

# Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign

NEW CHOICES  
for all  
families & children

## Highlights of *Thompson v. HUD* Proposed Remedy to Address Imbalances in the Regional Housing Market and Expand Housing Choices for Families and Children

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In January 2005, U.S. District Court Judge Marvin J. Garbis found that federal housing programs must take into account the entire region, rather than segregating assisted housing only in a few areas of Baltimore City, and that HUD had violated federal law in failing to do so. In July 2006, the court concluded a trial to consider what steps HUD should take to make the regional housing market work for the Thompson families and ultimately the whole region. The court's decision is expected at any time.

The trial occurs amidst growing concern over housing in the Baltimore region. Over the past several years, our housing market has gotten seriously out of balance. It affects almost everyone. Seniors worry about being able to keep their homes. Young families feel shut out of the housing market, often in the very communities where they grew up. And the workers who keep the economy humming along find that the supply of housing that's available to them is shrinking and is further and further from where the new jobs are growing.

The *Thompson* case--brought on behalf of 15,000 families who have lived in public housing that was confined to the poorest, most segregated neighborhoods in the region--is one part of restoring some balance to this runaway housing market. In the context of addressing housing challenges in the region, the court has a chance to consider how to locate housing for lower-wage working families in the parts of the region where jobs are growing and to help families successfully get on their feet in these growing communities.

- The remedy proposed by the families marks a serious attempt to get working families to those growing communities in the region that need workers.
  - It seeks to create housing options specifically in those areas where entry-level jobs are growing.
  - It would assist residents already working in high-opportunity parts of the region to live near their work.
  - It seeks to avoid families moving to older neighborhoods where jobs are not growing.

- At the same time, the proposed plan seeks to make sure that families who apply for and take advantage of these options near new job centers can get the help they need to get on their feet in a new community.
  - It encourages supports by local community institutions like congregations for families that will be moving to these job-rich areas.
  - It also asks HUD to seek out housing options (like Habitat for Humanity) where families can work with their new neighbors and put their own “sweat equity” into fixing up and maintaining their home.
  - It would create regionally administered vouchers in addition to existing local programs to remove administrative obstacles that impede families moving to areas of growing opportunity.
  - It would move gradually, assisting approximately 675 families per year in a region of about a million households, with appropriate screening and counseling. It would recognize that considerations outside of housing –such as transportation, childcare and community supports – should guide how many families would move into any given area or housing development over the course of a year.
- This novel approach would break new ground in the nation.
  - The proposed remedy makes the most of lessons learned here in Baltimore and around the nation.
  - It asks HUD to correct an injustice in a realistic way that benefits the community as a whole, helping to correct a housing market that is out of control.

The *Thompson* case is just one piece of a much bigger puzzle. But if we as a region can figure out how to solve this part of the challenge, we’ll be one step closer to a housing market that doesn’t leave more and more people out in the cold.