

National Tenants Group Calls for Residents to Take a Front Seat into New Development Deal

HOUSTON, TEXAS, UNITED STATES ,
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EINPresswire.com/ -- On Wednesday,
September 14, 2022 at 2pm CST,
Residents of Cuney Homes Community
will host a press conference at the
neighborhood's basketball court with a
call to action that states "You Don't
Know- What You Don't Know, Don't Let
the TRE Go!" The official address is:
3260 Truxillo Street, Houston, TX
77004. * The event will be live-
streamed.



“The Tre” is a term used by residents to describe Cuney’s origins in Houston’s Third Ward. Cuney Homes was established in 1943 as Houston’s first and largest Public Housing Community providing services to 564 families.

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There should never be a time when residents who have endured the pain and hardship of a community are excluded from reaping the long-lasting benefits, both physically and economically.”

RW Jones

REDEVELOPMENT AND RIGHTS FOR RESIDENTS

Recently, Cuney Homes was recently awarded a \$450,000 Choice Neighborhood Initiative Planning grant by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in partnership with the City of Houston, Houston Housing Authority, Cuney Resident Council and local partners. The grant is to focus on the following areas:

- Housing: replacing distressed housing with well-managed, quality, mixed-income housing.
- People: providing residents with quality-of-life support related to areas such as health, education, and employment.
- Neighborhood: reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods to bring in good schools, commercial activity, and other amenities important to Houstonians.

While the grant's People Pillar Focus appear to place residents at the center of the initiative, [Can I Live](#)—a national public housing tenants association—is convinced there are so many rights and opportunities inadequately communicated to residents during the planning process.

The fear is that development will move forward without proper training, education and decision-making skills that will automatically exclude residents for generations to come. Without adequate and effective training, tenants will forfeit their rights to grow wealth building opportunities.

MANDATING COMMUNICATION

Development deals and initial planning grants often show families as a focal point for all engagement, however, the truth is, resident needs are rarely addressed says Racquel W. Jones, CEO and President of Can I Live. In most cases, families are ignorant, illiterate and unlearned regarding the development process and its terminology, timelines and overall value to the local community. While the perception may look ill-will, it may be a simple case of staff and consultants being ill-informed, Jones says.

According to the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 970.9, residents are due the first right to purchase the property should Public Housing decide to dispose or demolish its structures. However, residents are not at all aware of these rights, nor are they in any shape or capacity adequately prepared to sit at the table and articulate the value they bring to the development partnership. The Cuney Homes Resident Council can partner with any development firm to construct a mutually beneficial transaction where they themselves become an equity partner in the development deal.

What's worse is that HUD allows the PHA (Public Housing Authority) to waive the rights of residents if the property will remain "affordable housing." This is where it gets tricky. No deal, requiring private investment can remain 100% affordable using 100% HUD subsidies, for this reason they mix the development deals with private rents. It's the private rents that change the



dynamics of the deal in its entirety argues Jones. Private investments through HUD programs like RAD (Rental Assistance Demonstration) should trigger residents ownership stake in the deal. HUD should not allow agencies the right to waive residents' rights for the places they live, work and play.

This conversation is being ignored, along with the training and capacity needed to ensure residents are equipped and informed to make sound decisions in development deals. The practice has been to promote the features of the new development such as receiving the Choice Housing "Section 8" Voucher, or brand-new units with new stoves and refrigerators.

While the Cuney Homes staff and CNI team work diligently on engaging residents using a series of focus groups, residents are often asked what they want or what they would like to see in their new community. Residents typically respond with beautification and aesthetics needs versus the opportunity to gain access to the same opportunities afforded to those at the top of these major deals. Failing to communicate wealth-building opportunities that derives from business ownership, resident management corporations and or equity partnerships for residents and communities is a huge disservice. These conversations are paramount and should be mandated in all redevelopment conversations, but it is not.

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SOLUTION

Can I Live is hosting a Resident Engagement Conference, which trains and equips resident services staff, resident council leaders and service coordinators on how to address the major barriers facing their residents including employment, entrepreneurship and contracts. Residents don't need resume writing skills and interview workshops alone, but a clear line to avoid the "Welfare Cliff," a term used that references the loss or reduction of benefits when low-income individuals obtain employment.

Immediately the system penalizes them for working and oftentimes remove them all together without adequate time to adjust their lives in totality.

Can I Live and their team bring over 100 years of first-hand expertise as former public housing commissioners, and housing authority residents under both Public Housing and Section 8 programs. Can I Live is uniquely designed to help stakeholders address the barriers often faced by Public Housing Residents and adequately motivate, inspire and empower residents to embrace a full vision for themselves and their families.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION AND CONFERENCE

The RADAR Experience – Resident Engagement Conference will take place on September 15-17 at the Embassy Suites Houston Hotel located at 1515 Dallas Street, Houston, TX.

The conference topics will speak to overcoming barriers through systems navigation, streamlining the service delivery process and marketing and framing a message that gets residents engaged with local programs.

Public Housing Staff, Service Coordinators and Residents Council leaders are urged to attend and observe what many call the “Missing piece to the Puzzle of Poverty.”

* A Link to the Conference Brochure can be found here: [The RADAR Experience- Houston](#)

With similar development deals like Cuney Homes on the table across the state of Texas and more than 300 HUD funded public housing authorities, only 3 agencies from Texas has participated.

The State of Residents is a national crisis and this conference addresses that in a bold and innovative way!

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

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Can I Live: <https://canilive.org/>

The WEALTHFair Tour: <https://thewealthfairtour.com/>

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