

AFTER ACTION REPORT

Brooklyn Homes Incident | Internal Evaluation of Response & Action

Submission Date: August 17, 2023



**HOUSING
AUTHORITY of
BALTIMORE CITY**



INTRODUCTION

The Scott Administration requested all departments and agencies that have been involved with the July 2, 2023, Brooklyn Homes mass shooting to provide an assessment of actions and responses since the incident occurred. To meet the completion deadline for this review, the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) conducted an internal evaluation of its actions and responses. The authority analyzed all activities, including but not limited to internal and external communications, on-site inspections, meetings with officials, resident affairs, community services, etc. from the time it was notified of the incident over the following 10-day period.

The findings and recommendations are considered preliminary as the incident is still part of an active investigation with other city departments. While this after-action report provides an overview of activities to assist the city with its initial review, HABC will conduct a more comprehensive review by an independent entity to fully evaluate the emergency response and preparedness.

BACKGROUND

I. HABC - Agency & Structure

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) is the nation's fifth largest public housing authority, serving over 20,000 low-income households (over 43,000 individuals) through its Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. HABC currently owns and operates nine conventional public housing developments as well as scattered sites throughout the city consisting of approximately 6,500 public housing units.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) provides housing subsidy to over 18,800 households who rent homes in the private market. HABC is federally regulated and funded through HUD, and the agency is governed by a Board of Commissioners appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore City. HABC works and communicates with its residents through the Resident Advisory Board and Tenant Council, including coordinating support services and community events for residents.



Judge Robert Cooper conducting HABC's RAB ceremony.

II. HABC's Resident Advisory Board and Tenant Council

The Resident Advisory Board (RAB) is an independent entity that was established in September 1968 with the goals of fostering open communication between public housing residents and HABC management, advocating on behalf of residents to address issues and concerns and encouraging tenant involvement in their communities. It serves as the umbrella organization over all the Tenant Councils at HABC's public housing developments throughout the city. RAB members and Tenant Council representatives are elected by HABC residents and sworn in by a judge.

HABC follows HUD regulations to facilitate the structure, funding and efficient operations of both the RAB and individual tenant councils. HABC's Constituent Services Manager (CSM) is a ready support and resource to promote and affect the operational and business functions of these entities in conjunction with those of HABC and its residents. The CSM works closely with the RAB and Tenant Councils to ensure there are efficient communications, adherence to policies and by-laws as well as promotion of activities and support on behalf of the RAB and Tenant Councils with agency leadership and divisions.

III. Description of Brooklyn Homes & Mass Shooting Incident on July 2

Brooklyn Homes is a public housing development located in South Baltimore that consists of 481 units and currently serves 472 households with a total of approximately 1,161 residents. On Sunday, July 2, 2023, at approximately 12:35 a.m., the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) arrived on the scene at the 800 block of Gretna Court, which is located within the Brooklyn Homes development, in response to reports of gunshots fired during a community block party. This was an unsanctioned event that was held without notice to or authorization from HABC.

HABC's leadership was notified of the incident at approximately 3:00 a.m., and HABC staff arrived at the site early Sunday morning. The Office of Resident Services (ORS) was onsite to provide wellness checks and other support services to residents and maintenance staff.

Emergency responders reported that 30 people were shot, two fatally, an 18-year-old female who was found dead at the scene and a 20-year-old male who died at an area hospital. The 20-year-old male victim who was fatally shot was a resident of Brooklyn Homes. Three of the surviving gunshot victims are residents of Brooklyn Homes, two others were HABC public housing residents, one residing in Cherry Hill Homes and one residing in Westport homes, and three were HCVP participants.



Mayor Brandon Scott, BPD Richard Worley, and President of the Baltimore City Council Nick Mosby speak with media at Brooklyn Homes.



Throwback photos of Brooklyn Homes residents enjoying Brooklyn Day.



IV. Brooklyn Day

Brooklyn Day has historically been a community clean up event, organized by residents, after which activities for kids and food were provided by the Tenant Council Association. There is no set date on which the event is held, but it has previously taken place during the months of June, July or August. In the past, HABC was notified in advance of the scheduled event and was able to coordinate with the Baltimore City Police Department and other appropriate city departments to provide any needed security resources for the day. However, since COVID-19, the event has not been organized by the residents in the same manner and properly communicated to HABC. The Authority did not receive any prior notification regarding the Brooklyn Day event that took place this year.

The activities that took place at this year's Brooklyn Day are prohibited by HABC. This includes activities like, alcohol use and electricity hookups without written authorization. Permission must be granted to host events after 4 p.m. If HABC grants permission, the organizers must provide their own security after 4 p.m., as well as the required proof of insurance for any third party event.

NOTIFICATION PROCESS, TIMELINE & RESPONSE

I. HABC's Emergency Call & Notification Systems

HABC provides a 24-hour emergency telephone system through a private company that residents can use to report urgent matters if HABC offices are closed. Each public housing development is assigned its own (800) number, and calls are connected to a live person. When the after-hours service is contacted, HABC has an assigned on-call employee for that property to respond. If the matter requires more than one person to address, the on-call employee will contact the site's supervisor for assistance. If the call is regarding a critical event that threatens the life, health or safety of residents, the call is escalated to HABC's Vice President of Property Management. Once escalated to this level, a notification is sent through the Alert Media System software system to HABC's entire senior leadership and management staff via text message and email. The alert stays open, and updates can be provided, until it is closed out by staff once the matter is resolved.

We communicate extensively with our residents to make sure they are aware of the after hours emergency phone numbers. Residents are encouraged to utilize these numbers after hours to report concerns for management's attention. However, in light of the events, HABC will explore additional opportunities to promote the use of these numbers.

Records from July 1 and 2, 2023 reflect that no calls regarding the Brooklyn Day event, concerns about crowds and weapons on the property or the mass shooting at Brooklyn Homes were made to HABC's after-hours emergency hotline. After HABC was contacted about the shooting by the Baltimore City Police Department, an Alert Media message was generated and sent to staff on July 2, 2023, at 4:24 a.m., which allowed the entire agency to be on alert for action and to mobilize.

II. Timeline

Below is a timeline of events/actions taken beginning with when HABC first received notification about the mass shooting at Brooklyn Homes from the Baltimore City Police Department.

Sunday, July 2, 2023

- At 3:00 a.m. HABC Executive Staff was notified about the mass shooting that took place at Brooklyn Homes by the Baltimore City Police Department.
- Alert Media notification about the incident sent to HABC management and staff at 4:24 a.m.
- HABC Staff from the Executive Team, Public Housing Operations (Operations), Office of Resident Services (ORS), Office of Communications arrived on site at Brooklyn Homes.
- ORS began trauma response protocols, which included canvassing residents impacted to provide support and resources.
- Brooklyn Homes Community Center was open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Communications coordinated updates for residents, staff and media, coordinating efforts with emergency response teams leading the shooting investigation.

Monday, July 3, 2023

- The Brooklyn Homes management office was open for normal operations, and the management team began accepting maintenance and transfer requests.
- ORS Staff was present at Brooklyn Homes to provide support and resources to residents.
- HABC staff participated in the Mayor's Community Meeting at Brooklyn Homes.
- Communications coordinated updates for all audiences, including social media posts in coordination with community partners, text messages to residents, and participated in Administration's press conference.

Tuesday, July 4, 2023

- ORS Staff was present at Brooklyn Homes to provide support and resources to residents; and assisted with collecting names of residents seeking transfers.
- Communications continued to coordinate media inquiries and provide updates via social media.



HABC staff members working at Brooklyn Homes' Community Center.



Wednesday, July 5, 2023

- HABC joined the Mayor to walk the community and meet with residents. The Management and Maintenance team identified abandoned vehicles on the site and had many of them removed; cleared trash on the site during the walk; and performed exterior maintenance work.
- Communications continued to provide community updates utilizing its digital platforms.



Thursday, July 6, 2023

- ORS and Operations provided support and assistance to residents, MONSE and other agencies on site as needed from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Communications coordinated with community partners to provide updates and resources via its social media channels.



HABC EVP and COO Monica Watkins and MONSE staff at Brooklyn Homes' Community Center.

Friday, July 7, 2023

- HABC toured the Brooklyn Homes development with HUD officials.
- ORS and Operations provided support and assistance to residents, MONSE and other agencies on site as needed from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Communications provided updates re: the HUD visit via social media channels.



HUD Members embraces Brooklyn Homes' Tenant Council President Erica Walker

Saturday, July 8, 2023

- ORS and Operations provided support and assistance to residents, MONSE and other agencies on site as needed from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 9, 2023

- ORS and Operations provided support and assistance to residents, MONSE and other agencies on site as needed from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Monday, July 10, 2023

- ORS continued its ongoing presence at Brooklyn Homes to provide daily trauma support and resource referrals to all residents who visit the Community Center or Management Office.
- ORS and Operations provided support and assistance to residents, MONSE and other agencies on site as needed from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- ORS and Operations provided support and assistance to residents, MONSE and other agencies on site as needed from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

II. HABC Response

As summarized in the timeline above, HABC staff from all levels were immediately onsite providing support and assistance. This included Executive Leadership, Office of Resident Services (ORS), Communications, Maintenance and Site Management and HABC's Board of Commissioners. Operations staff from other public housing sites were also deployed to Brooklyn Homes to help respond to resident inquiries and concerns. The Brooklyn Homes Community Center was used to provide space for City agencies and other services providers, and HABC staff stayed late each night to prepare the space for the next day. Additionally, the Communications team has been providing ongoing responses to internal and external audiences. Further details regarding HABC's response are provided below.

Office of Resident Services

Staff from HABC's Office of Resident Services (ORS) were onsite at Brooklyn Homes on the morning of July 2. Upon arrival, the ORS team gathered in the Brooklyn Homes community center and prepared to deploy their trauma response protocol which includes engaging those directly impacted by traumatic events within 48 hours.

The Senior Vice President (SVP) and seven additional ORS staff members were the first to provide trauma response services to the residents. Eight buildings were identified to have been directly impacted due to their proximity to the event. The initial engagement included providing wellness checks and trauma support referrals to the Baltimore Crisis Response Center and Baltimore Behavioral Health. Staff visited each household in the impacted area while following the guidance from BPD officers, the K9 unit and crime scene officials.

Each resident that ORS staff engaged with was provided with referral information for HABC's trauma and mental health practitioner partners. The ORS team provided immediate, real-time emotional support for any resident who indicated a need. Referral information was left in the doors of households that did not respond to these visits. When the ORS team returned to the Brooklyn Community Center after conducting home visits, the Mayor, City Council President, other staff from various Baltimore City agencies, as well as other responders had begun to arrive.

The ORS SVP briefed city officials on ORS' response and engagement using the property site map to identify the area that was canvassed and information from households that were requesting mental health first aid.

Representatives from the Mayor's Office and other City agencies maintained a physical presence at the Brooklyn Community Center for nine days following the incident. After day nine, the ORS team continued the implementation of HABC's trauma response plan, performing follow up visits to the households residing in the initial eight buildings, staying in contact with Brooklyn Homes' two Tenant Council leaders, and providing additional resources.

Communications

HABC's Office of Communications took immediate action to establish its presence onsite at Brooklyn Homes, provide updates and information to residents, staff and others and coordinate responses to media and other inquiries. Ongoing outreach efforts to residents, staff, community stakeholders and media included:

- Media: provided media with updates that were available and could be provided per the active investigation by the BPD;
- Residents: provided Brooklyn Homes households with updates about support services and messages from HABC's leadership;
- Social Media: utilized HABC's digital channels to provide updates regarding community support services and community strength, e.g. A Unified Community is a Prosperous One. Additionally, social platforms were used to make requests for witnesses to contact the BPD with any information;
- Community Outreach: created a kiosk and billboard campaign to promote public safety awareness



AFTER ACTION ANALYSIS: MEASURES TAKEN AND ONGOING FOCUS AREAS

I. Analysis of HABC's Initial Response

HABC's Executive team performed a preliminary review of the agency's response to the mass shooting incident at Brooklyn Homes. Upon notification of the mass shooting, HABC followed its routine emergency response and coordinated with city agencies and service providers. While the emergency response was effective, HABC believes that a more efficient coordination process among all agencies involved could have been realized by establishing a Joint Information Center. This would have allowed for a more consistent flow of information among all who were present, keeping everyone updated much quicker.

II. Actions Taken & Focus Areas

Security Program

HABC did not provide security at the Brooklyn Homes community. In the past when HABC was notified by residents about the Brooklyn Day event, the agency would coordinate public safety efforts with the BPD and other appropriate city agencies. HABC does not have its own police force, but in 2022, HABC implemented a "pilot program" to provide contracted security services at four developments: Poe Homes, Douglass Homes, Westport Homes and Latrobe Homes based on the analysis and recommendations from the Security Operations Manager. The original pilot program is scheduled to conclude in December 2023. However, the results of the pilot were that the targeted efforts were both effective and desirable to extend to the remaining family developments. In June of 2023, an RFP was launched to solicit security contractors for this purpose.

A contract was subsequently awarded in July 2023 for security services for all HABC family developments. As it pertains to Brooklyn Homes, the security contract began on Aug. 1, 2023, with two shifts from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 2 a.m., seven (7) days a week.

Communications

HABC continues its communication to residents and strive to build stronger relationships through:

- Establishing regular meetings with members of HABC's leadership team and the RAB Executive Board and/or Tenant Council representatives
- Implementing new initiatives to inform residents of HABC policies
- Redesigning of the HABC app to create a more user-friendly interface filled with content that is informative and helpful to residents
- Being proactive in communicating with residents and staff to identify known events and working with organizing to ensure that all requirements are followed

Continued Support for Brooklyn Homes Residents

HABC's ORS team continues to support the residents and community of Brooklyn Homes by coordinating and implementing a vast array of programs and services to enhance the quality of life for residents. Working collaboratively with families in mind, ORS has established six pillars to empower residents to become self-sufficient. These priority pillars include economic mobility; personal empowerment; youth development; senior support; digital inclusion; and health and wellness. ORS utilizes a service connector model with a focus on outcomes that contribute to impact and maintains strong community partnerships with local government, philanthropists, health and wellness practitioners and nonprofit stakeholders.

The onsite service coordination team continues to implement its trauma-informed approach to support the healing of the Brooklyn Homes community. This includes emotional and mental health referrals and weekly wellness checks/home visits.

Updated Policies

In reviewing operational documents to see what needs to be clarified and/or created, HABC realized that the requirement for prior approval for indoor and outdoor events defined in the lease was not included in the [Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policies \(ACOP\)](#), which is a governing HABC document. Pursuant to federal regulations, HABC submitted amendments to the ACOP to the Board of Commissioners (“Board”) for approval. By resolution, the Board approved the amendments to the ACOP at the July 2023 meeting, and the amendments included language that made the approval process for residents to hold indoor and outdoor events consistent with the requirements in the lease.

HABC is updating the guidelines to ensure that prior written approval is obtained from the Chief Operating Officer or designee within the HABC executive office prior to a resident or third-party holding an indoor or outdoor event that is held in the HABC common areas. The guidelines will continue to require that the sponsor has security for the event. Additionally, the guidelines will address the requirements for the use of utilities for the event and when insurance will be required. HABC is collaborating with the City to establish a process for the City to issue a permit when warranted for an event. Once the common area guidelines are updated, HABC will be discussing these requirements with the Resident Advisory Board, the Tenant Councils and HABC staff.

Updates to HABC’s Emergency Response Protocols

In 2019, HABC worked with the University of Maryland’s Center for Health and Homeland Security to prepare an Emergency Response and Preparedness Plan (EPRP). The plan defines actions to be taken in response to any disaster or emergency, regardless of type or scale. This is a living document that was last updated in 2020. HABC will conduct a review and update of the EPRP and convene staff for emergency preparedness training exercises.

Community Resource Center

Construction plans were already underway to renovate the existing community center. As part of HABC's outreach with residents and other community stakeholders after the July 2 incident, it was determined that the former Daycare Center, which was closed in 2010, will be renovated and reopened to serve as a new multipurpose Community Resource Center. The renovation of the former Daycare Center will include an update to the building envelope and infrastructure. The interior will be completely renovated to maximize space utilization and promote the operation of community programming, meeting space, job readiness, skills training, and educational development. The intent is to make a "state-of-the-art" facility fully adaptable to various requests for usage to address the various resident needs at Brooklyn Homes.

NEXT STEPS

HABC is already in the process of implementing many of the new policies and initiatives outlined above and will continue to advance other actions as determined throughout the evaluation process. The Authority has also engaged an established third-party evaluator to discuss providing an in-depth analysis of its emergency preparedness plan and ongoing response at Brooklyn Homes since the July 2, 2023, incident. HABC will provide the Administration with any additional reviews and/or assessments involving the Brooklyn Day incident when they are complete.