March 25, 2004

Dear Colleague:

Welcome to the Fifth Annual Conference sponsored by the Berkeley Program on Housing and Urban Policy. This annual conference honors the memory of Don Terner, who was a leader in promoting housing opportunities for all citizens, especially those most in need.

Today’s conference examines the rationale and motives of public policy in housing. We consider the possibility that housing policy can be socially “profitable” in a very narrow sense – that the taxpayers who finance government programs benefit as well as those assisted by these programs. We’ll consider concrete examples of programs providing benefits to middle income and low income households and the homeless. We encourage you to interact with our panels of experts to make the conference an enlightening and valuable experience.

Our keynote speaker this afternoon, Kevin Johnson, needs little introduction to a California audience. Mr. Johnson is an illustrious graduate of UC Berkeley, and a highly successful star of the National Basketball Association – playing for the Phoenix Suns for over a decade. He is currently an entrepreneur and developer in Sacramento who invests in socially profitable projects that also provide benefits to recipients.

The Berkeley Program on Housing and Urban Policy was established in 1999 to promote academic excellence and national leadership in housing studies and the application of knowledge to urban policy. We involve academic and professional leaders on campus and around the world to further our research and educational objectives. The Program supports economic research and teaching throughout the campus on urban development and policy.

Our website, http://urbanpolicy.berkeley.edu, provides an overview of what we do. It’s a clearinghouse for Berkeley students looking for courses on urban issues, taught by various departments. It lists some fifty working papers and publications on diverse topics such as housing affordability, immigration and rents, tax policies, and the mortgage market for low income households. We hope you’ll take a look.

Please take a moment at the end of the conference to complete the survey provided in your conference materials. We want to make future events as useful as we can to professionals involved in the design of housing policy, the delivery of housing services, and the local and national governance of urban areas. After the conference, please use our email address (housing@haas.berkeley.edu) to communicate with us directly about your conference experience, topics and speakers we might include in the future, and any other matter you wish to bring to our attention.

Again, welcome to the conference.

Sincerely,

John M. Quigley
I. Donald Terner Distinguished Professor