

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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for  
North Newark Clergy Group*

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Since mid-November a team of black, white, and Spanish-speaking priests and ministers of North Newark has worked to get facts from direct sources about Kawaida Towers. The North Newark Clergy Group, whose spokesman is the Rev. Fr. Thomas G. Smith, Pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Roman Catholic Church, Summer Avenue, Newark, has been meeting often and feels that the following facts are important for public information. As promised, these findings are being made known.

From the Management Division of the New Jersey Housing Finance Agency the clergy have learned--

- 1) Planned are 45 efficiency units, with maximum of 2 persons per unit; 90 1-bedroom units, with maximum of 2 persons per unit; 74 2-bedroom units, with maximum of 3 or 4 persons per unit. Total: 209 units.
- 2) Maximum development population: 521 residents. The actual population may be 10-15% less than the maximum since some family compositions will be less than the full capacity of apartments.
- 3) Families must relocate when their numbers exceed the maximum allowed per unit.
- 4) Number of parking spaces on the project premises: 109

- 5) Number of apartments to be rented at market rate: 10%  
at interest subsidy: 80%  
with rent subsidy: 10%
- 6) The sponsor, Kawaida Towers, Inc., and the New Jersey Housing Finance Agency approve applications for occupancy. The Housing Finance Agency has final say.
- 7) Kawaida Towers, Inc. is a non-profit sponsor and will not gain in any way financially.
- 8) The property at 129-141 Lincoln Avenue was purchased by Kawaida Towers, Inc. for \$209,000. from Abraham and Freda Mayer, 46 Branford Place, Newark.
- 9) The Management Division of the Housing Finance Agency has a responsibility to the bond holders to supervise the management by the owner/sponsor of all housing developments under HFA jurisdiction. This supervision of management will continue for the 48-year life of the mortgage. HFA makes periodic inspections of each housing development to see that it is properly maintained, and receives monthly and annual financial reports to assure that the financial status remains sound.
- From the President and staff of the Newark Board of Education the clergy have learned--
- 1) The projected student enrollment from Kawaida Towers is about 150 students. Board plans for distributing Towers students in area schools

have not been formed at this time.

2) The Board is trying to deal with the present problem of overcrowded schools in the area, specifically by adding an annex to the Broadway Junior High School and a temporary building to the Summer Avenue School.

3) The Board is open to leasing classroom space, as available, from neighborhood churches and, if possible, from Kawaida Towers itself.

Imamu Amiri Baraka, Spiritual Leader of Temple Kawaida, has stated to the clergy the following points--

1) 'Kawaida Towers is meant to be housing for low and middle income families. That was its one and only intent...We do not intend to make that building itself a Temple of Kawaida any more than Catholic, Jewish, or Protestant denominations make housing they sponsor temples of their respective faiths.'

2) Occupancy is open to all races and ethnic groups in accordance with civil rights law. By HFA rules, family size and income alone are determinants for occupancy.

3) The State's position at the outset was that the development should be all apartments. The services now provided for in the plans reflect the community development values which the sponsor successfully prevailed upon the State to allow in the building.

4) Those living in Kawaida Towers will feel like a community rather than 'tenants'. It is the services that make the difference. The services include:

security guards at the main door

in each unit, closed circuit TV security surveillance of the hallway

day care center (1000 square feet)

community room with kitchen and audio-visual facilities (1300 square feet)

library

art gallery

arts and crafts area

compactors for garbage disposal

balconies for more than half of the units

5) The residents themselves will determine the nature of activity which will take place in the community rooms.

6) The sponsor is open to leasing classroom space to the Board of Education, provided a) engineering-construction modifications and State sanctions do not appreciably delay the building process, and b) the public flow of people can be managed so as not to be an imposition upon building residents.

7) The incorporators of Kawaida Towers, Inc. are and must be members of Temple Kawaida, whose membership is open to anyone who practices

the Seven Principles, or Nguzo Saba, which are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

Assemblyman Anthony Imperiale has represented to the clergy the following--

- 1) 'Kawaida Towers, Inc. is not a bonafide group because its incorporators are unqualified.'
- 2) 'The project was pushed into the North Ward without regard for the present housing density of the Lincoln Avenue area and lack of school facilities.'
- 3) 'A developer, Mr. Padula, had tried to build on the Lincoln Avenue site and had been denied tax-abatement.'
- 4) 'Proposed town houses for the Triton Place area had been successfully resisted by the citizens of that neighborhood.'
- 5) 'State law speaks of the right to rescind tax-abatement, but no action has yet been forthcoming from the State.'

The clergy have also sought answers to questions about land development in the Central Ward.

Temple Kawaida has represented to the clergy that a community advocate planning group was formed in 1970, to which Temple Kawaida and 5 other

organizations are related. This Project Area Committee has virtually transformed R-32 land use plans from light industry to housing and related community services use. According to Temple Kawaida, this effort, constituting a major shift in land use, met with much Newark Housing Authority bureaucratic entanglement and delay. 'Because interminable bureaucracy obstructed, stymied, and prevented our attempts to build in the Central Ward, we decided we could build much quicker on land not controlled by the NHA,' Imamu Baraka has asserted to the clergy. The Towers was not located in the North Ward because of any 'expansionist intent,' he added--housing relief alone was in mind, and no confrontation in the North Ward was anticipated.

A Newark Housing Authority commissioner, when interviewed by the clergy, admitted that the Authority's performance in working with community groups, as distinguished from professional developers, had been beset with administrative snarls, and that the appointment of a new Executive Director brings hope for a new day in working with community-based sponsors. The Executive Director, Robert Notte, noting that relationships with community-based sponsors did lack direction in the past, assured the clergy that he has given personal direction to his staff to cooperate with the R-32 Project Area Committee and other community-based developers.

The clergy note that the Kawaida building plans were announced in the Newark Star-Ledger on 19 January 1972, 8 September 1972 and 8 October 1972.

The North Newark Clergy Group is open to meeting with any who desire to offer comment upon the foregoing findings. The clergy intend to continue to involve themselves in the fact-finding process, and to this end they invite anyone to share facts with them who wishes to do so.

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