

A1 YWCA Cambridge  
May 24, 2011  
Remarks by EM Stojko

The YWCA Cambridge is dedicated to empowering women, eliminating racism and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. The YWCA is the oldest and largest, multicultural women's organization in the world, and a global advocate for racial justice and the rights of women. Since its inception in 1891, YWCA Cambridge has been an advocate for human rights, and a cornerstone for providing safe, affordable accommodations for women, and supportive services for women and girls. When our Main Building opened in 1911, one of its primary purposes was to serve as a boardinghouse where women would be able to live and learn essential skills appropriate for the era, such as penmanship, dressmaking and etiquette.

The Tanner Residence, 108 units of SRO (single room occupancy) housing for hard-to-house women, opened in the 1960s. Since then, YWCA Cambridge has grown to be one of, if not the city's largest, provider of residential housing for women. Also within our housing portfolio is a Family Shelter that can accommodate 10 homeless families at any given time.

When our founding mothers opened the YWCA Cambridge boarding house in 1911, it's doubtful that they suspected the need for housing for single women would be so great for so long. Here we are 100 years later and as we speak this morning, Tanner Residence is 92% occupied. In other words 99 women are living in Tanner. There are 9 vacant rooms, but the turnaround time for filling those vacancies will average no more than 48 – 72 hours depending on the condition of the room and what work our maintenance team has to do to bring the room up to our standards. In addition, the turnaround time is frequently dictated by whether the applicant has completed all the necessary paperwork to be move-in ready.

The current age range of our residents is 20 – 84 years, 14% (15) of whom are at least 62 years of age, and an additional eight (8) women or 7% of our residents are between the ages of 59 – 61 years of age. Another 29 of our residents are at least 50 years of age. So, 52 or 53% of our current residents range from 50 – 84 years of age. Again, when the YWCA Cambridge opened its housing doors in 1911, the emphasis was on “young”, but not any more. The minimum age of our residents has remained relatively static over the last few years; however, the maximum age has continued to increase. Older women are coming to our Tanner Residence because they need safe, supportive, affordable housing. While the population that we serve has its

own unique needs, the need to be safe and to be able to pay ones rent is universal. Our aging population, especially women, needs housing such as SROs can provide. In this economy when rents and food can consume so much of ones income, it is imperative that we as a community offer viable housing alternatives. SROs can be that alternative. Single Room Occupancy living can provide a community in which our older population can continue to be self sufficient and independent, yet in a supportive, caring environment. We know from experience that the residents in our SRO have many benefits that those living in traditional rental housing do not. They truly can become a community, a support network, especially for those who are separated from their loved ones by death or distance.

SRO residents check on each other and often form communities within the community to care for and about each other , often shopping and eating communally in order to maximize their resources. In that regard, SROs also can foster other types of resource building and sharing such as the creation of communal kitchens where residents deliberately pool their food dollars, cook together and share the end products – even being able to take home meals and freeze them for times when there is more month than money. We know too that SRO residents often make new friends, and they have fun together in the common areas -- looking at television, playing games or simply chatting and enjoying each other's company.

In the final analysis, we at the YWCA Cambridge are firm believers in the SRO housing model. It is cost effective housing model that enables the residents to live independently, yet as part of a community. Think of SRO housing as dormitory housing with the drama.

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**Drury, Margaret**

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**From:** Josh Meehan [jmeehan@cambridge-housing.org]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 18, 2011 3:32 PM  
**To:** Drury, Margaret  
**Subject:** Tuesday's Housing Comm. Meeting

Hi Margaret,

Greg asked me to send you some information regarding the Single Room Occupancy program and elderly public housing for Tuesday's meeting. Hopefully this one pager on the SRO program, this one on public housing and this one on our waiting list and preferences will be helpful.

Both Greg and Mike send their apologies for missing the meeting and look forward to participating in future discussions.

Best,  
Josh

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# CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAM

Through its state and federal public housing programs, the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) provides over 2,500 households throughout the City of Cambridge with safe, quality affordable housing. CHA's commitment to providing the highest quality in affordable housing to its residents is highlighted by the agency's current construction projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Nearly \$29 million in federal stimulus grants have enabled CHA to revitalize several developments, strengthening its already industry-leading housing stock.

To adequately address the housing needs of Cambridge residents, the CHA manages separate housing programs for Family applicants and Elderly/Disabled applicants. CHA provides a number of services to its residents in addition to housing, including medical, nutritional and supportive social services to Elderly/Disabled tenants, and educational and vocational services to those in the Family program. The combination of high quality affordable housing and wide array of social services for residents sets CHA apart from the rest as a public housing agency.

### Eligibility for Public Housing

An individual is eligible for public housing if he/she meets the following criteria:

- Household income does not exceed 80% of the Area Median Income of Cambridge
- For **Family Public Housing**, the applicant must be 18 years of age or over, or is an emancipated minor
- For **Elderly/Disabled Public Housing**, the applicant must be at least 58 years old, or have a disability and be at least 18 or an emancipated minor

### Applying for Public Housing

The following is a list of important information to know when considering applying for CHA's public housing program:

- Applicants can submit an application with up to **3 property choices**
- A separate waiting list is maintained for each property by bedroom size
- Applicants can change their selections **once per year**
- Applications are categorized on the waiting list in one of the following groups: Emergencies, Preference, Non-Preference, and they are sorted by the date the application was submitted
- Applicants should only submit **one initial application** and the correct form should be used to change development choice or household composition

### Rent Simplification

In 2006, CHA implemented the MTW Rent Simplification program (RSP) to change the way the agency determined the rent paid by tenants. Prior to RSP, CHA followed national standards in rent policy by basing tenants' rent on 30 percent of their income. Under the current policy, tenants pay a certain amount depending on which \$2,500 band their income falls within. This seeks to encourage self-sufficiency among CHA residents by allowing them to increase employment income without increasing their rents.

### Key Facts

- There are two categories of public housing, Family and Elderly/Disabled, each with different eligibility requirements and services
- Applicants can choose 3 sites to apply to, and are placed on a waiting list for each site
- Rent is determined by which \$2,500 income band a tenant's income falls on

### Public Housing Inventory

Total Conventional Units	2,520
Family Units	1,421
Elderly/Disabled Units	1,092

Visit [www.cambridge-housing.org](http://www.cambridge-housing.org) to learn more and contact CHA staff with inquiries

# CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY

The Cambridge Housing Authority's Single Room Occupancy (SRO) program provides rental assistance to qualified applicants to live in shared housing with other SRO participants. Residents are provided a single room with a lock and key, and have access to shared kitchens and bathrooms. The properties that are used for the SRO program are rehabilitated facilities throughout the City of Cambridge.

The SRO program is designed to help transition homeless individuals within the Cambridge community into secure transitional housing. Often times, SRO units are useful for individuals needing to build a housing history in order to qualify for CHA's public housing and voucher programs. Through the SRO program, CHA is able to help offer high-quality affordable housing to members of the Cambridge community in urgent need of safe, reliable housing.

## Overview

The Single Room Occupancy program is authorized by Section 441 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, a federal law passed in 1987 that provides funding for homeless assistance. CHA provides rental assistance payments to landlords on behalf of the individuals participating in the program. These payments cover the difference between a portion of tenant's income, which is typically 30%, and the rent for the unit. Rental assistance through the SRO program is provided to an individual for up to 10 years. SRO provides an avenue for CHA to reach out to homeless individuals in Cambridge, and provide them with a much-needed long-term and stable source of housing.

## Key Facts

- CHA manages over 100 units through the SRO program
- There are 10 properties in Cambridge and 1 in Somerville participating in CHA's SRO program
- Only unaccompanied homeless individuals can receive assistance through SRO
- SRO assistance can last for 10 years

## Eligibility

In order for an individual or a residential property to participate in the SRO program, they must meet the eligibility criteria. SRO tenants must be unaccompanied homeless individuals, and provide adequate evidence of their current housing situation. For a property to qualify for SRO participation, the structure can be of any type but after renovation must include multiple room dwelling units. Also, at least 25% of the property's units must be vacant at the time of application so that housing is immediately to homeless individuals.

## Locations

### Group Homes

- 7 Temple St.
- 30 Pearl St.
- 240 Allston St.
- 820 Massachusetts Ave.
- 10 Russell St.
- 265 Rindge Ave.

- 10-12 Hunting St.
- 93 Norfolk St.
- 205 Green St.

### Individual Homes

- 149 Windsor St.
- 2 Meacham St. (Somerville)

Visit [www.cambridge-housing.org](http://www.cambridge-housing.org) to learn more and contact CHA staff with inquiries

# CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY

## WAITING LISTS AND PREFERENCES

### **The Preference System** (see Preference System fact sheet for more info)

CHA's preference system gives certain applicants an opportunity to be housed ahead of applicants who do not have a preference. A preference will be granted to applicants who qualify for housing assistance and meet one of the following criteria:

- Permanent resident of Cambridge on the date of application
- Living in or relocated from a Cambridge shelter or transitional facility
- Employed or about to be employed in the city of Cambridge
- Veteran

### **Emergency Status** (see Emergency Status fact sheet for more info)

The Emergency Status process allows those who qualify for housing assistance to move to the top of a waiting list. Applicants claiming emergency status must first qualify for a preference and then meet the following criteria:

- Victim of incident of domestic violence within Cambridge
- For voucher assistance, an applicant is a Cambridge resident whose shelter burden (rent plus Section 8 Utility Allowance) has increased to 50% or more of his/her monthly adjusted income and owner agrees to enter into a voucher contract for a minimum of one year
- Left housing due to natural disaster, given notice to vacate without knowledge of issues, "no fault" eviction, individual with disabilities whose condition has changed within the last 90 days

### **Public Housing Waiting List** (Family 1BR Waitlist Currently Closed)

The Family Public Housing waitlist is available to all income eligible applicants 18 years of age or over or emancipated minors. The Elderly/Disabled waitlist is open to applicants 58 years of age or over, as well as individuals with disabilities that are at least 18 or an emancipated minor.

- Applicants can submit an application with up to 3 property choices
- A separate waiting list is maintained for each property by bedroom size
- Applicants can change their selections **once per year**
- Applications are categorized on the waiting list in one of the following groups: Emergencies, Preference, Non-Preference, and then sorted by the date of application
- Applicants should only submit **one initial application** and the correct form should be used to change development choice or household composition

**Public Housing inquiries during walk-in office hours: John Ziniewicz Thursdays 10AM – 2PM**

### **Single Room Occupancy (SRO):**

The Single Room Occupancy program provides applicants the opportunity to live in shared housing with other SRO participants. Residents are provided a single room with a lock and key, shared kitchens and bathrooms. Applicants are screened by the property owner and if found eligible are offered a subsidized room with shared facilities. These SRO units are especially useful for individuals that need to build housing history to qualify for family or elderly/disabled housing.

### **Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Waiting List:** (HCV Waitlist Currently Closed)

Also known as the Section 8 Voucher Program, the HCV program is open to all income eligible applicants 18 years of age and over or emancipated minors regardless of disability status. Applicants that are found eligible and receive a voucher need to find housing in the private market. Applicants that apply for the Housing Choice Voucher Program should expect to participate in a screening to assure that they meet program eligibility guidelines.

### **Key Facts**

Applications for different waitlists are color-coded :

- Family Pink
- Elderly/Disabled Green
- HCV Program Blue
- SRO Program Yellow

Each CHA property has its own waiting list

There are over 11,000 applicants waiting for housing from the CHA

Applicants that are eligible for a preference will be housed before applicants without one.

Elderly/Disabled housing includes only 11 two-bedroom units and no three or four-bedrooms

Applicants can check their status on any waiting list by calling (617) 864-3020

Visit [www.cambridge-housing.org](http://www.cambridge-housing.org) to learn more and contact CHA staff with inquiries