September 29, 2015

Dr. Alesia Scott-Ford

Field Office Director

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

400 W. Bay Street Suite 1015

Jacksonville, Florida 32202

Dear Dr. Scott-Ford,

We are writing to you in our capacity as representatives of the Eureka Gardens Tenant Association.

There are numerous conditions in our homes that are in direct conflict with HUD’s policy of

providing safe, decent and affordable housing. We believe that practices in place at our complex may

involve abuse and waste of HUD resources.

Eureka Gardens has 400 units with 866 low and moderate income families and individuals in

residence. Our residents include 458 children, 47 people with disabilities and 18 seniors. All of these

populations have particular risk factors associated with unsafe housing.

We are asking that every apartment be immediately inspected to determine the depth and extent of

the safety and health concerns and immediate steps be taken to rectify these issues. We have copied

numerous other parties on this letter as we believe there may be violations in their areas of

jurisdiction.

Here are the major points of concern:

1. Mold: There are significant mold problems in the apartments. Numerous residents have

complained about visible mold on walls, floors, bathrooms and kitchens. In addition,

residents have complained about moldy smells, which indicates issues with hidden mold.

Residents have identified that children are having trouble breathing, which has led to

numerous emergency room and doctor visits. In addition, elderly and disabled residents who

suffer from COPD and other ailments are also having trouble breathing. Given the health

issues involved, we are copying the Duval County Department of Health to also investigate.

2. Plumbing: The plumbing is unacceptable, with leaks, improper repairs, toilet back-ups, sink

traps, rusted tubs, dripping faucets and lack of proper water pressure. Pipes are open to the

exterior, leading to people having their hot water shut off from outside their apartment.

Tenants with downstairs apartments often have leaks coming from plumbing problems with

the upstairs apartment and/or roof.

3. Air Conditioning Units: Air conditioning is not supplied to the tenants. The Property

Management Company has required tenants to use a specific vendor for air conditioner unit

installation. This vendor is a relative of one of the property managers and charges a $50 fee

for each installation. He is not a licensed contractor, which we believe is a violation of the

City of Jacksonville’s code for contracting work. Because of this allegation, we are copying

the City of Jacksonville to request that Code Enforcement become involved in this issue.

Many tenants are complaining about water leaks from air conditioning units that may be

adding to the mold problem. In addition, tenants are required to pay either a $12 or $24

monthly fee based on the BTU for each unit all year, whether the units are used or not. If a

tenant is moving out (either voluntarily or through eviction), they are charged an additional

$50 fee to remove the unit. Given that this may indicate consumer fraud, we are copying the

Consumer Protection Bureau of the Attorney General (Pam Bondi) as well as the Consumer

Finance Protection Bureau.

4. Screens: The property management company has removed most of the window and door

screens, limiting ventilation in the units. This has the effect of forcing tenants to purchase air

conditioning from an unlicensed contractor.

5. Electrical: The kitchens and bathrooms are not equipped with GFCI outlets, which create

safety issues. Residents are having kitchen appliances short out, which is an indication of

improper electrical wiring.

6. Interaction with Property Management: There are significant allegations of improper

behavior by the on-site personnel, including payments to allow felons to remain on the

property, buying food stamps from tenants, backdating of documents, offering leases that

are shorter than one year and theft of rent payments. When tenants complain, they are

threatened with eviction notices. There are also allegations of racial discrimination. Late fees

are not appropriately explained or posted and appear to be inconsistently administered.

7. Payments: The office has eliminated the drop box for payments to be made outside of

business hours, resulting in numerous tenants being unable to make their payments in a

timely fashion because offices are closed for evenings, weekends and holidays.

8. Landlord Access: There are numerous complaints about property management personnel

coming into apartments without giving appropriate notice.

9. Apartment Preparation: Apartments are not adequately prepared prior to tenant move-in.

Complaints include improper painting, nails coming up from the flooring, missing tiles,

doors that do not close properly, holes in cabinets, holes in walls and gaps between windows

and the wall.

10. Appliances: Many ovens and refrigerators are not kept in working order. Tenants are

complaining of gas leaks from the appliances, which is a safety issue that could result in fire

risk and/or breathing problems.

11. ADA Access: Tenants are alleging that they are not given downstairs apartments even when

they have evidence of a disability.

12. Pests: Many apartments are infested with roaches, ants, spiders, termites and bed bugs. This

also may be a health issue.

13. Step and Sidewalk Maintenance: Many steps and sidewalks are improperly maintained,

leading to trips and falls.

It is our sincere hope that you will take immediate action to resolve our concerns.

Sincerely,

Eureka Gardens Tenant Association

Cc: The Honorable Lenny Curry, Mayor of Jacksonville

The Honorable Garrett Dennis, City Council Member

Mike Williams, Jacksonville Sheriff

Chief Kurtis Wilson, Jacksonville Fire Chief

The Honorable Pam Bondi, Florida Attorney General

Dr. Kelli T. Wells, Director, Duval County Health Department

Consumer Finance Protection Bureau