

Housing Choice Voucher Program



Sarah Ettman for the Housing Authority, City of Santa Barbara

The federal government's Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) pays a housing subsidy directly to the landlord, through Tenant-Based Vouchers or Project-Based Vouchers.

Santa Barbara's Mesa neighborhood is a popular place to live. While it's just a few minutes' drive from downtown Santa Barbara, once you drive up the Carrillo Hill and hit Meigs Road, you are transported to a vibrant local community with a beachy vibe. The Mesa boasts all kinds of housing possibilities; multi-million-dollar homes, quaint 3-bedroom, 1-bath homes that make up the Marine Terrace neighborhood and apartments that meet a variety of budgets. Did you know that the Mesa also offers attractive affordable housing with lovely views and plenty of amenities for low-income individuals, families, seniors and those with special needs? Thanks to the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara (HACSB), there are several Mesa housing properties and choices for those who qualify for their affordable housing programs.

Established in 1969, HACSB is at the forefront of solving our local housing crisis by working to create safe, decent and quality affordable housing and support services to eligible persons with limited incomes and workforce residents. Rob Fredericks, HACSB Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, whose tenure spans over 26 years with the agency, states that, "Having a safe place to call home is the foundation of life and everything else springs from there. Over the last half century, the Housing Authority has created a portfolio of safe, decent affordable housing for our low-income families, seniors and disabled individuals. Before the late 1960s, there was very little in terms of permanent affordable housing options. Through our efforts, we have developed 1,369 units that we own and manage. This is in 1,369 units that we own and manage. This is in addition to our rental housing subsidy program, the Federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program." Frederick goes on to say, "We pride ourselves in taking more of a mission driven approach to our daily work. We are solution oriented. We identify the need and



Santa Barbara's Mesa - Photo Independent.com

address those needs by being an active developer of affordable housing and seek new grants for rental subsidy programs."

The **Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program** is the federal government's major program for assisting people with securing housing in the private market.

A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the Housing Authority on behalf of the qualified, participating family or individual. The tenant pays an affordable 30% of their income as rent to the landlord and the difference is paid by between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

The HCV program offers two housing options, each with their own waiting list: tenant-based vouchers and project-based vouchers. Tenant-based vouchers allow assisted households to use a voucher at open rental markets units owned by private landlords. The project-based voucher offers rental housing options at specific housing locations/complexes.

Tenant-based Voucher

Tenant-based vouchers allow participants to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments. The Housing Authority receives federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program. A family that is issued a tenant-based voucher is responsible for

finding a suitable housing unit of the family's choice where the owner agrees to rent under the program. This unit may include the family's present residence. Rental units must meet minimum standards of health and safety, as determined by the Housing Authority.

Project-Based Voucher

The project-based voucher (PBV) is one part of the HCV program. It helps subsidize rent, but only in specific buildings or units. That means that if you get a project-based voucher, you don't get to choose the unit you live in.

There are three distinctive project-based housing communities on the Mesa that are operated by HACSB:

Villa Santa Fe Apartments I is located at 418 Santa Fe Place. The complex features 106 one-bedroom apartments.

The apartment housing at **219-231 Meigs Rd.** features four 2-story buildings containing 18 units of 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom apartments.

1934-1938 Elise Way has spacious units throughout three 2-story buildings with 16 3- and 4-bedroom units.

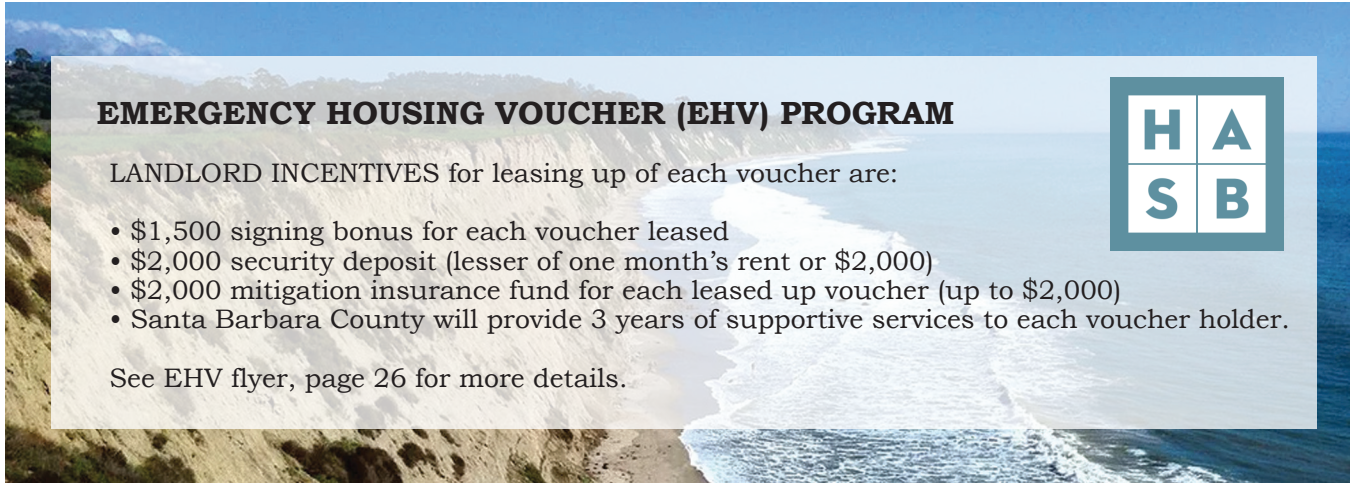
In addition to these three HACSB project-based housing complexes, there are single family homes on the Mesa that are leased to qualified Housing Choice voucher holders by private homeowner/landlords.

Eddie Capristo, HACSB's Leasing Representative, is the first point of contact for Mesa landlords who are interested in joining the program. He works one-on-one with them on the paper work, which, while different from a standard landlord rental agreement, is straightforward and easy to complete. He handles property inspections, coaches landlords on what is

needed to pass and follows up on the move-in process. Eddie says that right now during COVID-19 and subsequent economic and employment impacts, the program makes great sense for both renter and property owner. "I try to focus on the stability and sustainability pieces of the contractual arrangement, especially in this economy. The Voucher program literally "pandemic-proofs" the rent payment. It gives the tenant the security and confidence knowing that the rent they pay is based on what they can comfortably afford to pay. If they get laid off, lose their job, through no fault of their own, or get sick, HACSB steps in and readjusts their rent portion. The landlord is guaranteed their full, on time payment and the peace of mind knowing they have steady income for living expenses or paying property mortgage payments. The rent is secured until the tenant decides to leave. If you are a landlord on the "outside," you aren't eligible for this unbeatable kind of financial protection."

What does Capristo think about Housing Choice Voucher tenants? "They tend to be long term tenants, which is very attractive to a landlord who wants to avoid turnover. They are really grateful for housing help. Our clients don't want to lose their housing subsidy, which they see as a privilege that, in many cases, took years of being wait-listed before receiving HACSB financial assistance approval. They will do what it takes treat their landlord's property with care and respect."

If you are a Mesa landlord or property owner, you can be a part of the solution to the affordable housing crisis in Santa Barbara and change lives for the better. Start by participating in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. You can learn more about HACSB and the Housing Choice Voucher program at hacsb.org/landlords/.



EMERGENCY HOUSING VOUCHER (EHV) PROGRAM

LANDLORD INCENTIVES for leasing up of each voucher are:

- \$1,500 signing bonus for each voucher leased
- \$2,000 security deposit (lesser of one month's rent or \$2,000)
- \$2,000 mitigation insurance fund for each leased up voucher (up to \$2,000)
- Santa Barbara County will provide 3 years of supportive services to each voucher holder.

See EHV flyer, page 26 for more details.

