



TERRORISM A3

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MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS, B2

BASEBALL C1

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

THE POOR SIDE OF TOWN FOR SECTION 8 TENANTS



DAVID BERGELAND/Herald News

Construction debris fills an empty lot across from newly built Section 8 housing on Summer Street in Paterson. The program is supposed to give voucher holders the option of moving out of poor neighborhoods but that isn't often the case, an analysis shows.

Pleasant neighborhoods rarely an option in Paterson

By SAMANTHA HENRY and TOM MEAGHER Herald News

PATERSON - When Michelle Jamison and her family lost their apartment in a fire, they were given a list of Section 8 properties by the city to find a new place.

"The list that they gave us was all horrible areas - all in the 4th Ward," Jamison said. Jamison said she questioned why the city agency, seeing that she had a teenage daughter, would only recommend what she considered high-crime areas.

"I was like: 'Do you have another list?'" Jamison said. "They said that's what they had available, and this was their list, and pretty much take it or leave it."

Section 8 vouchers, part of a federal rental subsidy program, are intended to help low-income working families afford prevailing rents. Eligible tenants must contribute up to 30 percent of their income and the government pays the difference directly to the landlord.

"The list that they gave us was all horrible areas - all in the 4th Ward. I was like: 'Do you have another list?'"

MICHELLE JAMISON, Paterson resident

Giving tenants the option to move out of high-poverty neighborhoods is a central principle of the federal program. Housing choice and poverty de-concentration efforts are also key indicators by which the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development judges the effectiveness of how Section 8 funds are administered locally.

But a Herald News analysis of the lists given out to voucher holders in Paterson, as well as the location of leased Section 8 apartments, shows them concentrated in the poorest sections of the city.

Mapping the addresses of Section 8 apartments

and listings found that nearly 100 percent of them were located in Paterson. Nearly half of them were in the city's lowest-income neighborhoods, which had a concentration of Section 8 apartments more than four times the city's average.

Paterson's more affluent sections had just a handful of Section 8 apartments; 18 in Lakeview, seven in Hillcrest, and five on the East Side - none in the vicinity of the park.

It is up to voucher-holders to find an apartment where the landlord accepts Section 8, and property owners are not allowed to discriminate against tenants who pay rent through the program. Tenants are given 60 days to find an affordable place, and agencies that administer the program are supposed to help them by providing lists of Section 8 apartments, counseling on housing options outside low-income areas, and information on how they can use the vouchers anywhere, including in other states.

Please see PATERSON, A12

EDUCATION

Charter school saves session

Summer classes on, but future uncertain

By DANIELLE SHAPIRO Herald News

PATERSON - During an emergency meeting Saturday in the library of the Paterson Charter School for Science and Technology, the board of trustees appointed Frank Kosar to resume his role at the helm of the school until July 29.

The board took the emergency action so that the school could offer a summer program that was in jeopardy of being canceled without a supervisor.

However, there still was no answer to whether the school will open in the fall.

On Friday, the school received its second extension - to July 29 - of probation that was initiated in December. The school has until July 16 to submit a corrective-action plan for violations the state itemized in a report by the state Department of Education's office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance.

Please see SCHOOL, A5

WAR ON TERROR

Friends or foes?

Nine Gitmo prisoners were considered enemies of Taliban

By PAUL HAVEN The Associated Press

In 1997, in a mud-brick room in eastern Afghanistan, al-Qaida interrogators were firing angry questions at Sadiq Turkistani. What is your military rank? Are you connected to Israeli intelligence?

Why have you come to assassinate Osama bin Laden?

Turkistani says the men whipped him on the back and legs with a thick cable and slapped his face. After about a month, he would have preferred execution to the endless beatings, and he told them what they wanted to hear.

But that was only the start of Turkistani's ordeal.

The Taliban held him for nearly five years. When they were toppled in the U.S.-led campaign in 2001, the Americans shipped him to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba - as an alleged agent of al-Qaida, the very people who had tortured him in the first place.

Please see PRISONERS, A8

SUNDAY



West Paterson, New Jersey Vol. 136, No. 182

Celebration of life

Breast cancer survivors of every age, race and ethnicity gather to celebrate their survival and share their struggles.

In Life, D1



Boaters welcome sheriff's patrols

In Our Towns, B1

WEATHER

Sun, sun, sun

Highs in the upper 70s. Tonight and Monday: Mostly clear with lows in the lower 50s. Still sunny on Monday with highs in the upper 70s. C15

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Paterson: Residents with vouchers often end up in worst areas

Continued from A1

"One of the founding principals of the Section 8 program was that it would provide opportunities outside high-poverty neighborhoods," said Philip Tegeler, executive director of the Poverty & Race Research Action Council, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that focuses on civil rights issues.

"It wasn't until the early '90s that the program started to be run in an affirmative manner to give people those choices, and the requirement to give families better choices outside of segregated areas was taken more seriously. Today in 2007, they are supposed to provide listings in a wide range of areas."

Placement not intentional

Irma Gorham, director of the Paterson Housing Authority, also oversees the city's now-defunct Section 8 program, once run by the Department of Community Development. Gorham acknowledged that most of the Section 8 listings in the city were in the 1st, 4th and 5th wards. She said there were many reasons why they were concentrated in those areas — none of which had to do with intentionally making people remain in low-income neighborhoods.

"Number one, when they come in for a briefing — I can't tell you how the city program was run — but here, when they come in, we brief them, we give them a handbook and maps of the area. This whole poverty de-concentration piece — Paterson is what it is. We know the areas that may be attractive, but they might not have the availability of units."

Gorham said that much of the available apartment stock in Paterson's tight rental market — as well as most of the newly built housing — was concentrated in the lowest-income wards.

She added that lack of information on housing in other areas was not always the reason people choose to remain in high-poverty enclaves.

"When folks come in to look for a unit, the typical person will go to a community they are familiar with, have relatives in, know the services available," Gorham said. "They want to be in a place convenient to their child's school, a job, transportation; all of those things that make it easier for them."

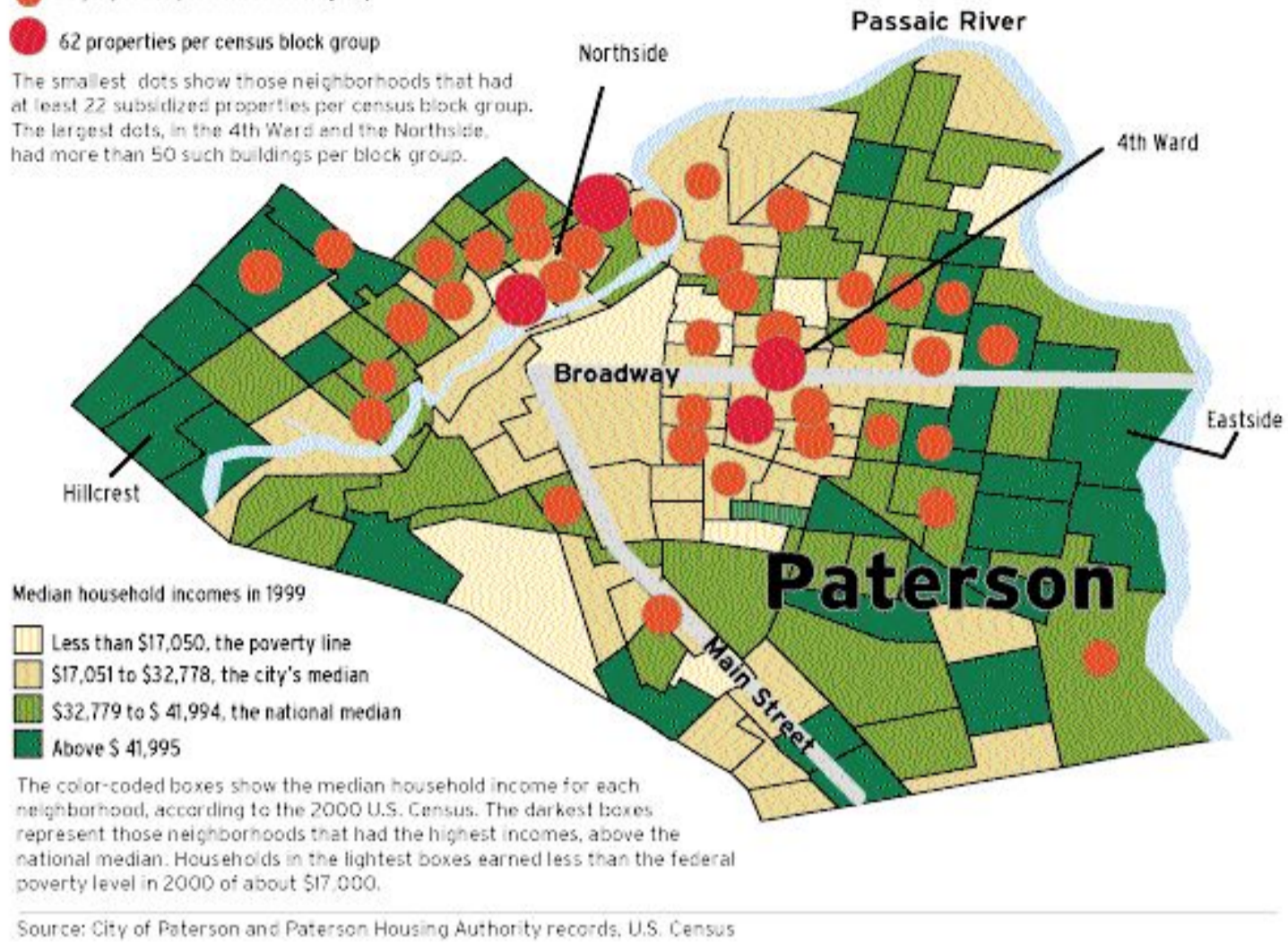
Poor showing for Section 8

Federally subsidized rental properties have been scattered throughout Paterson in recent years, but they tend to cluster around the city's most impoverished neighborhoods.

● 22 properties per census block group

● 62 properties per census block group

The smallest dots show those neighborhoods that had at least 22 subsidized properties per census block group. The largest dots, in the 4th Ward and the Northside, had more than 50 such buildings per block group.



Analysis by TOM MEAGHER/Herald News Graphic by SAMUEL CEWULKA/Herald News

'Troubled program'

The city's Section 8 programs were shaken up in March of this year, after federal authorities arrested 14 workers whom they had secretly taped soliciting or accepting bribes in connection with Section 8 cases. Nine of them were employees of the City of Paterson at the time of their alleged misdeeds — the majority of them with the Section 8 program. Two others were caseworkers with the Paterson Housing Authority, and the remaining three were from other agencies.

Analyses of documents obtained from HUD, as well as court papers related to the arrests, show that caseworkers implicated in the

scandal were taking bribes to steer voucher holders toward decrepit properties in the city's poorest sections.

At the same time, the city was paying Section 8 landlords higher rates for apartments in those same areas than the housing authority. Although HUD allows agencies the discretion to pay landlords from 90 to 110 percent of fair market rent, higher rental allowances are meant to give Section 8 tenants the opportunity to afford places in higher-rent neighborhoods, according to housing advocate Tegeler. But in Paterson, while the city was paying those higher Section 8 rates, they created a rule requiring tenants remain in Pater-

son, against HUD regulations.

A previous Herald News investigation found that a secondary effect of paying landlords higher rates in some of the most rundown sections of the city was that they served to drive up non-Section 8 rents in the surrounding areas, rendering even some of the lowest-income areas virtually unaffordable to people who had long called those neighborhoods home.

A 2002 audit by HUD found the city's program was failing to properly inform tenants of their rights to seek out apartments in higher-income neighborhoods, or use their vouchers anywhere they could find an apartment, including outside Paterson.

Meanwhile, the city's program was continually giving itself passing grades on its annual self-audit to HUD. In the "expanding housing opportunities" category, in which HUD requires an agency to take several steps to help residents find housing outside of high-poverty areas, the city gave itself a perfect score. When HUD double-checked the city's files, it found none of the requirements had been met, and lowered the score to zero. The same HUD report also downgraded the city's entire Section 8 program from "standard" to "troubled."

Court records also indicate that some of the Section 8 apartments on the city rosters were in severe

disrepair and full of code violations.

City officials in charge of the now-defunct Section 8 program have repeatedly refused comment — instead referring all questions to Gorham, who was not involved with the program at the time of the alleged mismanagement and corruption.

Rental agent Ralph Lugo said that many landlords like the Section 8 program because the government's portion of the rent check is guaranteed each month. He said many Section 8 tenants ask to see apartments in 4th or 5th wards because that's where new buildings are going up, not because they're being sent there by the agencies.

"When it comes to steering — my list is all over the place," Lugo said. "I rented apartments this month in Hillcrest, the East Side, the 12th Avenue redevelopment section. As long as they're nice, clean places, I represent them."

Paterson not alone

The lack of housing choice and mobility for Section 8 voucher holders is not just an issue in Paterson. Tegeler and other housing advocates testified before a congressional committee on the issue in March, during hearings for the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007. In a policy paper submitted to Congress, a coalition of groups emphasized that housing choice and mobility had been undermined by changes to HUD policy over the years.

"Racially segregated, high-poverty neighborhoods are a continuing reality in many American cities," read an excerpt from the testimony. "Federal and state housing programs have helped to create this situation, but they can also be part of the solution to change it."

Michelle Jamison, who combed the city for an affordable apartment, said she wasn't only surprised by the lack of neighborhood choices on the Section 8 list, but by the high rents they were asking for in areas she didn't think warranted those prices.

"I know they're slumlords over there, and they can get away with stuff, because they can get Section 8 and it's easy money," she said. "We went and looked and finally found a place ourselves, through relatives, as I don't remember being given choices or options."