

L.B. Johnson Apartments MODERNIZATION NEWSLETTER

February 2010
Frequently Asked Questions Edition

Frequently Asked Questions

This month's newsletter is devoted to answering frequently asked questions.



General Information

1. Why is renovation work necessary at LBJ?

The CHA and its design team have been reviewing building issues at LBJ for several years. LBJ Apartments was designed and built in an era of inexpensive energy. The most pressing problems include: an outdated building envelope that permits air and water to come inside, sturdy but energy-inefficient building construction, inefficient and ineffective ventilation and heating system, obsolete plumbing and electrical systems, insufficient handicapped accessible units, and other overdue upgrades to finishes and fixtures. For many years, the CHA has experienced significant difficulty in leasing studio apartments due to lack of privacy and the size of the apartments. Most applicants on the CHA's waiting list strongly prefer one bedroom apartments.

2. What is being done to address the building problems at LBJ?

Each of the problems listed above is addressed in CHA's plan to renovate LBJ.

- Windows and exterior doors will be replaced with high-performing windows to reduce heat loss and stop leaks;
- Concrete construction is ideal for the installation of exterior insulated cladding that will significantly improve the thermal performance of the building;
- Balconies in half of the studio apartments shall be enclosed to create 68 new one-bedroom apartments, thereby increasing the marketability and rental stability of the building;
- Existing electric heat system will be replaced with gas-fired hydronic heat and improved ventilation systems will capture building heat to condition incoming fresh air; and
- New air conditioning system will be installed to make the building more comfortable and energy efficient;
- Photo-voltaic panels, new flooring, and new kitchens are also in the scope of work.

3. How is this project funded?

LBJ Apartments was the recipient of a competitive grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA or also "stimulus" funding) for creating energy efficient green communities. Only 36 projects were funded nationally under this program. The ARRA funding, when combined with other funding including low-income housing tax credits proceeds, will permit the CHA to accomplish the full scale of improvements needed at LBJ.

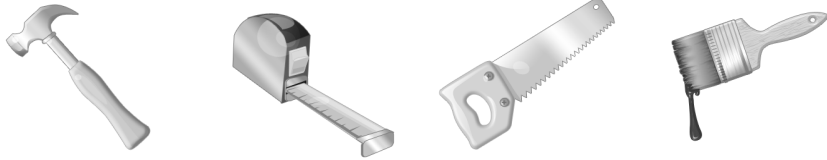
Next Resident Meeting Wednesday, February 17 at 6 p.m. in the LBJ Community Room

We will begin developing a written plan which will detail how relocation, transfers, and unit assignments at LBJ will occur.

More General Information

4. When will the work begin?

Building design is proceeding right now and a contractor for the project was selected. The start of construction is scheduled for late June or early July to meet the schedule required by ARRA funding.



Apartment Changes

1. How many balconies will be enclosed? Which units?

Approximately half of the existing studio apartments (approximately 68) will have enclosed balconies to create more interior living space. In so doing, these studio apartments will be converted to one-bedroom apartments. The balconies in studio units on floors six and higher will be enclosed due to increased problems with wind-driven rain at the top of the building. The CHA arranged tours of Burns Apartments in North Cambridge where balconies were enclosed several years ago and received well by residents.

2. How many balconies will be used for air-conditioning condensing units?

Thirteen balconies on the 5th floor of the 12-story portion of the building will be retained and used for condensing units that serve all of the apartments. These balconies will only be accessible to CHA staff and maintenance vendors.

3. How loud are the proposed condensing units?

This cooling system was selected because of its inherent energy efficiencies. The condensing units for these systems are noted for their quiet operation and are used in various applications from single-family homes, to high-end condominium and hotel complexes. The units operate at 50-52 decibels. Normal conversation is between 40-60 decibels.

More questions and answers on apartment changes can be found on the next page.

Common Area Changes

1. What are the plans for the common spaces?

The common areas are scheduled to receive a complete renovation.

- Lobby will be designed to be more inviting;
- Mailboxes will be replaced with larger boxes and relocated to provide more privacy;
- Waiting area with seating will be created to the side of the main entrance;
- Entrance from lobby to the rear yard will be created;
- New dedicated TV room and a billiards room will provide recreational spaces;
- Main common room will be renovated to include a gas fireplace and new finishes;
- Common kitchen and the rear bathrooms shall be renovated;
- Common hallways and elevator lobbies shall be refurbished.



2. What is being planned for the laundry room and terrace area?

The plan calls for double the number of washers and dryers in the laundry room and a new large counter for folding laundry. Dryers will be stacked, with the lower machines accessible to people with disabilities. The terrace area next to the laundry room will be enclosed to provide an office for the LBJ Tenant council. The laundry room will remain open during construction.

Questions about the upcoming modernization?

Call or email: Margaret Donnelly Moran at 617-520-6251 or mmoran@cambridge-housing.org or Ali Lynch at 617-520-6259 or alynch@cambridge-housing.org.

More Questions on Apartment Changes

4. What will the new windows be like?

The new windows will be the most obvious change at LBJ from inside and out. Not only will they improve the overall appearance of the building but they will provide a much more comfortable and attractive apartment for residents. Sight lines and views will be improved, operable window sashes will permit natural ventilation and cooling, and their construction will resist unwelcome water and air infiltration.

5. How will I be able to control heating and cooling in my apartment? What if I have a medical condition?

Each unit will have a thermostat which will limit the heating level to 78 degrees. Cooling shall be individually controlled in each apartment. Special accommodations can be made for residents with medical conditions.

6. What are the plans for the kitchen renovation?

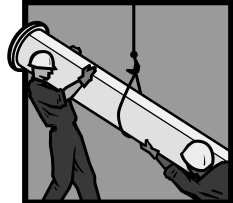
The current plan is to maximize the potential of the very small space by increasing counter space and making kitchen cabinets more accessible to all residents. The project architect, Tise Design, recommends using a smaller energy-efficient "senior-living" refrigerator to help maximize space. The existing ventilation in the kitchen, which has been the source of many complaints, will be blocked off and kitchen ranges will receive a new recirculating filtered range hood. The design and construction team is planning to construct a full-scale mock up of a new kitchen for resident review.

7. What are the plans for the bathroom renovation?

The current plan is to refinish the bathrooms and install new water-saving toilets and fixtures. CHA also plans to replace 75% of current bathtubs with showers to better meet the long-term needs of residents. The design and construction team intends to construct a full-scale mock up of a new bathroom with a shower for resident review.

8. What is the "wing wall"?

The wing wall (approximately 4 feet in length) will be placed between the living and sleeping areas in remaining studio apartments to hold the radiators and provide more furnishable floor space.



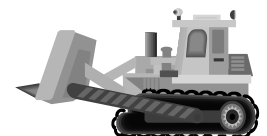
Construction

1. Who is the contractor? Who will be doing the construction?

With primary concerns for resident well-being, the CHA hired a Construction Manager to oversee and complete the work. The construction manager is hired during the design process and becomes involved earlier than normal to help determine best schedules for minimizing impacts to residents, looking for ways to save costs, and acting as a team player for getting the project done on time and on budget. After a competitive selection process, the CHA hired SKANSKA, an internationally-known construction company as construction manager.

2. What time will construction start in the morning and end in the evening?

As per all construction projects contracted by the CHA, construction activities will begin at 8 a.m. and end at 4 p.m.. Work is not permitted on weekends or holidays without CHA's prior consent.



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Other Questions

1. What is the plan for the outside space?

The architect is still developing a plan for the yards. He will present his plan to residents for their review at a future meeting.

2. What is the plan for the parking area?

As required by local ordinance, the renovations must provide storm water containment on-site before it is released into local sewer lines. The current design uses this stored water for irrigation. It will be necessary to install a water tank in the eastern driveway and make connection to local utilities. Following this work, the parking lot will be repaved and restriped. At certain times during the construction phase, the parking lot(s) will have to be cleared of cars for installation of the water tank, deliveries, and other processes. The Construction Manager will provide more information about the schedule.

3. How many units will be accessible at LBJ when the work is done?

As required by federal and state law, a renovation of this magnitude requires that a minimum of 5% of apartments be fully accessible to persons with disabilities (or 9 units at LBJ). Bathrooms and kitchens need to be reconfigured to accommodate these special needs and plumbing needs to be re-routed.

4. Will emergency cords be relocated closer to shower?

No. The Emergency Cord will remain where currently located.

5. Will entry and door entry systems change?

Yes. Secured entry doors will be operated by a FOB key. CHA hopes to replace the current intercom/buzzer system will be replaced with a telephone system.

6. Where is the asbestos and how will it be removed?

There is asbestos in the floor tile adhesive, in materials under the ceiling finish, and in the joint compound. Wet and/or dry removal methods will be used depending on the installation. The contractor will remove the asbestos using proper measures and in full accordance with state regulations.



Next Steps

- **Develop a written unit assignment, transfer and relocation plan.**
- **Continue to plan the design— resident input sought on:**
 - **Kitchen Design**
 - **Common Area Improvements**
 - **Outside Improvements**
 - **Color Selections**
 - **Flooring**
- **Determine the how long construction will take in each unit so that final relocation and phasing plans can be developed.**
- **Begin to work with those residents who want to move away from LBJ during construction.**

Upcoming Resident Meeting Schedule

Wednesday, Feb 17 @ 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Mar 3 @ 6 p.m.



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