

# TEXAS

HOUSING FOUNDATION

RAISING THE STANDARD OF LIVING

To the Members of the Austin City Council:

We, the members of the Santa Maria Village Tenants Association ("Tenants Association") and Texas Housing Foundation (THF), express our joint interest in and support of a sale of Santa Maria Village to THF. THF has met with members of the Tenants Association and made commitments to improving the living conditions at Santa Maria, which are outlined below. We urge the Austin City Council to vote in favor of a sale of the Santa Maria property to THF, support THF's cooperative agreement.

## **History of Santa Maria Village**

Santa Maria Village is located at 8071 North Lamar Boulevard Austin, Texas 78753, in Council District 4. Santa Maria includes 176 units, 74 of which are covered by a Section 8 Housing Assistance Program contract; the rest are subject to a bond regulatory agreement through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program that currently limits rents to 50% of area median income. THF has also sought approval from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs for a 4% Tax Credit/Bond transaction.

Santa Maria is a diverse community, where residents come from many countries and cultures. Some members of the Tenants Association have lived at the property for more than 40 years, and in that time have seen this property as well as their entire neighborhood change radically. Residents feel connected to one another, yet also have concerns about a history of crime on the premises, disrespectful treatment by management, and neglect of the physical condition of the property.

Residents formed the Santa Maria Village Tenants Association in February of 2018 with the assistance of the Building and Strengthening Tenant Action (BASTA) project. The Tenants Association surveyed residents and compiled a list of improvements that residents would like to see made at the property. Over 100 households signed on in support of the Tenants Association's request. THF met with the Tenants Association to discuss the requested improvements and address tenant concerns.

## **Commitments Between Texas Housing Foundation and the Tenants Association**

Both THF and the Tenants Association envision a Santa Maria that is safe, healthy and welcoming to all residents. Should Texas Housing Foundation become the new owner of Santa Maria Village Apartments, THF commits to the following:

### **Personnel & Communication with Residents**

- Endeavor to hire management staff that is able to speak Spanish and/or Vietnamese in addition to English
- Hire management staff that will be available to residents at reasonable and consistent hours
- Hire management staff that will commit to transparency and communication with residents
- Hire management staff who are familiar with Section 8 and LIHTC rules
- Provide written repair request forms, community rules, leases and other routine documents in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese
- Provide support for residents with literacy issues to request repairs in writing
- Hold quarterly meetings with the Tenants Association and other interested residents before and during the period of renovations to inform residents about the plans for repairs

#### Affordability, Finances and Accounting

- Renew the Section 8 contract with Housing and Urban Development for an additional 16 years after the expiration of the current Section 8 contract
- Extend the affordability period for 35 years under the LIHTC program
- Establish a process, in conjunction with the Tenants Association and tenant advocates from Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, to review all tenant files and confirm accurate payment ledgers. This process will include offering an opportunity to any resident to review her file, meet with Santa Maria staff, and contest debts allegedly owed. THF and its affiliates will not issue any Notice to Vacate, Notice of Termination, or Lease Violation based on outstanding debts before providing the resident with an opportunity to review and contest the amount allegedly owed.
- Conduct an interim recertification for any resident receiving Section 8 assistance who believes there are errors in her rent calculations

#### Safety and Security Measures

- Install additional lights and repair existing light fixtures to increase lighting on property
- Lock laundry rooms and make them accessible via a resident key
- Install functional security cameras
- Meet with residents to discuss additional security concerns and proposals, including but not limited to hiring security officers who will patrol the property on foot each night and installing a gated entrance to prevent trespassing and crime

#### Repairs and Renovations

- A visual inspection of all units will be conducted and any mold identified in the units will be treated
- Pending need and feasibility:
  - Replace all kitchen cabinets, counters, sinks, faucets and appliances
  - Replace all bathroom vanities, sinks, faucets, medicine cabinets, tub surrounds, and toilets
  - Replace all floors and/or carpet inside of apartments
- Inspect and repair leaks inside of units
- Inspect and repair HVAC system at the property and in all units
- To the extent possible or as required by applicable law, provide reasonable modifications and accommodations for residents who have disabilities and limited mobility, which may include accessible parking spaces and accessible ramps.
- Provide on-site temporary housing and moving assistance for residents while their units are being renovated; if on-site housing is not available, suitable off-site housing and moving assistance will be provided.
- If off-site housing is required, every effort will be made to provide such housing (i) with kitchens and (ii) within the applicable school zone, and Manager will assist residents in coordinating with the applicable ISD. If the Owner is unable to provide such housing, the Owner guarantees a per diem that will cover all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in connection with the temporary relocation for food and transportation.
- Hire qualified maintenance crew who will make adequate repairs
  - Provide competent pest control for cockroaches, ants, bedbugs, and lizards
  - Provide consistent and adequate garbage collection and dumpsters

#### Community Spaces

- Remodel community room
- Assess opportunities for additional recreational areas and playgrounds, taking resident interest into account
- Make the community room available to residents every day from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and after

hours upon request. Any deposits required for resident and/or Tenant Association meetings will be discussed.

- Provide computers and internet access for resident use in the community room or another common area
- Add a gym or exercise room for residents, pending feasibility
- Renovate and maintain laundry rooms


Parking and Towing

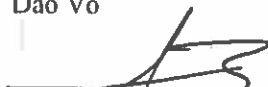
- Assess options to increase parking availability for residents, including considering allowing parking in administrative lot after hours and distributing more parking stickers per unit
- Hold a meeting with the Tenants Association and interested residents to understand Residents' concerns over parking spaces and rules
- Provide clear parking and towing rules and posting clear signs in parking lots


The Tenants Association and THF look forward to building a strong relationship that places the residents' interests at the forefront of plans, policies and daily operations at Santa Maria Village. With the aforementioned commitments from THF, the Tenants Association wholeheartedly endorses this sale and hopes that THF can become a model owner and operator of affordable housing in the city of Austin.


Thank you for your consideration,

  
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Texas Housing Foundation

Santa Maria Village Tenants Association