering the property. In cases of significant criminal activity, HACM has also augmented our public safety temporarily by hiring contracted security staff when resources allow. We are seeing progress from these efforts and will continue working to resolve security concerns.

As with all operations, security services are available as resources allow. Like other independent living housing providers, we rely primarily on law enforcement agencies for public safety services. Beginning in the 1990s, HACM had the great benefit of receiving federal funding to provide supplementary security services through HACM's Public Safety team. Unfortunately, federal and other funding for public safety services ended over 20 years ago, and most Public Housing Authorities have eliminated their public safety divisions. However, HACM has continued to provide this service but has had to reduce services as available funding has diminished. We are collaborating with residents and community members to encourage reporting of issues.

The cooperation and assistance of residents is paramount in combating any criminal activity or other serious lease violations in our developments. Building stronger relations between residents, HACM staff, and law enforcement agencies will aid us in addressing safety and security concerns in our community. HACM offers ways to anonymously report fraud and safety concerns.

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Deferred and Ongoing Maintenance

HACM strives to provide the best quality housing to our residents. Our maintenance staff addresses work orders as they are submitted by residents or by staff. Additionally, HACM properties are inspected annually. HACM further relies on residents to submit work orders to address issues when they arise. We will continue to work with residents to identify and resolve issues.

Wisconsin is receiving \$29.6 MM in capital funding from HUD in 2023 for all Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in the state. Of that, \$8 MM is allocated to HACM for all of its properties. We do not yet know what we will receive for 2024.

Pest Control

Pest control is a top priority both for the well-being of our residents and for the care of our properties. HACM manages pest control within the resources available through in-house staff who can most efficiently and cost-effectively provide services. This includes regular monitoring and treatment of properties as well as specific pest remediation when reported by residents and staff. Effective pest control requires a partnership with residents, who play a lead role in proper disposal of trash, upkeep of housing units, and preparation of units for pest control treatment. We will continue to work to build this partnership between our residents and our pest control services to keep pests out of HACM housing.

Personnel and Management

HACM's residents are our customers, and we expect all staff to provide excellent customer service. We take complaints very seriously. If HACM corroborates information that staff members are acting inappropriately, HACM will deal with it promptly. Please note, HACM does not tolerate retaliation against residents.

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Property management staff work with residents to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations in the resident lease and handbook, which include responsibilities regarding safety, maintenance, and other issues.

Ultimately, the Housing Authority and its residents have common goals, and we are partners in achieving them. HACM embraces this through its existing organizational framework. HACM's seven-member Board of Commissioners includes two public housing residents to ensure resident voice is included at the highest level of decision-making. In addition, HACM has a Resident Advisory Board (RAB) that meets to assist in the development of the annual and 5-Year Agency Plan and to review proposed changes in policies. Finally, the residents of each housing development are able to organize and have a resident organization/council whose role includes the following types of activities:

- To represent resident interests with the housing authority;
- To build participation among residents and build a sense of community among residents;
- To build relationships with the housing authority and community organizations who can support the residents and bring programs to the community to improve people's opportunities and quality of life;
- To educate residents on their rights and responsibilities as public housing residents;
- To organize recreation, social services and other resident participation activities; and
- To use tenant participation funding to carry out eligible activities.

During most of 2020 and 2021, many resident organizations were not meeting regularly as community events and community spaces were curtailed due to the COVID pandemic. Most resident organizations began holding meetings and elections of officers again during the latter part of 2022.

HACM agrees that good communication between HACM management and resident leaders is essential in working together and building trust, whether it includes communication about new policies or how to address concerns that have been identified by residents. HACM management makes itself available for all resident meetings and will host monthly meetings with resident leadership to discuss policies, procedures, concerns, and upcoming activities.

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Tenant Rights

HACM supports and protects the civil rights of residents and values their participation in maintaining safe, healthy buildings and neighborhoods. HACM has a historically robust and well-established system for residents to address grievances and disciplinary actions. However, the system was adversely impacted during the pandemic, and we are working to restore it to full capacity. Residents receive information about these processes through the HACM housing programs through which they receive housing assistance. As an example, a copy of the current “Resident Grievance Procedures” for Public Housing is available on HACM’s website. Any resident can also request a copy from their property management office.

Reasonable Accommodations

Residents with disabilities are valued members of our communities. We work with residents to provide reasonable accommodations when needed. All residents can complete a request for accommodation, and HACM will review it for consideration and action within federal guidelines.

Currently, HACM has a limited number of accessible units in our Public Housing portfolio due to the aging housing stock. Most of our housing developments were built between the 1930s to 1970s. As funding allows, HACM renovates our older housing stock through HUD’s Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, which enables more accessible units.

Accountability

HACM is committed to transparency in its operations and the handling of complaints, while preserving the privacy rights of residents and staff who are involved. We also seek shared accountability between HACM operations, employees, residents and community partners.

HACM currently has systems in place to address complaints brought forth by HACM residents, employees, and citizens. It has built-in quality assurance practices to ensure the work being performed meets the appropriate quality standards. Residents can share their concerns with Housing Management or go through the grievance process, if appropriate. HACM also offers ways to anonymously report fraud and safety concerns.

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HACM takes very seriously its role in providing safe, healthy, affordable and quality housing to Milwaukeeans throughout our city. HACM strives to work with its residents to achieve this. As stated previously, our residents' safety and well-being is our top priority.

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Elevators in HACM’s High-Rise Buildings

HACM is working closely with our maintenance and repair services contractor, Otis Elevator Company, to address elevator issues in some of our high-rise developments. Otis shared that the elevator industry is experiencing significant supply chain issues on components and parts. Our consultant (Performance Elevator Consulting LLC) concurs that the supply chain issues are industry-wide and getting worse. Due to issues with some of the elevators in our buildings and the subsequent delays of the delivery of parts to repair the respective elevators, we inquired about the possibility of ordering some parts in advance to have in our inventory to avoid the lengthy delays. Otis does not believe this is a feasible solution because of all the different types of parts involved. Otis added that typically the long lead time items are due to obsolete or scarce parts, such as those that might be needed for our aging elevators. We have experienced such delays in the past on other elevators, through no fault of Otis.

Becher Court

The large elevator at Becher Court has been out of service since January 29, 2023. Otis ordered the needed part, which arrived March 22 and the elevator was returned to service March 23. The parts needed are manufactured by Sprecher Schuh.

Locust Court

The small elevator at Locust Court has been out of service since December 19, 2022. HACM proactively authorized replacing the motor drive on January 5. This was designed to prevent lengthy service outages from replacing the obsolete drive. The shipment from the controls manufacturer was missing some components, which was discovered during installation. The second package with the parts was lost in shipment and was never received. The third shipment is being tracked and is expected to arrive on April 4 with manpower aligned to install the part on April 5. Depending on how things go with troubleshooting and adjusting, the small elevator should be back in service on April 5 or 6. The parts needed are manufactured by Motion Control Engineering (MCE) and KEB Automation.

Since December 19, 2022 the large elevator at Locust Court was out of service on one occasion for approximately two hours.

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