

# Housing

*Addressing the needs of Housing Authorities & Community Development Organizations in Illinois*

*focus*

## **Message from the Senior Vice-President: Alan Zais**

### **Illinois NAHRO had a strong presence at the October 2015 National NAHRO Conference!**

Executive Director Christina Klepper and Associate Director Andrea Juracek of Housing Choice Partners of Chicago and Lake County Executive Director David Northern presented the "Strategies for Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing program", discussing the results of numerous fair housing and mobility studies in metropolitan Chicago and elsewhere that are designed to expand housing choice and include opportunity areas for Housing Choice Voucher households, which can be found in the Regional Housing Initiative pilot program.

Winnebago County Housing Authority Director of Housing Operations, Felicia Davis, met with her Emerging Leaders Committee which works to encourage career development in public housing. Her committee held the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Party with a Purpose which raised over \$5,000 to benefit Forgiving for Living, Inc., which helps at-risk girls between the ages of 13-18 overcome behavioral and mental health issues in addition to low self-esteem due to depression, abuse, and abandonment. Since 1999 Forgiving for Living has touched the lives of over 3,000 girls.

The Chicago National Public Housing Museum Executive Director Charles Leeks presented the "Convening Public Housing Perspectives: The Case for the National Public Housing Museum session". The museum, located in Chicago, is dedicated to telling the stories of public housing residents. Since 2007 the museum has worked to secure its home inside Chicago's first public housing project, the Jane Addams Homes. The museum is looking for ways that the NAHRO membership can be part of the museum's creation.

Charles also presented this year's Illinois NAHRO Annual Conference in his outreach to the Illinois membership. I was fortunate for the opportunity to visit the museum several years ago while it was still closed and some of the pictures are presented here. That is the actual size of the bathroom, the windows had bars bolted to them, an opening had been created between two apartments, and these conditions all existed within sight of Chicago's Gold Coast. The contrast is sobering.





Freeport Housing Authority CEO Larry Williams presented the “Improving Resident Self-sufficiency through Effective Partnerships, Section 3, and Workforce Development”. The session covered the roles that housing authorities can play to empower residents to teach self-sufficiency, encouraging residents to excel and have a passion for success. Lessons included how to collaborate with local employers and educational institutions, measure success of the partnerships and develop a reliable resident registry to meet both resident and employer needs.

Rockford Housing Authority CEO Ron Clewer and myself attended our International Research and Global Exchange Committee, which hosted an International theme for the conference. Sessions included “Learning from Each Other: Building a NAHRO Professional Development Program with South Africa” with the CEO of the Housing Association of East London, South Africa, and the Chair for Education in Human Settlements Development and Management with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. The “Habitat III, An Upcoming Global Gathering: Lessons Learned, Hopes Abound” covered NAHRO’s work as it’s member to the United Nations for the 2016 Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador, and was presented by our partners with HUD. “Policy Perspectives for the Future of Public Housing Based on Canada, UK and the Netherlands” was the presentation of the NAHRO White Paper on international lessons learned from like applications of the Rental Assistance Demonstration program and agency consolidation, and how these lessons can be share with police makers so public housing can receive the demonstrated best practices and avoid the mistakes. Panelists included the Chief Executive of Woningstichting Better Living of The Netherlands, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association Executive Director and the Irwell Valley Housing Association Chief Executive from Manchester. One of interesting parts of this program is how Canadian housing agencies

are responding to their housing crisis—the Canadian government have turned over all housing assets to the housing agencies and discontinued housing subsidies, creating very difficult decisions. “Social Housing Policy in the Center of Paris: Project, Financing and Social Support was presented by the President of the Housing Society of Paris, France, and their financial models to support programs focused on children of disadvantaged neighborhoods and the unemployed.

Finally, I need to share an important session, “Voices of Public and Assisted Housing”, in which residents gave their dramatic stories of how their lives were impacted by public housing. Some residents had made poor choices when young, leaving them homeless, in poverty, and constant conflict with the police and courts. The very basic need of an address, that a person needs to attend school and get a job, were transformational to their lives. It reflects the importance of always sharing the faces and voices of the families we serve, which goes beyond numbers and statistics to present the value of our work to our communities and leaders in government.

Thank you to Bloomington Housing Authority Executive Director Kim Homan-Short for her conference booth on Housing America and helping all of NAHRO membership develop their own Housing America programs and outreach, and congratulations to Johnneisha White of Church Point Housing Authority of Church Point, Louisiana, who received the Resident Roll of Achievers award. Growing up in public housing, Johnneisha excelled in her education and was accepted to one of the “Public Elite” high schools where her education is directed to a career with Doctors Without Borders. Her complete story can be found under the Awards section of the NAHRO website. Please be sure to nominate your residents who make noteworthy efforts to improve as an individual and community!



# In **THE SPOTLIGHT**

## Drop-in Veterans Center moving to new Rockford location

By **Brian Leaf** Posted Oct. 9, 2015 at 8:00 AM [bleaf@rrstar.com](mailto:bleaf@rrstar.com); [@b\\_leaf](https://twitter.com/b_leaf)



*A home at the corner of 15th Avenue and Fourth Street will be remodeled for the Veterans Drop-in Center. Pictured Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2015, in Rockford. MAX GERSH/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/RRSTAR.COM*

ROCKFORD — The Veterans Drop-in Center is getting its own home.

The center will move from downtown to 1539 S. Fourth St., where an abandoned house will be remodeled into offices and common space for veterans to meet. The project has been awarded \$33,000 from the Home Depot Foundation.

On Monday, Rockford aldermen approved a special-use permit to allow the center to operate as an office in a residential area.

The veterans center opened four years ago in the Jubilee Center at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 412 N. Church St. Executive Director Pat Ambrose said the space and location worked well. Shelter Care Ministries, however, uses the space during the day for a drop-in center for people with mental illnesses. Veterans couldn't use the center until the evening.

"Jubilee Center is open until 4:30 p.m.," Ambrose

said. "That's why I wanted to move — I want to extend my hours."

In August, Ambrose said that Shelter Care nearly suspended Jubilee Center operations because of delays in the release of grant money. It remained open after receiving a \$15,000 grant from Emmanuel and the release of funds.

"If the Jubilee Center closes, I have to close," she said.

Alan Zais, executive director of the Winnebago County Housing Authority, said the house near Kishwaukee Street and 15th Avenue is one of 10 foreclosed buildings it acquired through the National Community Stabilization Trust, a nonprofit that works with partners to return distressed homes to productive uses.

Zais said the authority got involved with the drop-in center after Chad Forrester, manager of Home Depot's east Rockford store, mentioned he was looking for a project house for the center. The Home Depot Foundation supports veteran-related building projects.

"We are all systems go on this," said Forrester.

While the grant is \$33,000, the project's value is greater because labor, products, services and other work will be donated. Forrester said the remodeling project will begin Oct. 19. The building will be completed Nov. 7.

"We are going to totally remodel the building — inside, outside, upside down and sideways — into something they can use for years to come," Forrester said.







ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY ALAN ZAIS WITH HIS FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

“This house had been vacant for several years and had been suffered as a site of criminal activity. WCHA received it through its work with the National Community Stabilization Trust as part of our foreclosure recovery program, placing an energy efficient heating system through the University of Illinois and Illinois Department of Energy efficiency grant, and the Rockford Home Depot will be renovating the home and ensuring it is accessibility for persons with disabilities. We held an open house several weeks ago with both English and Spanish letters and interpreters, inviting the neighborhood and fully explaining the program and seeing if there were any questions or concerns they had which we would address. Every one of the families including the next door neighbor were so happy to see it with this use and occupied once again—they were actually volunteering to restart a neighborhood watch program. We have very strong neighborhood support and the neighbors will be invited to the grand opening.



I want to share that the homes we rehabbed and housed through a great partnership with Ron Clewer and his team at the Rockford Housing Authority, housing RHA families using RHA Project Based Section 8 assistance. This has been a critical strategic move by both RHA and WCHA, as we are using it, along with HUD, for one of the basic templates of a HUD Regional Housing Initiative program.

There is only one RHI in the nation at the Chicago area and HUD wants to replicate a second pilot program in the Rockford area with these homes as the springboard. We are looking at such further programs as a vacant school rehab and conversion to senior housing in Rockton. We are excited with the partnerships of RHA, the Rockford Home Depot and NCST which combine the resources to make these programs possible.



# HUD News

## HUD AWARDS \$2 MILLION TO REDUCE HEALTH HAZARDS IN HOUSING Research grants to help control asthma and reduce tobacco smoke exposure

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today awarded more than \$2 million in research grants designed to protect children and other vulnerable groups from health hazards in their homes. This funding highlights the link between housing and health, and methods for reducing residential health hazards. HUD’s grants are being awarded to two universities and a non-profit research institution studying new low-cost methods to control asthma triggers in the home, and to control tobacco smoke residue that has settled on home surfaces (referred to as third-hand smoke. Read below a complete project-by-project summary of the programs awarded grants today.

The following is a state-by-state breakdown of the funding announced today:

Grant Recipient	State	Award
San Diego State University Foundation / Dept. of Psychology	CA	\$699,866
Sinai Health System / Sinai Urban Health Institute	IL	\$677,658
Columbia University / Mailman School of Public Health	NY	\$672,158

HUD’s Healthy Homes Technical Studies (HHTS) Grant Program supports research on new approaches to improve the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of methods to evaluate and control of housing-related health and safety hazards. The program is particularly focused on the health of children and other vulnerable groups. The grants announced today as part of HUD’s overall Healthy Homes Program supplement the \$101 million in grants HUD awarded in August to protect thousands of children from lead and other home health hazards.

As HUD marks its 50th anniversary, HUD Secretary Julián Castro is focused on advancing policies that create opportunities for all Americans, including helping children and families secure quality housing and protecting them from home health and safety hazards.

“Finding new and improved ways to keep asthma and secondhand smoke under control so that children excel is vital to a family’s well-being,” said Secretary Castro. “The research that will be conducted under these grants will show how low-cost methods can be

used to make and keep their homes healthy.”

“Asthma and other respiratory diseases continue to afflict too many children and other vulnerable individuals,” said Matthew Ammon, Director of HUD’s Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes. “These grants will support important research that will improve our ability to better manage these illnesses through cost effective home interventions.

HUD’s Healthy Homes Program promotes safe, decent, and sanitary housing as a means for preventing disease and injury. There is an emerging body of scientific evidence—to which these new grants will contribute—linking health outcomes such as asthma, lead poisoning, and unintentional injuries to substandard housing. Housing of all types and ages may contain hazards. Creating healthier housing promotes the

health of people of all ages, but especially our most vulnerable, and thus has the potential to save billions annually in health care costs. Everyone needs a healthy home and some of the most serious health problems are linked to our homes. There are special reasons to focus on the home environment:

On average we spend about 70 percent of our time in our homes.

Children’s play and interactions can expose them to toxins such as insect residues and tobacco smoke that have settled on surfaces in the home.

Millions of U.S. homes have existing hazards such as deteriorated lead-based paint, elevated radon levels, or pest infestation.

Read more about how to protect your family from a variety of home-based health and safety hazards in [Help Yourself to a Healthy Home](#).

# HUD News

## HUD AWARDS \$38 MILLION TO MORE THAN 100 GROUPS TO FIGHT HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced today that it is awarding more than \$38 million under HUD’s Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) to over 100 groups across the nation to fight housing discrimination. See chart below for a listing of grant recipients and read summaries here of the activities these organizations will conduct with the grants.

The funding provided through the competitive grants will help to support a range of fair housing enforcement efforts, including fair housing testing, as well as activities that help educate the public, housing providers and local governments about their rights and responsibilities under the Fair Housing Act.

“Combating housing discrimination requires the aggressive enforcement of the nation’s fair housing laws, but HUD can’t do it alone,” said HUD’s Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Gustavo Velasquez. “The funding we are announcing today will enable organizations committed to justice and equality to support our efforts to ensure that everyone has equal access to available housing opportunities.”

The categories of grant awards are:

**Private Enforcement Initiative grants (PEI)**– These awards help non-profit fair housing enforcement organizations carry out investigations and other enforcement activities to prevent or eliminate discriminatory housing practices.

**Education and Outreach Initiative grants (EOI)**– HUD awards these grants to groups that educate the public and housing providers about their rights and responsibilities under federal law or state and local fair housing laws that are substantially equivalent to the Fair Housing Act.

**Fair Housing Organizations Initiative grants (FHOI)** – HUD awards these grants to help build the capacity and effectiveness of non-profit fair housing organizations to continue and enhance enforcement of the Fair Housing Act.

The 2015 FHIP Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) established the following six new components:

Under Fair Housing Organizations Initiative grants:

**Special Emphasis Component** – This grant will strengthen the enforcement activities and capacity build-

ing efforts of organizations and help them pursue cases that investigate systemic patterns of discrimination.

**National/Regional Testing Component** – This grant will enable organizations to develop and support a national/regional testing program to identify discrimination in rental and sales transactions.

Under Education and Outreach Initiative grants:

**National Programs Component – Sex Discrimination** – This grant will enable organizations to conduct education and outreach projects that counter sex discrimination in housing, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, gender stereotyping or discrimination based on gender identity.

**National Programs Component – Sex/Familial Status Discrimination** – This grant will enable organizations to conduct education and outreach projects that focus on one or more forms of sex or familial status discrimination.

**National Programs Component – National Origin Discrimination** – This grant will enable organizations to address one or more forms of national origin discrimination in rental, sales, or lending.

**National Programs Component – Disability Discrimination** – This grant will enable organizations, using the results of recent discrimination studies, to conduct education and outreach activities that address discrimination based on disability, particularly discrimination experienced by individuals with mobility impairments, hearing impairments, and cognitive or mental disabilities.

Persons who believe they have experienced discrimination may file a complaint by contacting HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 (voice) or (800) 927-9275 (TTY). Housing discrimination complaints may also be filed by going to [www.hud.gov/fairhousing](http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing), or by downloading HUD’s free housing discrimination mobile application, which can be accessed through Apple devices, such as the iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



# HUD News

## HUD APPROVES NEARLY \$1.8 MILLION LOAN GUARANTEE FOR KANKAKEE ILLINOIS

Federally backed loan will facilitate Mercy Housing Senior Independent Living Development Project

CHICAGO – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today announced the approval of a \$1.79 million loan guarantee for the City of Kankakee, Illinois, to provide project site, financial assistance to a non-profit development entity for its construction of an affordable, senior housing development, the Mercy Housing Senior Independent Living Development. The Section 108 guaranteed loan proceeds will be used for acquisition of the project site, site preparation and related site, infrastructure improvements.

HUD's Section 108 Loan Guarantee Assistance Program enables local governments to borrow money from private sources at reduced interest rates to promote economic development, stimulate job growth and improve public facilities. The loan guarantee program allows local governments to convert up to five times the allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds into federally guaranteed loans that are large enough to pursue physical and economic re-

talization projects that are capable of renewing entire neighborhoods. Such public investment is often necessary to inspire private contributions, to provide seed money or simply to boost confidence private firms and individuals may need to invest in distressed areas.

"HUD's Loan Guarantee Program can be a powerful public investment tool to drive economic development in underserved areas," said Antonio R. Riley, HUD Midwest Regional Administrator. "It will create more opportunities for seniors in Kankakee to reside in an integrated and less restrictive setting as an alternative to institutionalization."

The project is located within the city's Alpiner Park Neighborhood and upon completion, the Mercy Housing Senior Independent Living Development will include 70, one-bedroom apartments and a health clinic for low income senior persons.

## Rockford-area leaders look to Chicago for regional housing strategies

ROCKFORD — Debate over the best location for affordable housing rages on, but area leaders hope spreading units around the Rockford region will change the course of the conflict.

Four area housing authorities — Winnebago and Boone counties, Rockford and Freeport — have applied to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, also known as HUD, for help in creating a Regional Housing Initiative, or RHI. This intergovernmental group would allow each of the four housing authorities to pool together vouchers they each get from HUD, which are used to subsidize

rent in specific privately owned developments. The housing authorities could then collaboratively decide the best locations for development.

This regional approach would allow officials to expand "opportunity areas" — neighborhoods with specific racial, economic and employment makeups where those who award state funding require developments to be located — and strategically build new housing near employers and schools. A local RHI would also help cities around the region form a consistent affordable housing game plan.

# Attractive property, successful schools key to Rockford's Purpose Built plan

**This story is part of the September section of Transform Monthly that focuses on the Purpose Built Community concept proposed in Rockford. The section publishes in print on Sept. 27. Read more of the stories at [rrstar.com/news/transform-rockford](http://rrstar.com/news/transform-rockford).**

By [Kevin Haas](#)

Posted Sep. 24, 2015 at 1:00 PM

[Winnebago County commissioned this video, created by Comtech Multimedia Marketing Group in 2013, to explain why it was pursuing a partnership with Purpose Built Communities. Purpose Built is an Atlanta-based nonprofit that helps communities revitalize neighborhoods through a new approach to public housing.](#)

ATLANTA — Two years ago a Purpose Built plan was pitched for west Rockford, but the location couldn't withstand scrutiny.

Winnebago County officials had initially eyed the city's west end as the place to launch a local version of the Purpose Built Communities model, which calls for building mixed-income homes to replace dense pockets of public housing, developing a cradle-to-college education pipeline and providing easy access to healthy food and recreation options. The [original plan](#) called for demolishing Concord Commons and replacing it with mixed-income housing. But the city's far west-end was deemed an unfeasible location.

"After all the market studies were done, we couldn't prove where you would get market-rate individuals or families to move to that location," said Stacy Bernardi of [First Midwest Group](#), who volunteers with the local group working to develop a Purpose Built model in south Rockford.

Purpose Built, an Atlanta-based nonprofit that helps communities advance revitalization efforts, couldn't see the reason market-rate renters would pay to live in the area Rockford initially proposed, Bernardi said. The nonprofit's redevelopment model depends on creating an economically diverse neighborhood, and that's not possible if there aren't amenities to attract residents. Purpose Built calls for 50 percent of housing units to go to people in need of public assistance, while the other half are rented at market rates.

In [late July](#), a new Rockford location was pitched as a place to develop a community modeled after the Purpose Built strategy. The new plan spans two sides of the Rock River south of downtown Rockford, where there's walking-distance access to restaurants and

entertainment, a recreational path system and soon-to-be complete downtown sports complex. Those amenities, combined with riverfront views, make it a potentially attractive site for young professionals who would pay the market rate, Bernardi said.

"We virtually have one place (where) you can live on the river, unless you live on National Avenue, and people want river views," Bernardi said. "For years we've underutilized the river, which is one of our best natural assets."

An initial proposal calls for a mixed-income residential development with lofts and town houses on the 26-acre Barber-Colman industrial complex on the west bank of the Rock River. A second mixed-income development could be built on the other side of the river. The development would help replace Fairgrounds Valley, a 210-unit development that the Rockford Housing Authority wants to demolish as it looks to overhaul public housing around the city.

Market rates can vary depending on the community. In the Villages of East Lake, the Atlanta mixed-income apartment complex that Rockford is using as a model, a single-bedroom apartment costs between \$795-\$815 per month. A four-bedroom ranges from \$1,130 to \$1,287 a month in the gated community, according to a price sheet from the Villages of East Lake. Half of the residents in the Villages of East Lake pay those market rates. The other half receives public assistance. Low-income residents that qualify for assistance pay 30 percent of their income for rent. The Villages of East Lake is a 524-unit complex built nearly two decades ago after the violent and rundown East Lake Meadows housing project was demolished.

"It is a challenge for each one of these projects. They



have to think about how to make their development a destination of choice for people,” said Ethan Davidson of Purpose Built Communities.

The Villages of East Lake has been able to attract residents and families to its development so much so that there’s a waiting list to get in, Davidson said. The Villages are an attractive complex bordered by two golf courses, one public and one private, and within walking distance of a grocery store. But the key reason people want to move into the area is because of the success of the schools, he said. The [Drew Charter School](#) was established 15 years ago as Atlanta’s first charter school, meaning it receives public funding but operates independently of the rest of the district. Drew is one of the top performing schools in Atlanta.

“The reason people want to live here in the market-rate housing is so they can send their kids to Drew,” Davidson said. “They want to be able to send their kids to the best public school in the city and if you live here you will be able to do that.”

Residents of the Villages of East Lake are given first preference to attend Drew. After that, those who live in the surrounding neighborhoods of East Lake and Kirkwood are favored for admission.

“Because Drew is so popular, people are moving here and wanting to live here,” said Tracy Gould Sheinin, who lives in the East Lake neighborhood with her husband, Aaron. Their two children attend Drew Charter School. Students at Drew consistently meet and exceed Georgia state standards on test scores and outperform their peers at other schools, according to

figures in the charter school’s annual report.

Rockford School District officials have been involved in the discussions for a Purpose Built effort and an initial plan calls for new schools in the area.

The neighborhood around Drew Charter School includes a mix of aging houses in need of repair and recently-renovated, large estates. The homes have been repaired as the neighborhood has turned around after the former housing project was demolished and replaced with the Villages of East Lake nearly two decades ago, Davidson said.

“You have these little, small houses that have been there for generations. They’ve sold those houses and (the new owners) built houses bigger than what was already there,” said James Kennemore, who lives in the East Lake Towers, a senior-living complex near the Villages of East Lake. “It’s making the neighborhood look good, but it’s making the old houses look ugly” by comparison.

The development is a sign that people now want to live in the East Lake neighborhood, Davidson said, and the high-performing schools deserve a lot of the credit. Supporters and financial backers of Rockford’s project need to be willing to build high-quality schools to support children in the area and attract new families, Davidson said. There also has to be a focus on community wellness and health. For East Lake, that includes a YMCA branch attached to the school.

“It doesn’t have to all be there at the start, but we need to see a path toward those elements,” Davidson said.



## Planning on recycling your Capital Needs Assessment report for RAD? Think again...

Public Housing Agencies are no strangers to the Capital Needs Assessment reports required for HUD’s public housing program. Whether referred to as a Capital Needs Assessment (CNA), Physical Needs Assessment (PNA), Physical Condition Assessment (PCA) or Project Capital Needs Assessment (PCNA), all of these reports essentially identify and provide cost estimates for critical, short term and long term capital needs of repairs and replacements. However, thinking that any of these can be reused to meet the requirements of the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program would be a mistake.

The RAD program, launched in 2013 to chip away at the over \$26 billion backlog of public housing capital

improvement needs, increased the number of units allowed into program from 60,000 to 185,000 last year. With few exceptions (e.g. recently constructed projects) all units hoping to convert to the program will need a RAD Physical Condition Assessment, or RPCA.

If your project is awarded a spot on the CHAP list (or “Commitment to enter a Housing Assistance Payment”), you have six months after receiving notice to get the RPCA done. The objective of the RPCA differs considerably from the CNA because it actually determines the amount of money you will need for immediate repairs as well as the reserve for replacements necessary for future repairs over the next 20 years. A typical CNA for a public housing project considers only five years and doesn’t need to consider green alternatives or an energy audit.

“The goal is to assess the present and future physical

condition of the property because they directly impact its marketability to tenants,” said Pete Bosanic, Founder and President of PM Environmental. “The need for major capital expenditures may impact the economic soundness and value of the property.”

An RPCA consists of three parts. The first part is a traditional property condition assessment identifying critical/immediate repairs, short term repairs that can be done within the first year, and long term repairs and replacements during the next 20 years. Costs using both traditional and green principles that meet local building codes must be included as well as comments on the benefits of the green alternative.

The second part is an energy audit, comparable to an ASHRAE Level 2 study, to evaluate how energy and water is used at the property. It documents prudent utility-related improvements, the costs and a financial payback analysis.

“What is driving the energy audit is that HUD wants to create an energy efficient housing stock and integrate the 2005 energy policy act,” said Bosanic. “Some of the simplest and least-expensive savings based on our experience include water flow rates restrictors and aerators, and using cfl T-8 lighting and LED lighting.

The final part is a utility consumption baseline that contains data on all utility usage at the property, both tenant and owner paid, and including all common areas for a full 12-month period. It establishes a baseline to allow for benchmarking, and future cost and consumption

measurements.

The deliverable for an RPCA consists of a narrative report covering the previous items and a completed RPCA Excel tool are available through HUD.

An RPCA can cost from \$7,500 to over \$50,000, depending on the size of the PHA, number of units seeking conversion and the condition of the building. The RPCA is a robust report and requires expertise to produce, including knowledge of building systems and codes, more than five years performing facility inspections as well as BPI, RESNET or similar certifications to perform energy audits.

“It’s vital that you hire a consultant that has training and experience to produce a good report,” said Bosanic.

A good RPCA can be a valuable planning and budgeting tool and is valid for RAD as well as other housing programs.

#### **About PM Environmental**

PM Environmental, Inc. was incorporated in 1992 and is a full-service environmental consulting firm with offices throughout the United States. PM is ranked #1 in Michigan and nationally has ranked in the top 20 environmental consulting and engineering services company by EDR ScoreKeeper™ over the last five years. Services include Environmental Site Assessments, Property Condition Assessments, Brownfield Redevelopment, Environmental Compliance Audits, Building Facilities Services, Underground Storage Tank Management, LEED and Energy Auditing Services, and more. PM Environmental is proud to be a member of **NAHRO**.



## **Save the Date**

IL NAHRO Annual Conference

**August 17-19, 2016**

Radisson Hotel  
Rockford, IL



# REGIONAL HOUSING SUMMIT

As part of Housing America Month and to address local fair housing issues, a Regional Housing summit was held October 7, 2015 at the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP), 314 N. Main Street, Rockford, Il.

Presenters at the summit included representation, information and documentation from the Rockford Housing Authority, the Winnebago Housing Authority, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Winnebago County, the Illinois Housing Development Authority, City of Rockford, RMAP, and the Federal Home Loan Bank. Discussions on current market conditions, the tools, resources, plans and goals to lead toward a regional housing strategy and Community wide understanding of affordable housing in the market with developing a consensus around a regional housing plan, were the objectives of the summit. <https://www.facebook.com/RockfordHousingAuthority/timeline>

## CONNECTHOME

On October 21, the Rockford Housing Authority and the City of Rockford kicked off a program to connect children and families in HUD-assisted housing with access to high-speed Internet. Called ConnectHome, this pilot program only in 28 communities throughout the US, will accelerate broadband adoption and narrow the digital divide by addressing various barriers to broadband access, including the costs associated with high-speed service and electronic devices, and the need to provide residents with training in digital literacy.

“At RHA, we are excited to join this game changing initiative to help connect Rockford families with low-cost broadband service at home,” said Ron Clewer, CEO at RHA. “Home broadband access can change the way that families interact with the ever-increasing digital world. We are proud to be part of this initiative.”

- See more at: <http://rockfordha.org/blog.aspx#sthash.XedZXu6G.dpuf>







**The Housing Authority of the City of Freeport [HACF] was recognized recently with a national award. NanMckay and Associates, Inc. [NMA] is the industry leader in providing performance improvement solutions including training, consulting, and products to subsidized housing agencies. NMA annually honors agencies that build bridges to the future and generate real change in their communities and the affordable housing industry. This year, the HACF was awarded the Pioneer in Housing Award for small agencies (those with 1249 or fewer units). This award is to recognize housing authorities that use “out of the box” thinking to improve the future of their employees, community, and industry.**

The award application highlighted HACF’s successful Workforce Development Institute [WDI]. The HACF has achieved recognition as a leader in the industry from local, state, regional and national levels, most specifically for outstanding resident services with educational, employment, and empowerment opportunities. HACF seeks innovative ways to offer services and programming above and beyond basic housing services in order to best support public housing residents and the low-income families in the community, ensuring they have the tools to reach their goals. HACF has recognized the challenges and barriers of its residents and other persons of low-income in the community toward obtaining and maintaining employment. Barriers include lack of high school diploma or GED, confidence to return to school due to age, criminal background, transportation, and even substance abuse histories.

HACF has gained respect and acknowledgement for the great work done in providing self-sufficiency, education, employment and empowerment opportunities from residents, within the agency, the community, and the housing industry. HACF used “out of the box” thinking to address the needs of residents and the local community and ensure self-sufficiency is obtainable. The HACF Workforce Development Institute is transforming the local workforce to be more equipped with the needed skills thus reducing cost to the employers due to decreased employee turnaround and also attracting new businesses to the area. The WDI students are gaining soft skills, as well as self-confidence and personal development to be more successful in life.

# FIVE MYTHS ABOUT PUBLIC HOUSING

Washington Post – 9/11/2015



David Simon's recent HBO miniseries "[Show Me a Hero](#)" has drawn attention to the history of one of the most misunderstood parts of American urban life: public housing. Many observers across the political spectrum believe that public housing in the United States has been a failure. Liberals think it concentrates poverty and epitomizes top-down, bland urban planning. Conservatives have always seen public housing as it was described in 1991 [by Jack Kemp](#), then secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): as a "relic" that is "one of the world's last socialistic schemes." But these are views from people who don't live in public housing, and they fail to capture its diverse reality. [Researchers](#) have consistently shown that the vast majority of the more than 2 million people who actually live in publicly owned rental housing don't see it as a failure. And far from a relic, dependable and affordable public housing is more important now than ever; if you work full time for the minimum wage in America, the number of states where you can afford to rent a one-bedroom apartment on the private market is exactly [zero](#). Yet as scholars such as [Lawrence Vale](#) and [Edward Goetz](#) have shown, ever since public housing was created, there have been efforts to delegitimize it. This has resulted in an oppressive [stigma](#) felt by some residents. And it has prevented a serious discussion of the real challenges public housing faces, while blocking any acknowledgment of its contribution to urban life. Let's look at some of the major myths that stand in the way.

## 1. Public housing residents want to escape it.

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For many critics, it's an article of faith that public housing is something from which everyone wants to flee. Public housing is routinely described as a "[last resort](#)," a place from which people must try to "[escape](#)." The Manhattan Institute's *City Journal* [claimed](#) that New York City Housing Authority buildings had become "crime-ridden wastelands, since no New Yorker with an option to live somewhere else wants to live with a dysfunctional underclass."

From the nearly universally negative coverage of public housing, you'd never know that far more people are trying to get into it than leave it. Nearly all of the nation's more than 3,000 public housing authorities have waiting lists. New York City's public housing has a 1 percent vacancy rate and more than 270,000 families waiting for a spot. [Surveys consistently show that most residents](#) of public housing developments (many reject the word "project" as stigmatizing) are satisfied overall with their homes, even as they demand solutions to pressing problems with maintenance and management. [Ethnographic research](#) has shown that public housing residents tend to develop important networks of solidarity and mutual aid that they want to maintain, not abandon.

Yet the story that the best way to help public housing residents is to destroy their neighborhoods and force them to move, presumably to more economically mixed areas — what housing scholar David Imbroscio calls "[the dispersal consensus](#)" — has become the dominant narrative for many politicians, developers and academics. A host of federal housing policies aimed at [deconcentrating](#) poor households have been based on this premise, especially the HOPE VI program, which since 1992 has pushed to replace public housing complexes with private ones. But as the Right to the City Alliance, a network of housing activists, [puts it](#), "The problems with public housing are due to lack of resources and services in low-income communities, rather than simply the concentration of low-income people."

Most residents do not want to "escape" from public housing or see it demolished. It is their home, and they want to see it strengthened, improved and expanded.

## 2. Public housing is crumbling.

The received wisdom is that public housing buildings are falling apart or are what one real estate writer

[described](#) as “symbols of danger, social dysfunction and blight.” A [recent book](#) laments that coverage of public housing largely consists of “endless portraits of derelict towers, rampant criminality, and unchecked disorder.”

The image of public housing dereliction is, at best, a too-sweeping generalization. According to [the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#), “problem” developments, like the now-demolished Pruitt-Igou in St. Louis or Cabrini-Green in Chicago, are by far the exception, not the rule. Most public housing is in decent shape: More than 85 percent of units meet or exceed federal standards, and more than 40 percent of developments are considered to be in excellent order. Public housing is usually in better condition than comparable private housing in similar neighborhoods.

This isn’t to say that there are no problems. In some developments, stalled elevators, mold, broken plumbing and other maintenance issues are pervasive. Faulty lighting played a tragic role in the [2014 fatal shooting of Akai Gurley](#) by a police officer in the Louis H. Pink Houses in Brooklyn. But these problems are a result of policy choices, which are obscured by stigmatizing language that blames tenants. Public housing has suffered major cuts in funding, and this disinvestment is reflected in the condition of many developments. HUD estimates that public housing stock nationally has [\\$26 billion](#) in unmet capital needs. New York City’s alone has lost more than \$2 billion in capital and operating funds since 2001. Across the country, there are plenty of buildings that have serious repair needs. But this condition isn’t universal, and it isn’t inherent to public housing. It’s because local and national governments have been slashing budgets for decades.

### **3. Public housing assists the wrong people.**

Public housing has long been denounced as a dwelling place for people who don’t deserve it. In the 1950s, it was a target of anti-communist [witch hunts](#). Recently, some news organizations have been making a big deal about [millionaires](#) living there at taxpayers’ expense. Others have cast public housing developments as “[warehouses for the poor](#)” or as home to people who are essentially different from other Americans. In June, Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.) introduced [a measure](#) that would “make sure” undocumented immigrants are blocked from public housing developments. Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-Tex.) [wondered](#) whether HUD-sponsored

programs such as public housing are “simply helping to create a permanent underclass.”

The reality is that public housing is home to many different communities of lower-income households. According to [HUD](#), the average income of public housing residents is a bit more than \$14,000 per year. More than 50 percent have annual household incomes between \$5,000 and \$15,000. But they are not monolithically poor: Fewer than a third receive welfare benefits. Most tenants [pay 30 percent](#) of their income in rent. And according to [reports](#), fewer than 30,000 of the millions of people living in public housing are ineligible noncitizens.

Public housing isn’t a scam for the well-off to receive free homes. Nor are its residents an alien group. Rather, it is a crucial resource for working families, the elderly, the disabled and others whom the market does not — and will not — serve. And it protects economic and social diversity in many places, especially in expensive, fast-gentrifying cities such as New York, San Francisco and Washington.

### **4. High-rise public housing is unlivable.**

When he was HUD secretary, Henry Cisneros remarked, “The history is clear that the high-rises just don’t work, and we have to replace them.” He may have had in mind “[Defensible Space](#),” a 1972 study by the architect Oscar Newman that strongly influenced policy at HUD and other public housing agencies. Newman argued, “It is the apartment tower itself which is the real and final villain.” The New York Times [simplified](#) this to “High Rise = High Crime.”

But the notion that public housing is unlivable because it takes the form of high-rise towers is doubly false.

First of all, a relatively small number of public housing developments are high-rise buildings. Even in 1994, when the number of units was at its peak, only [27 percent](#) of public housing buildings were high rises, and that number has decreased since. In comparison, 32 percent were garden apartments in 1994, 16 percent were walk-ups and 25 percent were single-family homes. These buildings were constructed in a variety of architectural styles, from art deco to brutalism to neo-traditionalism.

Besides, high-rises exhibit huge diversity. Around the world, millions of people, rich and poor, live in high-rise buildings. If towers were inherently



unlivable, presumably wealthy condo-dwellers who have plenty of other options wouldn't be buying into them throughout New York, Chicago and other highly vertical cities. As researchers Fritz Umbach and Alexander Gerould [point out](#), there have been some times and places when public housing has had a crime rate that is higher than that of private housing, and other times and places when it has had a lower rate. Scholars have also questioned Newman's methodology and the [spatial determinism](#) upon which his study was based.

### **5. Public housing is a top-down imposition by government bureaucrats.**

The idea that public housing represents inefficient bureaucracy run amok is widespread. Howard Husock [writes](#) in *Forbes*, "As with early utopian promises of public housing projects, bureaucratic ideas of how Americans should live ... tend to go awry." The *New York Post* [thinks](#) it's time to "break up this behemoth government monopoly." And even some supporters of public housing [portray](#) it as an expression of technocratic reform disconnected from popular politics.

Once again, this is a crude simplification. It's true that some of the shortcomings of mid-century public housing can be traced to heavy-handed planners (though many of their mistakes stemmed from making compromises with private developers, rather than from resisting them). And it is true that, like many large public and private organizations, public housing authorities can be frustrating bureaucracies.

But the history of American housing activism shows that public housing was not only a creation of bureaucrats. It was demanded by generations of activists, from Yiddish-speaking rent strikers on the Lower East Side of New York in the early 20th century to the Black Panther Party, which included government-supported housing in its 10-point program. And as historian [Rhonda Williams](#) and others have shown, public housing provides an avenue for political participation and activism, often with women of color taking the lead. The residential public sector that exists today is not a top-down imposition. It's a result of struggles between activists and the powerful institutions that have sought to shape it for their own ends.

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## **When Finding Housing Is a Job in Itself**

By [Piazadora Footman](#) September 6, 2015



Credit Illustration by Abigail Gray Swartz

Six years ago I went into the New York City shelter system. For 11 months, I searched for apartments like crazy. I had few options. I had just come out of a psychiatric hospital. I had a 4-year-old son and was pregnant with my daughter. I had a housing voucher and was living off of Supplementary Security Income (a Social Security program) and food stamps. I went in

and out of real estate offices until I found an apartment at the western edge of the Bronx, in the River Park Towers.

The area was bad and flooded with drugs. I wanted to give my children better than what I had growing up, but I was down to my last straw. I had no choice.

I tried to make the best of our one bedroom by putting up curtains that matched my living room set and buying cable TV. But the apartment began to fall apart soon after we moved in. The toilet stopped up, the elevator didn't work, and the landlord didn't make repairs. On winter nights, we would freeze because the windows let in cold air. We would put on hats and gloves, with long johns under our pajamas.

Even so, I felt that I was making progress in my life. My mother was a drug addict who didn't take care of me. One of my grandmothers raised me with extreme physical and emotional abuse, always saying things like, "You ain't never going to be nothing, just like your mother." I felt as if my fate had already been painted, and in fact I did become an addict and lost my

son to foster care, but I got treatment and got him home. I also enrolled in college and finished two semesters. My plan was to get my children settled, finish school, get a job and support myself.

Then came nearly 18 months when my life was overtaken by running here and there to try to hold on to our housing. All my plans for moving my life forward fell apart.

It began with a letter saying that the New York City voucher program that helped pay my rent was being discontinued. Neither the Department of Homeless Services nor the city help line offered any information that helped me. A few months later, I got a letter from my landlord's lawyer telling me that, because the voucher had ended, I was in danger of being evicted.

At the rental office, I was told to get public assistance. For that, I needed a letter from my son's school, which I had to request and pick up in person; a letter from Supplementary Security Income and a letter from my rental office. I spent five hours applying at the Human Resources Administration office. Then I went to another unit for emergency rent assistance. I needed proof of an active public assistance case; a letter from a judge stating the exact amount of rent owed; and a letter saying my landlord would lower my rent. That took weeks.

When I went to turn in those documents, the worker told me that my center had been changed to Center No. 17. She told me it was in Brooklyn, two hours each way from my house by train and bus. I could not find someone to pick up my son from the school bus if my appointment went long. In the end, I just kept him home from school and took him with me. When we got to Center No. 17, the worker asked me, "Why did you travel all the way to Brooklyn when there is a Center No. 17 in the Bronx?" Luckily she agreed to help me. I must have thanked her 10 times.

Going from appointment to appointment, I felt defeated and depressed. For weeks I had done nothing but gather paperwork. I could barely go to my part-time job, and I had to drop out of school. My life already felt as if I were riding in a small boat with just one oar, always patching up the holes. Now my boat was leaking. I said to myself everyday, "How am I going to keep us from drowning?"

After several months, I was able to qualify for a new housing voucher and stay in my apartment.

Just a short time later, though, my landlord sold the building. We would have to move. The good news was that people with low income were given

Section 8 vouchers (the federal government's housing assistance). This change terrified me (I had 60 days to find an apartment) but I was also hopeful. Section 8 is a long-term affordable housing program.

I yelled and cried a lot during my apartment search. Everyone wanted three months' rent and a broker's fee. If I had almost \$6,000 in savings, I probably wouldn't need a voucher. Finally, I spoke with a landlord in Yonkers who had an apartment for \$1,800 with only one month's security.

When I arrived, I saw a guy sweeping the front steps. I thought, "This is going to be a well-kept building." Then I stepped into the apartment and was overwhelmed with happiness and unworthiness. It was huge and beautiful, with three spacious bedrooms. I wanted to cry.

It's been so different to live in a nice area without violence, drug use and dealers in the park. My children and I have met our neighbors. I'm not scared to let my children (my son is 10 now, and my daughter, 6) play outside. We even have cookouts in our yard.

Before, I had to keep my guard up. I felt as if I had to become a monster to protect my children from harm. Although nothing is perfect, finding stable housing in a nice area is our little peace of mind and paradise.

I don't think I'll be dependent on rental assistance, public assistance and Supplementary Security Income forever. Having order in my life is making it possible to have direction again. I am back at work and achieving my goal of slowly and strongly moving forward at my job.

Now my children and I have little bonus adventures. One evening in July I took them to the Yonkers boardwalk to sit on a blanket and have an Icee, something I never would have felt free enough to do a year ago.

My family life is not problem free, but it is stable and happy. I think my children are learning that we can keep looking for ways to save our lives, and we won't always struggle.

Piaadora Footman is an editorial intern at [Rise Magazine](#), a publication by and for parents affected by the child welfare system.

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