



*Growing Communities One Family At A Time
For More Than 70 Years*

Sparkman Homes Relocation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (July 2019)

1. Why is Huntsville Housing Authority (HHA) asking residents of Sparkman Homes to be relocated?

HHA carefully examined every option to avoid this but in the end, Sparkman Homes simply requires more in capital maintenance than HHA can legally provide. Built in 1954, Sparkman Homes is located in the floodplain and requires more than \$20 million in renovations, if such renovations were permitted by the City of Huntsville and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which they are not. Relocation is the only option to protect the health and safety of residents. **On July 17, 2019, HHA received approval from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the demolition of Sparkman Homes.**

2. What will HHA do to help the residents of Sparkman Homes?

With HUD approval, all eligible residents currently under lease at Sparkman Homes will be offered Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPVs), a unique form of rental assistance provided to HHA-assisted households forced to relocate from their homes. Residents will also be offered the opportunity to transfer to other public housing properties. To ensure that you are eligible for relocation benefits, **do not move** until you receive written notice from HHA.

3. What happens should a family choose not to move?

Households currently living at Sparkman Homes with HHA will be required to move since the housing authority will be securing these properties for future demolition. HHA will provide relocation counseling services to all affected families to find the best relocation option for each household. This relocation is necessary due to health and safety reasons. However, residents can choose to move locally or anywhere in the country where a recipient housing authority operates a voucher program.

4. How will HHA help residents to find another home?

In addition to providing residents with TPVs, HHA will offer one-on-one counseling and relocation assistance to help residents find a new home, either in the area or anywhere else in the country where a local Public Housing Authority operates a voucher program.

5. Will I have to move away from Huntsville?

No. There is adequate housing in or near Huntsville for Sparkman Homes' residents to move to. While the demand for affordable housing in Huntsville is extremely high, HHA recently increased its payment standards in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. This allows for HHA to pay higher voucher amounts in "areas of opportunity," like Hampton Cove and Owens Crossroads. Families will have the option to live anywhere in the country, including available units in Huntsville and surrounding cities with a housing authority operating a voucher program.

6. How many Sparkman Homes families are being moved?

HHA anticipates moving residents from all 165 resident-occupied units at Sparkman Homes.

7. When will Sparkman Homes residents be required to move? Will they be evicted?

HHA will work with every family to find a new home. The relocation process for families will begin when HHA receives approval from HUD for TPVs for Sparkman Homes and TPVs are issued to all eligible families. Eligible families will receive a Notice of Eligibility & 90 Day Notice to Move by certified mail. Once residents receive their voucher, they will have 60 to 90 days to locate suitable housing. Residents who want to leave Huntsville must complete a Request for Portability form. Residents who require reasonable accommodations for their housing search should contact the housing authority. All families should be moved from Sparkman Homes within 3 to 6 months from the date HUD approves the TPVs. **HHA applied for the TPVs on July 17, 2019.**

8. Will there be counseling provided to families who may have no experience renting from a private landlord or living in private rental property?

Absolutely. HHA will be working closely with housing counselors and relocation specialists to help ease the transition from public to HHA-assisted private rental housing to make certain residents understand the terms of their new lease agreements.

9. Will residents be offered housing counseling assistance to locate a new unit?

Yes. Housing authority staff will be available for one-on-one meetings with residents to help them locate their next home.

10. What special consideration will be given to the special needs of elderly residents living in Sparkman Homes?

We plan to do everything possible to assist elderly residents who may have lived in Huntsville their entire lives. We are meeting with each elderly resident, asking them to tell us what THEY choose. Once they make a choice of what housing situation works best for them, our relocation team will work with them to facilitate a smooth transition into their new home.

11. Does HHA realize the relocation will have a significant impact on the larger community?

We are keenly aware of the hardship this relocation will have on these households and indeed upon the very fabric of the surrounding community. HHA is hoping to implement this process in a manner that will allow these residents to locate alternative housing prior to the start of a new school year for their children.

12. Did you coordinate with the school district/city/state?

HHA has had several meetings with local school district leaders, community leaders, city and leadership and will continue to engage these leaders before and during implementation of any relocation activities.

13. Is there a limit to how much a relocation can cost?

There are prescribed limits under the U.S. Department of Transportation guidelines (Uniform Relocation Act) and within HHA's budget limitations. The exact amount of relocation assistance to be provided to each household will be determined when we have a better estimate of where families will elect to move.

14. What will happen to the buildings at Sparkman Homes once residents have been moved?

The cost of restoring this development to any level of suitability and to protect them from future flood risks is estimated to exceed \$20 million. Given the annual funding HHA receives under HUD's Capital Fund Program, it would take more than 14 years to address all the physical

needs at Sparkman Homes. Quite simply, these developments are beyond repair. Once the buildings at Sparkman Homes are fully vacant, HHA and the City of Huntsville will facilitate their demolition.

15. Is HHA considering redevelopment of the property?

HHA is exploring every opportunity to redevelop these properties but no decision has been made yet. Our top priority now is moving current residents to safer, healthier homes.

16. Why is it taking HHA so long to complete this?

HHA is not permitted to relocate families and demolish public housing units without the explicit approval from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD has specific guidelines that public housing authorities (PHAs) must follow before permission to demolish a public housing site is given. HHA has diligently worked on a demolition application that meets all of HUD's requirements. During the time of the development of the application, the Historical Preservation Society determined the site qualifies for listing on the register of historic places. This caused a major time delay. However, the situation was resolved and the demolition application was successfully submitted to HUD in February 2019. **On July 17, 2019, HHA received approval from HUD for the demolition of Sparkman Homes.**

17. What police or other security will be provided to the residents as the buildings are slowly vacated and families are left isolated while waiting to relocate?

We plan to work with local law enforcement to ensure they are completely apprised of our relocation efforts to ensure policing and security where necessary.

18. What happens to families that owe back rent or are otherwise not current on their rent payments to the HHA?

HHA staff will work with residents of Sparkman Homes to locate community resources to help families relocate without debt to their new public housing authority or Section 8 unit. Families will **not** be eligible for a voucher if they any owe money to HHA and the voucher **will be denied**. Families will be notified if they are not eligible for a voucher due to a debt owed to the public housing program. Families that are under a repayment agreement must pay off their entire balance to the public housing program before they can be issued a voucher. Any family that does not pay off their balance will be offered the opportunity to transfer to another a public housing unit.

19. Is there a maximum level of rental assistance HHA will offer residents of Sparkman Homes?

Payment standards are adopted by the PHA and must be within a certain range of the Fair Market Rent (FMR) or Small Area Fair Market Rent (SAFMR) for the Huntsville metropolitan area and/or Zip Code in which the rental unit is located. Rental assistance is calculated based upon the payment standard for each particular family and is further determined by household composition and income. Tenants typically contribute 30 percent of their income for their portion of the rent.

20. How much will this relocation effort cost?

Since Sparkman Homes residents can move anywhere they wish throughout the country, the total cost of relocation cannot be calculated now.

21. When will my Tenant Protection Voucher become effective?

HHA will provide a specific date in the coming weeks as information is finalized. Vouchers may be used to move anywhere in the country where there is an active voucher program. Residents who elect to leave Huntsville will work with the public housing authority in their new jurisdiction once they move.

22. Will HHA also pay for relocation expenses (security deposit, moving costs, and application fees)?

Yes. HHA will pay the cost of up to three rental application fees for each affected resident household, along with a maximum security deposit of up to one month's rent. HHA will also pay the costs of fees related to reconnection of utilities, as long as the utilities were active in the name of the head of household. Finally, HHA will pay moving costs for Sparkman Homes families, in accordance with the Fixed Payment for Moving Expenses, as determined by the federal government. **HHA will make payments to vendors directly on behalf of the tenant. Residents will need to submit a request to their relocation specialist who will submit it to the Finance Department for processing.** Residents can choose one of the three moving options provided below:

1. **HHA Move** – HHA will contract with a professional moving company that will move residents anywhere within a 50 mile radius of the affected property. Displaced residents may choose to have the HHA movers complete their move. Residents may also choose to have packing and unpacking services provided by the contract mover or may choose to pack and unpack themselves. If residents elect to do their own packing and unpacking, HHA will provide packing supplies

once a move has been scheduled.

2. **Self-Move (Fixed Rate Moving Expense Allowance)** – Residents may choose to move themselves with no assistance from HHA’s contract mover. If displaced households choose a self-move, HHA will provide packing supplies once the move has been scheduled. Persons selecting this option will be entitled to a fixed payment for moving expenses determined in accordance with the Fixed Residential Moving Cost Schedule approved by the Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, as published on a periodic basis in the federal register. This schedule is based on rooms of furniture in the displaced dwelling unit; bathrooms, hallways, closets and kitchens are not included in determining the number of rooms.
3. **Self-Move (Reimbursement of Reasonable Moving Related Expenses)** – HHA will reimburse residents who choose to move themselves for reasonable moving related expenses. All expenses for reimbursement must be supported by original receipts. For this option, reimbursement cannot exceed the fixed rate moving expense allowance.

23. How much money will residents receive for relocation costs?

Relocation costs will vary based upon the unit size of the resident family and the location to which they move. HHA staff will work with each resident family to make sure that their needs are taken care of, in accordance with all federal and local requirements **HHA will make payments to vendors directly on behalf of the tenant. Residents will need to submit a request to their relocation specialist who will submit it to the Finance Department for processing.**

24. Will Sparkman Homes residents be required to pay for repairs to their current units?

Per the lease, residents will be responsible for any resident-caused damage, beyond normal wear and tear, for the remainder of their time in the unit. Residents that cause damage beyond normal wear and tear may not be eligible for a voucher. Repairs that are not related to resident-caused damage will be made at no cost to the residents.