

**Northtown & Independence Library Apts, Public Comment Hearing: July 12, 2017**

**Comment Period: Jun2 28 - July 28, 2017**

Row #	INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANIZATION	COMMENT	Response
1	Kathleen Reyes	I have questions. You've already answered one, because the lease refers to one and two-bedroom apartments. But I'm concerned about the Northtown Apartments. So those are all one-bedroom.	
2	Kathleen Reyes	My first question goes to financing. If CHA owns this building site, then how does Evergreen get a mortgage, because CHA's ownership makes this public land?	MS. GRONSTAL: So there will be a long-term ground lease for the land, and there will be a private first mortgage held by Evergreen.
3	Kathleen Reyes	So Evergreen is going to lease the land from CHA?  Who has the mortgage?	MS. GRONSTAL: Yes. We have a long-term ground lease.  Evergreen. Not technically Evergreen. The partnership that owns the building.
4	Kathleen Reyes	My second question is: Our alderman told us that the financing is structured the way it is because of the budget impasse. Now that that's been resolved, has there been any effect or do you expect one?	MS. GRONSTAL: I can't comment on that, because I -- there's nothing related to the state budget that has an impact on this budget, that I'm aware of.
5	Kathleen Reyes	Thirdly, you say that there is going to be a benefits coordinator assigned to the building. And several of us have been talking and asking why that would be necessary, because so many neighborhood sites all around hearing this new building offer that same service, benefits coordination.  Services such as?	MS. GRONSTAL: So it's not a benefits coordinator, it is a social service coordinator for the building. And what they do is work directly with the agencies in the area and ensure that residents get information and get connected to services.  Any kind of social service. It depends on the resident population and what the needs of the building are. But that person works directly with local social service agencies.

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6	Kathleen Reyes	We were also told that the building would be restricted to West Ridge residents, current residents or West Ridge residents on the CHA wait list. Is that the case or can anybody apply?	MS. GRONSTAL: Andreas, do you want to answer that? I mean Evergreen-maintained wait list is something we manage, so I can answer that question from the Evergreen perspective. That wait list is an open wait list that we manage, and it's essentially on a first-come, first-serve basis. It has to comply with Federal Fair Housing Law.
7	Kathleen Reyes	You can't answer tonight?	MR. SAFAKAS: If you have a specific CHA question, can you, please, submit it in writing, and I can write out a response for you?
8	Kathleen Reyes	Can you just give me a general response then?	MR. SAFAKAS: No, I can. I can answer more succinctly by writing it out. There's different information.  MS. GRONSTAL: It's in the Tenant Selection Plan. MR. SAFAKAS: It's in the Tenant Selection Plan, so I would just copy and paste it.
9	Kathleen Reyes	So, in other words, because the TSP says specifically that anybody can apply, it is not restricted to West Ridge residents?	MS. GRONSTAL: Correct. And it cannot be restricted to that, because that violates Federal Fair Housing Law.  MR. SAFAKAS: To a point, yes.
10	Kathleen Reyes	My last question is, how long is that ground lease?	MS. GRONSTAL: Do you know what it was in the -- it just went to CHA board, so I don't have the -- I don't have -- it's a long-term ground lease, so I would say that's something that she'll have to get you an answer on. But it just went to board.
11	John Kane	This is explicitly for just questions concerning resident housing or does it go beyond that?  So we're isolating eligibility requirements, right, is that the idea? Tenant selection?	MS. HOYLE: The specific topic is the Tenant Selection Plan and Lease, which would be for prospective CHA residents of this property.  Right

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12	John Kane	<p>So 62 units are available. There were originally 48. I'm talking specifically about the West Ridge development.</p> <p>I read 62. Is that Independence Park?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: 44 units.</p> <p>There were 62 in the original design competition.</p>
13	John Kane	<p>Got it. So what is the specific parameters for age for those individuals who want to be in that housing?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: 62 or older.</p>
14	John Kane	<p>And how do they qualify? What's the process?</p> <p>What's AMI?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: So there's two different sets. There is a set of 14 units that are 60 percent of AMI or less.</p> <p>Area Median Income. So that for – for those 14 units, that's the income qualification. On the 30 CHA units, the income varies.</p>
15	John Kane	<p>That first subset you're talking about, the AMI that you just discussed, those hearing are federal guidelines by which that specific population is selected in terms of the income level? Help me understand that. What do you mean by that?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: So, yes, from affordable housing. Affordable housing, in order to get a loan from housing tax credits, which is one of the financing sources, you have to have certain percentages. There's a couple different ways that you can qualify for the tax credits, so it's kind of a lot to explain. So very simply it's –</p>
16	John Kane	<p>You mean the actual individual or are you talking about the --</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: The developer and owner. And so for this particular project, we have 14 units set aside at 60 percent of the area meeting income. The remaining 30 are utilizing Chicago Housing Authority rental assistance, so they will come directly from wait lists that are maintained by the Chicago Housing Authority. So they determine that initial verification.</p> <p>But all tenants go through the same Tenant Selection Plan with screening for credit, criminal background, you know, all of that.</p>

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17	John Kane	So the breakout that you just illustrated, the first group versus the second group, the 30 versus 15 --	MS. GRONSTAL: 14
18	John Kane	14. 44 units and 30 units. So the 30 units, that specific breakout, how is that decided in terms of its -- the partition of the legal --	MS. GRONSTAL: I mean a lot of it is financing and Chicago Housing Authority, you know, need. They look city-wide at what the need is and availability for vouchers. So they have a certain amount of vouchers set aside, so they assign those to different projects. This one is assigned 30 of those rental assistance vouchers.
19	John Kane	Who makes that decision in terms of those 30 vouchers?	MS. GRONSTAL: What do you mean?
20	John Kane	Is it a City decision? Is it a CHA decision? You said they're set aside. How is that set aside?	MS. GRONSTAL: These are project-based vouchers. The Chicago Housing Authority issues a rental assistance agreement for the specific project for project-based vouchers. So it's a Chicago Housing Authority decision, a Chicago Housing Authority board decision.
21	John Kane	Okay. In other words, is this similar to other -- is this breakout in terms of proportion for this particular development, this 30 versus -- what is it? You said 14. Is it similar in terms of proportion to other types of developments that are being built or is it totally arbitrary?	MS. GRONSTAL: They all vary. No, it's not arbitrary. It's totally based on finance and need. There's a lot of factors that Chicago Housing Authority looks at.

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22	John Kane	<p>Are those factors made by the Chicago Housing Authority, is that something that's public record in terms of how those decisions are made specifically for a particular development?</p> <p>In other words, was there a decision specifically a couple of months ago made by the CHA that it would be broken out this way?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: The Chicago Housing Authority board approves specific vouchers for developments at their board meetings.</p> <p>MS. HOYLE: So to the extent that there was discussion at the board meeting or that certain information was presented to the board, that is all a matter of public record.</p> <p>MS. GRONSTAL: Correct.</p>
23	John Kane	<p>So it is not an arbitrary decision, it is a thoughtful decision, and it is an open-to-public meeting -- CHA meeting?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: Yes.</p> <p>MR. SAFAKAS: For future reference, if you want to attend any CHA board meeting, you are more than welcome to attend at 60 East Van Buren. It's open to the public. You can submit comments like we have here. And that's also live-streamed as well.</p>
24	John Kane	<p>Similar to going to like a Chicago Library's board meeting, Chicago Park hearing District's board meeting?</p>	<p>MR. SAFAKAS: Sure.</p>
25	John Kane	<p>And there is a group of commissioners or --</p>	<p>MR. SAFAKAS: Yes.</p>
26	John Kane	<p>Okay. So when will the first residents be moving in officially after the development opens?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: As soon as it is -- as soon as the certificate of occupancy is received, and we have eligible residents that have been fully screened and have signed leases, they will move in.</p> <p>So we are anticipating completing construction by the end of December 2018. So people would likely move in -- may not be the end of December, might be the beginning of January 2019.</p>

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27	John Kane	<p>And we have a CHA person here?</p> <p>Can you go into -- can you talk about the screening process for those 30 slots?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: Correct.</p> <p>MS. GRONSTAL: It's actually our screening process. So it's Evergreen's screening process through our Tenant Selection Plan, which is what's here.</p>
28	John Kane		<p>So that entire Tenant Selection Plan is the full screening process. I don't know how many pages that is, but it's fairly big. It's a fairly large document. But the screening procedures are the same for all applicants. The only difference is who is doing the income verification for those different units.</p>
29	John Kane		<p>Evergreen still has to do the income verification, but you have to go through a process first to get on the CHA wait list. But then once they come to us, everyone is screened exactly the same.</p>
30	John Kane	<p>So you validate the eligibility or the information -- the personal biographical information of all the applicants, Evergreen does that. So who does oversight of Evergreen's work --</p> <p>to make sure that you're doing what you are supposed to be doing?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: -- whatever entity issues low-income housing tax credits, in this case we are applying to the City of Chicago, they have some of their own low-income housing tax credits that they issue. So between City of Chicago and then also ultimately the federal government is the one that passes down the low-income housing tax credits. So there's annual reviews.</p>
31	John Kane	<p>Who quality reviews or makes sure you are complying with those requirements? Who signs off ultimately?</p>	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: It all depends on who ends up with the different -- who the different sources of funding end up being. So it will likely be our investor that invests in low-income housing tax credits, the City of Chicago, the Chicago Housing Authority, HUD, like -- a large number, like whoever has our private mortgage.</p>

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32	John Kane	So multiple entities, parties will actually do the verification of all of that screening?	MS. GRONSTAL: Yes.
33	John Kane	By investors, you're talking about bond holders, correct?	MS. GRONSTAL: No. Those that purchase low-income housing tax credits. This is not a bond transaction.
34	John Kane	Okay. So there's actual documentation signing off on the work that you guys do in terms of that tenant selection process?	MS. GRONSTAL: Yes, we have to comply with the Tenant Selection Plan that we have submitted to Chicago Housing Authority once it's approved, as well as all the federal regulations for low-income housing tax credits, HUD regulations, Fair Housing regulations.
35	John Kane	Right. One of the questions that came up in the public meetings when they were talking about the construction of the new library housing complex was set aside for West Ridge residents, and if that would be possible to specifically target seniors that live within West Ridge that would actually want to live within that complex.	<p>MS. GRONSTAL: So what we will do -- as I answered earlier, it does -- there is no way to do a set-aside without violating Federal Fair Housing Law. And so we cannot violate Federal Fair Housing Law.</p> <p>And what we will do as an effort to just ensure that West Ridge residents and residents nearby know about it is through our Affirmative Fair Marketing Plan.</p> <p>We've identified with the alderman, several different community organizations and other ways to reach out and ensure that residents are aware of it very early on in the process. Generally we start about four months before construction is complete.</p>

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36	John Kane	Can you talk about the process by which you're going to outreach to the alderman in terms of what you just discussed in terms of West Ridge residents, how you're going to market?	MS. GRONSTAL: That is something that we determine in consultation once we get further along in the process. That's not something we generally would determine all of the marketing methods. We wouldn't necessarily determine that this early in the process. We don't even have financing in place. Until all of those steps are done, determining the marketing is not --
37	John Kane	So let's benchmark. Let's say you've done this before. You've been in this process before. What would you normally do with the alderman or elected representative in	MS. GRONSTAL: So I can submit to CHA what we submitted to the alderman, which is an actual schedule of when we are going to touch base with her.
38	John Kane	Is there a step-by-step process in terms of that marketing that you discussed?	MS: GRONSTAL: There is an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan, which is something that we have to complete and has to be approved. And I don't have the exact timeline on that today, because it is not any time in the near future. But when we actually start outreach efforts is generally four months before construction is completed. And so we would a couple of months before that reach out to the community groups that we've previously identified. And we've already identified several of those that our property management company has been speaking directly with. A lot of times with social service agencies in the area.
39	John Kane	Okay. So is this something -- this process that we're discussing, is this something that's driven entirely by Evergreen, legally that is, or is it something that is -- something that CHA also has authority over?	MS. GRONSTAL: No, we are responsible for that effort. We do have to submit an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan, which has to get approved, not only by the CHA and HUD, but also by whoever issues the low-income housing tax credits, which in this case is likely to be the City of Chicago.

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40	John Kane	How do you make sure that the process of selecting those individuals that want to live in that development are objectively chosen and not politically connected in any way? How can you make sure there's safeguards?	MS. GRONSTAL: So the Tenant Selection Plan outlines everything. It is a legal document. So our screening process has to be the same for every single person that comes in to the building, and it has to be approved ahead of time. And, honestly, it is fairly consistent across the board for all of our properties. We don't generally have different background checks and things for different buildings. They tend to be all fairly standard.
41	John Kane	Okay. You guys don't talk about the mortgage stuff, right?	MS. GRONSTAL: The what?
42	John Kane	Questions regarding mortgage stuff, like financing on the project.	That's not the topic of this meeting.
43	John Kane	Okay. One more question. Communication. I didn't get word of this hearing meeting until last minute. Is this something that should have been publicly posted?	MS. GRONSTAL: It was posted publicly. MS. HOYLE: I'll speak to that. We have a process we follow for all CHA meetings like this. We take ads out in papers. We have ads in the Sun-Times, Defender. It gets posted at all of our CHA properties. It gets sent to right to return residents, email blasts to people that have signed up for CHA communications. That's a fairly standard process that we follow.
44	John Kane	Was that information sent to the alderman's office?	MS. HOYLE: That I don't know. We wouldn't normally do that, because these meetings are usually targeted at prospective residents. I can check to see if somebody else --

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45	John Kane	Was the purview of the Advisory Council that's put together for the actual library, was there any discussions of the development in the tenant selection process during that, would you know? Is that something that --	MS. GRONSTAL: So I don't know that I have a good answer to that question. I wasn't at all of those meetings. The Tenant Selection Plan is not generally something -- because it is a very legal document, it's not generally something that would be discussed at a steering committee meeting. A lot of it is fairly standard. All goes through CHA legal, so it's -- there's only so much you can adjust, because a lot of it is fairly standard.
46	John Kane	If those individuals that are chosen or being -- want to be chosen have criminal records, is there a waiting system in terms of those who are chosen with criminal records versus not criminal records? How does that work?	MS. GRONSTAL: No, people have to pass our criminal background check. And it is a very specific check. I don't have it all written out in front of me today. It's -- every different type of offense has a different length of time period. And we also look at the -- if there's a pattern of misdemeanors. So it's a very extensive background check. So everyone has to pass the background check. So if you don't pass, you don't get on a wait list.
47	John Kane	Is there a credit check, too?	MS. GRONSTAL: Yes
48	Cynthea Wright	Since these units are for seniors, wil lthe walls and floors be thick enough to prevent sound transfer?	The structural system of the building is still being designed. The units will comply with all City of Chicago and Illinois state building codes regarding sound transmissivity between units. Resident comfort, including reduction of sound transfer, are will be a priority in the design.
49	Cynthea Wright	When will you begin accepting applications for the Northtown Apts?	Developer anticipates applications being available and accepted starting November 1, 2018.