

H O U S I N G

Siletz Indian Housing Authority Annual Report for 1995

SUMMARY OF THE YEAR'S

ACTIVITIES

The construction of 26 apartments for Elders and families, along with an administrative building for the Housing Authority, has been a year-long project, which will reach completion in early 1996. Weather and problems with materials, notably lumber and plywood, slowed the progress of the project. The architect, general contractor, and Housing Authority worked together to resolve problems as they arose. Although behind schedule, the finished project will be first rate in quality and design and adds much needed housing units to the area.

Early in the year, the Housing Authority was awarded a \$2.1 million grant from HUD's Office of Native American Programs to develop another rental project. The process of site selection was begun with Tribal Council and by year's end preliminary site planning had begun for the Judd Road tract.

The Section 8 rent subsidy program continues to be the largest program that we administer, in terms of the number of families served - approximately 75. Turnover is high, due to a number of factors, both negative and positive. Positive factors include families returning to work and seeing their incomes rise to the point where they no longer need a rent subsidy. The Section 8 program has enabled many Tribal members to have homes of their own for the first time in their lives.

Management of the 54 Mutual Help homes was made more difficult by delays and difficulties within the Tribal Court system. Despite this, a vast majority of the Homebuyers respect the authority of the Housing Board to enforce the rules and regulations which are necessary to maintain a safe environment for Tribal families and a financially viable operation for the Housing Authority.

FINANCIAL CONDITION OF THE AUTHORITY

The Housing Authority depends on the funds generated by its housing programs for operating revenue. These include house payments and rents paid by

residents and operating subsidy and administrative fees paid by HUD. During 1995 we had four budgets that we were working with: Mutual Help (54 homes), Section 8 (75 units), and development budgets for the two apartment projects. This helps to reduce the administrative cost for each program and has enabled the Housing Authority to continue at its present staffing level, despite a delay in getting the first apartment project completed and occupied. When the first 26 apartments are completed in early 1996 and we begin to collect rents and HUD subsidy for their operation, the Housing Authority will be adding a half-time maintenance person and another full-time clerical person. Although our programs are growing, HUD subsidy amounts are uncertain, due to federal budget constraints. With careful planning and a close monitoring of expenditures, we hope to avoid any cutbacks in staff or services. Our reserve funds for Mutual Help and Section 8 are at healthy levels. Section 8 funds are under short-term contract with HUD and are not in jeopardy during the term of the contract. However, the contract for our first 25 units will be expiring in 1997 and there is the possibility that it may not be renewed at its current level. Unless funding cuts are drastic, we would hope that it will not be necessary to terminate any Section 8 contracts for Tribal members due to a lack of HUD funds, although it may limit the addition of new units to the program.

THE CONDITION OF THE PROPERTIES

Annual inspections were completed on all 54 homes and re-inspections are conducted as needed. The purpose of the inspections is to determine that Homebuyers are carrying out their maintenance responsibilities under the lease agreement. The Housing Authority assists Homebuyers in providing information and guidance and in situations where essential maintenance is needed and the Homebuyer has no equity account or other funds available, the Housing Authority will pay to have the work done and set up a payment plan with the Homebuyer. Winter storms took their toll, with trees falling on two homes and shingle loss on most of the homes in Project 35-1. The Housing Auth-

ority's insurance covered most of the storm losses, with the deductible spread among the affected Homebuyers. The Housing board and staff strictly enforce the Authority's vehicle and pet policies. Enforcement of the Authority's vehicle policy was tested in Tribal

Court and our position was upheld. We are committed to insuring a safe and attractive environment for Tribal families.

NUMBER OF UNITS AND VACANCIES

Three homes were vacated during the year, all as a result of evictions. The homes were filled with applicants from our waiting list. Vacancy losses were held to a minimum.

SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A lack of adequate law enforcement continues to be the most significant problem affecting the management of our housing area. A lack of long range land use planning by the Tribe is the most significant problem limiting the development of new housing.

With the occupancy of 26 apartment units in early 1996 and the development of 25 additional apartment units during the year, the need for law enforcement to protect our residents is crucial. The Housing Authority cannot guarantee a safe environment for Tribal families, with the present system of law enforcement, in which we are dependent on the county sheriff's office. The Housing Authority is not a law enforcement agency, yet our residents often expect us to respond as such when criminal activity is reported to us. We work closely with the sheriff's office to document reports of criminal activity and enforce the lease agreements accordingly. A Tribal law enforcement presence would not only reduce criminal activity, we believe, but would also help us better document the activity that does occur. Most importantly, a local law enforcement presence will better protect the law abiding families who are being injured, disturbed and frightened by the criminal activity.

We appreciate the steps that Tribal Council has taken to improve the Tribal Court system. Our legal expenses were extremely high during 1995, due to the delays and appeals that were pending in Tribal Court. We would like to see our residents receive more effective