

# OWNER UPDATE



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"The mission of the Cambridge Housing Authority is to develop and manage safe, good quality, affordable housing for low-income individuals and families in a manner which promotes citizenship, community & self reliance."

## **CHA PREPARES TO LAUNCH NEW BUSINESS SOFTWARE : *New Platform Includes Improvements for Owners***

CHA is deeply committed to improving the delivery of its programs to public housing residents, voucher holders and owners. In 2007 CHA began the long process of reviewing and selecting a new computer platform for all of its management and financial functions. After a careful review of available products, CHA decided to move ahead with the purchase and design of a business platform developed specifically for Housing Authorities called, ELITE. After more than a year of design and planning CHA is preparing to launch ELITE for Leased Housing beginning in November.

ELITE will make it even easier for owners to do business with us. ELITE allows more accurate delivery and tracking of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) checks to owners. In particular, ELITE will improve CHA's ability to create and distribute HAPs for firms managing tenancies for multiple owners. In the past it was difficult for CHA to separate payments by owner, when leases were managed by a single management company. With ELITE CHA will be able to easily segregate HAPs by owner to make accounting easier for management companies.

Once the new system is up and running, CHA will begin integrating a number of "bells and whistles" for owners that take full advantage of ELITE's online functionality as well as CHA's new website (*see article on page 2*). In the coming months owners can expect CHA to offer the following online functions:

- **Online Payment Registry**—owners will be able to login through a secure server to review all past and pending HAP payments.
- **Online Apartment Listing**—owners will be able to securely log on to CHA's website to list their apartments for rent and remove listings once apartments are rented.

CHA anticipates the initial ELITE implementation to be completed in November and December. As with any new system, CHA expects a few hiccups as the conversion from the old system to the new one moves forward. Owners are encouraged to contact CHA's Director of Leased Housing, Angelica Benzan immediately if any errors occur. Ms. Benzan can be reached by phone at 617-497-4040 or by email at [abenzan@cambridge-housing.org](mailto:abenzan@cambridge-housing.org).

## CHA COMPLETES MAJOR WEBSITE UPGRADE

CHA launched its redesigned website on October 16th. The new CHA Online ([www.cambridge-housing.org](http://www.cambridge-housing.org)) is designed with new and first-time web surfers in mind and includes a large portion of the site dedicated to owners looking for information on the voucher program. The "For Owners" section of CHA's website provides background on the voucher program, answers to frequently asked questions, up-to-date payment standards and utility allowance rates, past editions of the *Owner Update* and links to programs and resources useful to Cambridge property owners.

Over the next few weeks CHA will be adding a host forms owners use to business with us including:

- Owner change of address forms
- Direct Deposit Agreements
- Request for Tenancy Approval Packets
- Change of ownership packets
- A sample lease and Housing Assistance Payment contract
- Add/delete tenant forms
- A calendar of events

Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Spanish language versions of the site are accessible by clicking on one of the flags at the top right of the home page. We hope owners find the new website useful and easy to navigate. Please feel free to send us suggestions on how we can improve the site for owners.

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS & UPDATES:

**Direct Deposit Program:** In October 2008 owners were notified that CHA was transitioning to a direct deposit system for HAP payments. The Direct Deposit Program took effect on June 1, 2009. Owners not signed-up for the Direct Deposit Program may begin experiencing payment interruptions. Copies of the Direct Deposit Agreement can be downloaded from the For Owners section of our website, [www.cambridge-housing.org](http://www.cambridge-housing.org) or by contacting Joe DiMambro at 617-520-6215 or by email at [jdimambro@cambridge-housing.org](mailto:jdimambro@cambridge-housing.org)

**Failed Inspections:** Owners must notify CHA in writing when failed inspection items have been repaired and their units are ready for a re-inspection or if unexpected delays are making it difficult to make repairs on time. Questions about abatements should be directed to Director Benzan at 617-497-4040.

**New Payment Standards Coming in December:** CHA is currently analyzing market data gathered through the recently completed market study (*see July 2009 Update for details*). The data indicate that CHA's Payment Standards for the voucher program are reasonable, but that Cambridge remains an exceptionally expensive market. CHA will complete its analysis and announce the 2010 payment standards in the January edition of the *Owner Update* and online at [www.cambridge-housing.org](http://www.cambridge-housing.org).

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