

## Multifamily Homeless Preference, Owners and Agents Share Their Experience

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HOWARD COHEN: I'm Howard Cohen. I'm chairperson of the board of Beacon Communities. Beacon has been in the affordable housing business for over 40 years. I'm standing on the site of our first development, Georgetown Homes. A couple of years ago, we decided, as a company, to make a commitment to a homeless preference in 10 of our developments in Massachusetts. And during this period of time, we've admitted 122 families, really, from shelters directly, into our affordable housing developments.

The program has been a remarkable success. It's been wonderful for our staff. We're very mission driven. I would encourage other owners to seriously consider adopting a homeless preference. One of the keys to doing this is to work very closely with a social service provider who can provide additional assistance that these families need as they make a transition.

JESSICA PROVAN: Hi. My name is Jessica Provan. I'm a property manager for Georgetown Homes for Beacon Communities. We've been working with the homeless preference for over two years now, and have moved in over 40 families to our community. They are an integral part of our community, working in the homework room and being a part of our programs. And we look forward to working with the homeless preference in the future.

LARRY CURTIS: I'm Larry Curtis, president and managing partner of WinnDevelopment Company. We are standing here in Boston, Massachusetts at the Castle Square Apartments. We, as a company, own and manage some 90,000 plus units nationwide, and have recognized, like others, that solving homelessness is a key part of why we are in business.

The families' lives become transformed. They integrate into the community in a positive way. Lives are made better. And in a certain way, our lives are made better as well, by seeing homelessness solved in one family at a time.

LAURA ROSI: Hi. I'm Laura Rosi, the director of housing and advocacy with Housing Families. Housing Families is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending family homelessness. Housing Families has been really happy to partner with the property managers in our communities that have the homeless preference. This preference has really helped families decrease the amount of time that they're staying in emergency shelter, and quickly move into quality and affordable housing.

Housing Families understands the needs of the property managers. When there's a vacancy with the homeless preference, we make sure that the families are able to get their applications done quickly. When a family moves into their new home, we continue providing them with support services so that they're able to maintain stable and successful tenancies.

The families that have moved into multifamily housing are thriving. I just heard a family talk about how happy they were to be able to throw a birthday party for their children. And kids are so excited to be able to have sleepovers with their friends in their new homes.

BART MITCHELL: I'm Bart Mitchell. I'm the president and CEO of The Community Builders. Community Builders is now one of the largest nonprofit owners of affordable and mixed income apartments in the US. We own 11,000 apartments in 14 states. I'm here in front of Historic South End Homes, one of our properties, where we have instituted a homeless preference, and where 15 families have recently moved in here, and in nearby properties.

We wanted to institute a homeless preference, because homelessness is devastating. It's devastating for individuals and for families, breaking connections to school, and work, and support systems. And we knew we could participate if we had great partners for referrals and for case management. The new lease made sure that the families had a chance to apply on time, and completely, to work for us as a landlord, and there were connections to services.

It works. We've seen previously homeless families transitioning to safe and stable housing, and building stronger connections to their health, and to education for their children. Please take part. Multifamily housing owners, institute a homeless preference. HUD will be easy to work with. There are great service partners out there. Your staff will be proud. You'll be doing something great for this country.

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## **Adopt the Homeless Preference at Your Properties**

**For more information:**

<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/multifamily-housing-owners-managers/>

**Questions? Ready to adopt the preference?**

Contact your HUD Account Executive or email HUD at [MFHP@hud.gov](mailto:MFHP@hud.gov)