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March 26, 2014

The Honorable Jim McDermott
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
1035 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4707

Dear Congressman McDermott:

Thank you for your recent letter about The Theodora.

Volunteers of America (VOA) began serving those in need throughout the state of Washington in 1898. Today, through our Western Washington affiliate, we provide services in six counties through a wide range of programs that focus on serving people and communities in need. Through our Basic Needs Services, Personal Support Services, Child & Youth Services, Conflict Resolution Services, Behavioral Health Services, and Volunteer Services, Volunteers of America Western Washington responds to 350,000 requests for assistance each year. Volunteers of America serves over two million Americans nationally each year.

At the heart of all we do is a commitment to help break the cycle of poverty by ensuring those at risk have their basic needs met - mainly food and shelter. Our vision is a community where all people live in safety, with social, emotional and physical well-being, spiritual fulfillment, justice and hope.

The Theodora

The Theodora is a unique housing model. It is comprised of 114 single-room apartments (about 200 sq. ft. or smaller) with shared cafeteria and kitchen. Meals are prepared onsite for residents. While this model worked well decades ago, it has become antiquated and does not address the needs of today's elderly and disabled.

The outdated building configuration, which is not comparable to or competitive even with other HUD 202 buildings in Seattle, has been an increasing impediment to retaining residents. Recognizing this, starting in 2007, Volunteers of America worked internally and then with two respected local development consultant groups to achieve redevelopment of The Theodora. Unfortunately, a feasible redevelopment solution could not be found. VOA has operated the Theodora at a significant financial loss for years and we cannot continue to sustain the building.

Volunteers of America first marketed The Theodora via CBRE brokerage firm to nearly 75 local and national non-profit developers, which included names given to us by the Office of Housing. Through many conversations had by our team and our broker, non-profits told us that because of the building's age and current configuration, they could not afford to acquire and operate the building as low-income housing.

We then took The Theodora to the private market and received several bids. Volunteers of America could have easily maximized profit and sold to a developer who would have razed the building and constructed expensive homes. Instead, we selected a developer willing to not only invest in and preserve this historic building, but also keep the housing affordable – at the exact levels the city is trying so hard to increase. We entered into a good faith contract with Goodman Real Estate, which will conclude with a sale of the building this fall.

Volunteers of America is deeply committed to our residents during this time of transition and our goal is to go above and beyond for them wherever possible.

Here is a summary of the work we are beginning:

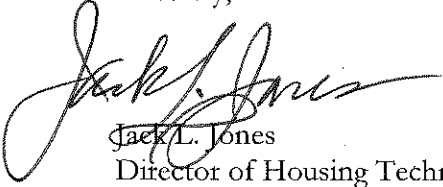
- We will work with Seattle Housing Authority and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) early and often to facilitate all Section 8 residents and non Section 8 residents find new homes that fully suit their needs.
- We have retained a relocation specialist to work one-on-one with each resident and their families to assist them in finding housing that fits their budget and health needs.
- Along with Goodman Real Estate (buyer), we will provide \$5,000 to each resident. In addition, all residents who qualify for City of Seattle relocation assistance will receive \$3,188 to help with their transition. This means each resident could receive about \$8,188 to defray their cost of relocation.
- ALL residents who currently receive Section 8 subsidy, who are determined eligible under the rules of the Seattle Housing Authority, will retain their subsidy. Tenant protection vouchers are portable subsidies that will allow eligible residents more choices and the freedom to find a home that better meets their needs. Our relocation specialist will work closely with Seattle Housing Authority on this transition and will be closely involved to make sure everyone transitions well and as many vouchers as possible are retained.

Affordability in Seattle is a complex topic. While the Theodora is no longer economically viable for VOA to operate, we will continue investing in our North Seattle/Greenwood location as well as other new low-income housing in and around Seattle – as we have done for nearly 100 years.

We invite you to tour the property and learn more about the building, as well as our commitment to residents during this transition.

J. McDermott
March 26, 2014
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jack L. Jones".

Jack L. Jones

Director of Housing Technical Assistance & Training &
National Section 504 Coordinator

cc: Ed Murray, Mayor, City of Seattle
Seattle City Council
Theodora Rescue Committee