

# Resident Perspectives:

## *Home in a High-Rise*



Bohn Tower rises 22 stories into the sky from downtown Cleveland, Ohio. Owned by the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA), the affordable housing property is not only surrounded by condominiums, multifamily housing, and high-rise office buildings, but it sits near the waterfront and is close to the Q Arena, Progressive Field, hotels, and many restaurants. It was an ideal site to be preserved and renovated through RAD.

Taking on renovations for a 22-story building is no small task. Anyone who wanted to move out during the renovations was assisted. However, CMHA also allowed residents to remain in the building during the construction. Those who stayed were prepped for the noise, and some took part in the development.



*"We encouraged contractors to give residents the opportunity to work with them and learn about something. It benefits the tenants and it also helps to have tenants who see both sides. When you get involved like that, you're also not just waiting for something to happen anymore; you're part of it happening."*

*~ Jeffery Patterson, Chief Executive Director of CMHA.*

One of the biggest changes in the building was the addition of a third elevator. Cutting an elevator shaft into a building like Bohn Tower—and while it was still occupied—was unprecedented. But it was necessary. The two old elevators that serviced the entire building moved so slow that it was widely known you could push the button, take a shower, and come back dressed before it reached your floor.

Adding an elevator was a massive project, but not the only one taken on during the renovation that immediately improved the quality of housing for residents.

Residents reported that since the renovations, people from around the city are drawn into the building and often inquire about availability.



*"Not only did they renovate the building, they made it so we could grow as a community." ~ Mr. Charles Brown*





*"I watched it being done. I helped with it along the way. But when it was all done; when I walked into the space with everything, I just thought: this is incredible; this is amazing; and this is my home." ~ Ms. Botsio-Boakye*

## Top Recommendations For Success

We asked if the residents and board members would share the things they learned that would be helpful for others considering a RAD conversion and within minutes we had this list of musts:

- 1. Make sure you understand all the work** that is going to be done before it begins.
- 2. Examine any possible unforeseen circumstances** so that you can have a contingency plan and a way of walking tenants through it.
- 3. Coordinate your relocation timeline with the construction contractor's timeline.** If you are moving people from old units into new ones as they become available, make sure tenants aren't being moved too quickly to transition, but also make sure they are moved with adequate time for work to begin on schedule.
- 4. Be available and have lots of facetime with your tenants.** It strengthens trust and keeps concerns from becoming problems.
- 5. Communication is the most important thing.** Walk tenants through the process from the physical changes to the property to their lives moving forward. They might not know how it will personally impact them.
- 6. Listen to residents when developing the scope of work.** Make sure you do the things that will have a significant impact on the building, like asbestos removal or new roofs, but also **add in items that will improve quality of life for residents.** The "big ticket" item at Bohn Tower was the third elevator, which everyone wanted.

*View the complete story online*