



April 2021 Edition

ILNAHRO—Housing Focus

FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT

Springtime is a time of renewal and hope for many of us. It is a time where the winter ends and new growth begins. It is a time where the days become longer between the winter and summer solstices. Springtime is a time of hope. And hope has been likened to a bridge that can transport us from dark to light. Hope, in general, has been defined as a desire for things to change for the better, and to want that better situation very much.

Less than a year ago, in our Summer 2020 Newsletter, I talked about the intensely unfortunate national resurgence of racial injustice impacting virtually every community throughout this nation. And in horror, we stood and witnessed the injustices perpetrated against black and brown people and continues even today. We have stood in support of the voices that cry for change and we stand in support of justice!! With the recent verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial, and the continued challenges faced within our communities, we continue our stance in support of change and justice. We desire for things to change for the better!! We want better for our Families, better for this Community, better for our City, better for our State and better for our Nation!! Needless to say, it takes all of us to not just want better, but to pursue what is best!

As we enter this spring season in 2021 and transition into the summer months, we are cautiously optimistic and hopeful that the tides are turning. ILNAHRO is committed to helping make our Cities and State better. We will continue to join forces and work together towards building a better and stronger communities. We will continue with our partnerships within each City's Police Department and other social justice organizations to "have the conversation" and work towards solutions. ILNAHRO is committed to diversity, racial equity and inclusion; and continues to review Federal (and State) policies and procedures to ensure they align with these commitments.

We know that George Floyd paid the ultimate price and that his family's pain will be etched in their hearts forever. However, we hope this tragedy serves as a springboard to creating and sustaining diverse communities across this country that are inclusive of all and thrive because of the diversity, and not in spite of it. For weeks I sat at my computer staring at a blank screen...wondering where do I even begin? But I began this newsletter with a message of HOPE and will end it with a message of HOPE!

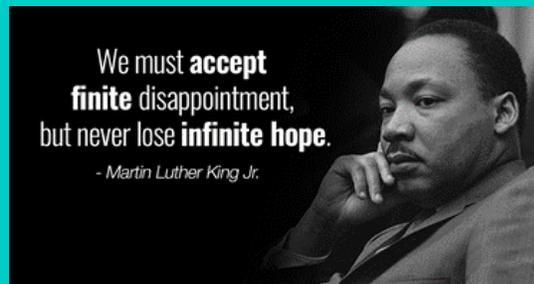
We encourage each of you to remain optimistic and hopeful as ILNAHRO works diligently to continue to transform who we are as an organization; how we provide services to our families within each our communities and transforming neighborhoods.

Stay Hopeful!!

Respectfully Submitted,

Jackie L. Newman

Jackie L. Newman
ILNAHRO President



Newest Updates Since We Last Talked

Federal Moratorium Extended: As you may have heard, the federal eviction moratorium, by action of the CDC, has been extended to June 30, 2021. A “Covered Person” may not be evicted for non-payment of rent, with certain exceptions. As the state moratorium is stricter than the federal moratorium – prohibiting all eviction actions against “Covered Persons” unless an exception is met – the state moratorium controls until it expires. The state moratorium is in effect until April 3, 2021, but it would not be surprising if it was extended (30 days at a time) through the federal deadline. PHAs may still proceed as provided for in the step-by-step guide that we previously shared. If Declarations are not returned or an exception is met, eviction may still be permissible. HUD has strongly encouraged PHAs to enter into re-payment agreements with tenants for past due rent.

New State Restrictions on Use of Criminal History Records: On March 23, 2021, Governor Pritzker signed SB 1980 which amends the Illinois Housing Authorities Act related to the use of criminal history records in public housing. Housing authorities are now required to collect certain criminal history record data of applicants to report to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Further, the Act was amended to provide a specific process for assessment of the criminal history report of an applicant including (1) limiting the report’s contents that may be considered by a housing authority in determining admission or denial and (2) requiring that an applicant be given an opportunity for an individualized criminal records assessment hearing where the accuracy/relevancy of the criminal history can be contested and mitigation, such as proof of rehabilitation, can be provided. In the coming weeks, we will share more information on the specifics of what data needs to be collected and a sample procedure for the individualized assessment hearing. For your reference, attached is the language of SB 1980.

10100SB1980ham002 LRB101 09593 RJF 74793 a (page 14)
(Source: P.A. 98-1162, eff. 6-1-15)

Article 5—Section 5-5. The Housing Authorities Act is amended by changing Sections 8.23, 17, and 25 and by adding Sections 8.10a, 25.01, and 25.02 as follows:

(310 ILCS 10/8.10a new)—Sec. 8.10a. Criminal history record data. (a) Every Authority organized under the provisions of this act shall collect the following:

- (1) the number of applications submitted for admission to federally assisted housing;
- (2) the number of applications submitted for admission to federally assisted housing by individual with a criminal history record, if the Authority is conducting criminal history records checks of applicants or other household members;
- (3) the number of applications for admission to federally assisted housing that were denied on the basis of a criminal history record, if the Authority is conducting criminal history records checks of applicants or other household members;
- (4) the number of criminal records assessment hearings requested by applications for housing who were denied

****This bill can be read in it’s entirety at: <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocTypeID=SB&DocNum=1980&GAID=15&SessionID=108&LegID=119901>**



Poster Contest—"What Home Means to Me"

JUDGES



HUD Representatives (L to R): William O. Dawson, III, Regional Public Housing Director; Towanda Macon, Division Director; and Eleny Ladias, Division Director

The 2021 "What Home Means to Me" Poster Contest has now concluded. For the state of Illinois we received seventeen (17) entries and was very fortunate to have the same great team from HUD to judge the poster submissions (please see their pictures above).

Each participant showed great talent with the drawings and the paragraphs they submitted told amazing stories about them, their families and "home"! Each participant will receive a letter of appreciation and a \$10 gift card for their poster submission.

We look forward to highlighting the state winners and all other participants in upcoming edition of this chapter's newsletter.

Deb Alfredson, ILNAHRO VP of Housing /Poster Contest is beginning to pull ideas and plans together to get more information out to the PHAs in order to get an even stronger participant count next year.

Here are a few of the guidelines that can help you in your decision to participate next year. For complete information visit the Housing America Website at www.housingamericacampaign.org. or NCRC NAHRO (Anna Judge) at www.ncrcnahro.org.

The "What Homes Means to Me" poster contest is for youth, Kindergarten through Grade 12, who live in affordable and assisted housing. The NCRC NAHRO regional council will recognize our region's three winners (one from each age group) at the regional conference in Chicago, IL on to be announced rescheduled date. Those 3 winners will then be sent on to the national level for consideration.

(Send poster contest entries to your State Chapters for selection process and the top 3 state chapter winners from each age group will be forwarded to NCRC NAHRO for regional selection. Submissions sent directly to National NAHRO will be disqualified.)

As part of NAHRO's Housing America campaign, a poster contest is held each year for children residing in affordable housing and community developments owned or administered by NAHRO member agencies. Posters reflect the national theme of "What Home Means to Me." The contest is a collaborative effort of NAHRO's chapter/state, regional, and national organizations. National honorees are selected from chapter/state-level winning entries.

How to Enter

Housing authorities submitting entries to the national poster contest must first send entries to its local/state NAHRO chapter. Local/state NAHRO chapters are encouraged to host their own poster contests and submit the winning posters from each age category to their regional council. Local/state chapter contests are optional. Each regional council will determine a deadline for poster contest entries and a date for regional judging. National NAHRO is not involved in the scheduling or conduct of regional council contests. The regional council will select three winners – one from each age category – and forward those on to the national competition in Washington, D.C.

ILNAHRO would like to give a special thanks to Deb Alfredson, Deputy Director of the Winnebago County Housing Authority, who stepped into her VP roll and worked tirelessly to see this year's event to completion.

****Remember--We can use your story...please submit to brendab@sha1.org by mid-week of each month.****

HUD Announces \$693 Million for National Housing Trust Fund to Build Deeply Affordable Housing!



HUD announced today that [communities will receive \\$693 million](#), more than double last year's allocation, in [national Housing Trust Fund \(HTF\)](#) funding for the construction and operation of affordable, accessible housing for the lowest-income people. The HTF is a dedicated resource for building, rehabilitating, and preserving affordable housing for people with the lowest incomes.

This funding is a welcome and urgently needed resource, but much more is required to meet the [country's need](#) for deeply affordable, accessible housing. NLIHC's [HoUSed campaign](#) calls on Congress to provide at least [\\$40 billion annually for the HTF](#) to expand and preserve the supply of rental homes affordable and available to people with the lowest incomes. Learn more about the HoUSed campaign at: nlihc.org/housed.

[Contact](#) your representatives and senators and urge them to enact bold, long-term solutions to the nation's affordable housing crisis that will ensure housing is universal, stable, and affordable!

Background

Enacted in the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 (HERA), the national Housing Trust Fund is the first new housing program in a generation dedicated solely to the construction of housing affordable to the lowest-income people. The HTF is a permanent federal program with dedicated funding sources outside of the annual appropriations process; the HTF is funded through a modest annual assessment fee on Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, so it does not compete for funding with other HUD housing programs.

At least 90% of HTF funding must be used for the production, rehabilitation, preservation, or operation of rental housing, while up to 10% can be used for homeownership activities for first-time homebuyers. The HTF is administered through HUD as block grants to states and territories, and [funding for each state and territory](#) is determined by the number of extremely and very low-income renters who are severely housing cost-burdened as well as the shortage of rental properties available to extremely and very low-income households.

Increasing the supply of deeply affordable housing not only helps the lowest-income people but can alleviate rent pressure on those with higher incomes as well. Millions of low-income renters occupy housing units they cannot afford because they have no other option; increasing the supply of quality affordable, accessible rental housing for those with the lowest incomes through the HTF would allow these renters to move into homes affordable to them and free up their original units for renters at higher incomes. The HoUSed campaign urges Congress to provide [at least \\$40 billion annually](#) for the HTF to expand and preserve the supply of rental homes affordable and available to people with the lowest incomes.

In addition to expanding and preserving the supply of rental homes affordable and accessible to people with the lowest incomes, the HoUSed campaign is calling on Congress to bridge the gap between incomes and housing costs by [expanding rental assistance](#) to every eligible household; providing [emergency rental assistance](#) to households in crisis by creating a permanent national housing stabilization fund; and [strengthening and enforcing renter protections](#) to address the power imbalance between renters and landlords that puts renters at risk of housing instability and homelessness.

Take action by [joining the HoUSed national campaign](#) today, and by [contacting](#) your representatives and senators to demand they support bold solutions to the affordable housing crisis!

Thank you for your advocacy to get and keep the lowest-income and most marginalized people #HoUSed!

Federal Low-Income Housing Grant Doubles in Size This Year

Washington (AP) — Thanks to a coronavirus pandemic-fueled mortgage boom, states will get nearly \$700M in federal grants from a special program for low-income housing, more than double the amount distributed last year.

It's boost that the Department of Housing and Urban Development says should produce a tangible leap forward in government low-income housing plans across the country. The Housing Trust Fund, administered by the department, will disburse the monthly to state governments for construction, maintenance and restoration of low-income housing. This year's allotment is \$689,565,492 — more than double the \$322,564,267 disbursed the previous year, HUD said in a statement.



The grant increase is independent of [President Joe Biden's massive COVID-19 relief package](#), and his equally massive infrastructure proposal. But it falls in line with the general tone of Biden's young presidency, which is responding to the pandemic by disbursing money across the nation in a manner that potentially [reshapes the social safety net](#). "This past year has reminded us just how important it is to have access to safe and stable housing. But too many Americans are struggling to keep or find an affordable home," HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge said in a statement.

Established in 2008, the Housing Trust Fund started making payments to state governments in 2016, and is fueled by a sliver of the proceeds from the parallel federal mortgage programs, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. A HUD senior official said the original idea was to link strong performance in one part of the housing market with increased help for those in vulnerable housing situations. Interest rates fell to longtime lows last year, prompting a wave of mortgage refinancing in the midst of the pandemic.

The grants go directly to state governments. Each state must use 80% of each annual grant for rental housing, up to 10% for homeownership and the rest for administrative and planning costs. The fund can be used for acquisition, new construction, reconstruction or rehabilitation of properties.

The HUD senior official, who spoke on condition of anonymity before the program had been officially announced, said many state housing agencies had been tracking the spike in mortgage activity and were already making plans for the funding boost before the actual numbers were announced.

The overall impact, the official said, will be to allow state housing authorities to expand existing plans or move up projects that had been on the back burner awaiting funding.

Diane Yentel, president of the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), said the economic upheaval brought on by the pandemic shined a spotlight on how many Americans were a few missed paychecks away from a personal housing crisis. "The pandemic made it clear that housing is health care," she said. "These are critically needed resources to build and preserve housing for our most vulnerable people."

Yentel said the Housing Trust Fund is off to a good start in its first few years of operation. But she and other housing advocates are pushing for a massive expansion of the program, lobbying Congress to pour up to \$40B annually into the fund.

\$6M on Upgraded Security At Its Sites



The Birmingham Times, By Erica Wright

The Housing Authority of the Birmingham District (HABD) has earmarked \$6 million to make security upgrades in its public housing sites.

Several children have lost lives in public housing over the past 24 months including four-year-old Jurnee Coleman; three-year-old Kamille ‘Cupcake’ McKinney, and two-year-old Major Turner.

“They did not deserve to die and we owe it to them and families and all existing families that reside in our public housing communities to do everything we can to keep them safe,” said Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin on Friday at a press conference attended by HABD President and CEO David A. Northern, Sr. and Birmingham Police Chief Patrick Smith.

The \$6 million will include installing and upgrading surveillance cameras; license plate readers which will be monitored by law enforcement; LED lighting and lighting repairs.

“When HABD residents lay down at night, they deserve to feel safe and I think it is our job to do that,” Woodfin said. “All of us are collectively doing our part to make sure that families receive the peace that they deserve.”

Northern said HABD’s Board of Commissioners reviewed the Capital Fund budget and agreed to make safety a priority. “Addressing safety and crime in the city of Birmingham should be something local agencies work on together to make the most impact,” Northern said. “Our hope is that taking additional steps to improve security will make a difference and aid in deterring crime; and better assist law enforcement with solving criminal activity on our properties.”



Smith said his department will partner with HABD to help ensure safety of all public housing residents. “The Birmingham Police Department is constructing its Real Time Crime Center and that will bring together all of the technologies that work together within the city from cameras to license plate recognition...” he said. “Everything will help us achieve public safety with the community and make sure the residents feel safe when they go out.”

Public housing allocations include:

Smithfield Court, \$750,000	Marks Village, \$500,000	Elyton Village, \$500,000
Rev. Dr. Morrell Todd Holmes, \$500,000	Collegeville, \$350,000	Kimbrough Homes, \$250,000
North Birmingham Homes, \$200,000	Cooper Green Homes, \$200,000	Harris Homes, \$200,000
Tom Brown Village, \$500,000	Roosevelt City, \$250,000	Benjamin Greene, \$150,000

News Updates

National News

Biden proposes big increase for housing programs

Affordable Housing Finance (April 12)

“Representatives of several housing organizations applauded the latest funding request. ‘This budget is a big deal and reflects years of NAHRO members making the case for investments in affordable housing and community development,’ said Sunny Shaw, president of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. ‘A 15% increase in HUD funding is a strong statement by the Biden administration.’”

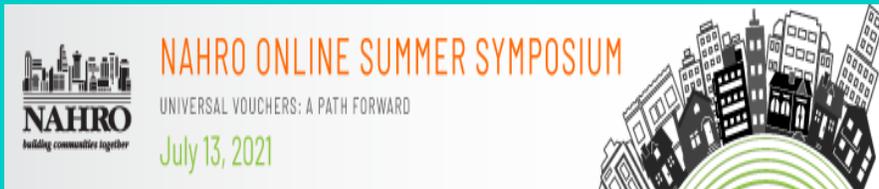
Trump gutted Obama-era housing discrimination rules. Biden’s bringing them back.

Washington Post (April 13)

“Housing Secretary Marcia L. Fudge on Tuesday moved to reinstate fair housing regulations that had been gutted under President Donald Trump, in one of the most tangible steps that the Biden administration has taken thus far to address systemic racism. The effort comes less than three months after President Biden signed a series of executive orders aimed at increasing racial equity across the nation, including directing the Department of Housing and Urban Development to examine and reverse actions taken by the Trump administration that undermined fair housing principles.”

Upcoming NAHRO Training/Conferences

Learn More by visiting: [National Conference - The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials \(NAHRO\)](#)



2022 Washington Conference

March 28-30
Grand Hyatt Washington Hotel
Washington, DC

2022 National Conference & Exhibition

September 22-24
Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina
San Diego, CA

2023 Washington Conference

March 6-8
Renaissance Washington DC Downtown Hotel
Washington, DC

2023 National Conference & Exhibition

October 6-8
Hyatt Regency New Orleans
New Orleans, LA

2024 Washington Conference

April 8-10
Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
Washington, DC

2024 National Conference & Exhibition

September 26-28
Marriott Orlando World Center Hotel
Orlando, FL

ONPHAA's Analysis of the 2021 Ontario Budget



Ontario released its [2021 Budget](#) on March 24, which is focused on health and economic recovery toward a post-pandemic future.

ONPHA was glad to see some much-needed investments in Ontario's ongoing pandemic response, including targeted supports for communities most impacted by COVID-19, families, and economic recovery efforts for both workers and organizations.

We would have liked to have seen the adoption of our recommendations to make housing a central budget focus, and will continue to highlight the critical role of housing in socioeconomic recovery.

Find [ONPHA's full analysis](#) of the 2021 Ontario Budget with the top five takeaways for community housing, and track some of our [housing sector "wins"](#) on the blog.

Stay tuned for ONPHA's analysis of the 2021 Federal Budget (dropping April 19).

If you have any questions about the Ontario 2021 Budget or want to share feedback to inform ONPHA's advocacy, contact policy@onpha.org.

Build Up Your Skills with These Essential Topics for Housing Providers

Our professional development opportunities are designed to prepare housing staff and board members to meet changing and complex demands in governing and managing high-quality, sustainable, tenant-focused housing.

Online courses

Last chance to register for our online courses! Courses start on April 6, 2021 and end on July 6, 2021.



[Supportive housing core competencies](#) to enhance your skills when communicating with tenants.

[Ready, set, \(re\)build](#) for those looking to start a new construction project.

[The new, simplified world of RGI](#) for staff that administers and calculates Rent-Geared-to-Income.

Workshops

We're offering our popular [RGI simplification workshop](#) on three dates leading up to full implementation of the new RGI rules on July 1, 2021. Make sure your organization is prepared for RGI modernization!

Pick a date that works for you:

- Wednesday, May 19, 2021, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM
- Wednesday, June 9, 2021, 1:00 PM—4 PM

To view all learning opportunities, visit the following link: http://onpha.on.ca/web/Learning_and_events/Professional_development/Content/Learning_and_events/Professional_development.aspx?hkey=a597d226-34c7-4645-b207-96bef5e180fc&utm_source=informz&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Email&_zs=VVnbX&_zl=0vRV2

Articles furnished by Jeff du Manoir—VP of International

CHRA to Become National Coordinator for Chartered Institute of Housing, Canada

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) is proud to announce that it has entered into a partnership agreement with the Chartered Institute of Housing Canada (CIH Canada) whereby CHRA will serve as the new administrator for CIH Canada, effective May 1, 2021. The new partnership was announced by CHRA Board President Kevin Albers at the Opening Ceremonies of the Annual Congress.

CIH Canada is the national program for education, professional standards and accreditation in Canada's affordable and social housing sector. CIH Canada offers training, coaching and resources to housing professionals and people interested in working in housing. "As the national association representing the non-profit, social and affordable housing sector in Canada, CIH Canada was a natural fit for CHRA to take on. This new arrangement will allow CIH Canada to strengthen and offer greater training, educational and accreditation opportunities to people throughout the sector" Kevin Albers, CHRA Board stated. "CIH Canada is excited at the opportunities that partnering with CHRA will create. CHRA has a national reach and is well respected by the sector, stakeholders, and national decision makers — we believe this new arrangement will greatly raise the profile and stature of CIH Canada in the national housing sector", said Greg Dewling, Chair of CIH Canada.

CHRA also announced that it has hired Mary Clarke as the General Manager to oversee CIH Canada. Mary will oversee the operation and administration of CIH Canada within CHRA. Mary is already familiar with CHRA members, having previously served with CHRA from 2008 to 2011. Mary can be contacted at mclarke@chra-achru.ca.

Over the coming months, there will be more information made available about CIH Canada to CHRA members, including its courses, accreditation programs, and membership. In the meantime, for more information on CIH Canada, and how it can assist you in your career goals, visit www.cihcanada.ca.

Message From CIH Canada Chair

Dear CIH Canada Members,

As noted today, we are very pleased to be partnering with the Canadian Housing Renewal Association (CHRA) to deliver association leadership for CIH Canada. With this transition, it is time to consider the role of chair for CIH Canada. I have served for the last few years and desire to complete this transition to CHRA. In preparation for the next phase of leadership, CIH Canada is soliciting interested from our members for the future role of Chair. Our intent is to transition this role over the next year. The incoming chair will be appointed to the Board of CIH Canada immediately. If you have interest in this role, please forward a cover letter and your resume to me at: greg.dewling@civida.ca. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or to discuss

Articles

[Government of Canada to Create 30 000 Affordable Housing Units Through Innovation Fund](#)—"Our Government believes that families should be able to live, grow and work in a neighbourhood that meets their needs, and have the stability and opportunities that allow them to succeed. Innovation is key to making that happen. With today's announcement, it is clear that our government will continue to support innovation and growth in our communities with the help of partners across all sectors."

[A new era of funding for affordable housing in Hamilton](#)—Everyone deserves a safe, stable and well-maintained place to call home.

COVID-19: Questions, Answers and Statistics

IDPH—Data is reported based on the date IDPH receives vaccination reports from providers. Providers are to report as soon as practicable, but reporting can be delayed as much as 72-hours, which can lead to a lag between vaccines delivered to Illinois and vaccines administered.

Below is the current data, as of April 9, 2021:

Total Illinois Cases	1,323,170	Total Illinois Deaths	21,836
Probable Deaths	2,314	Total Test Performed	22,318,791
Recovery Rate	98%		

IDPH reminds that you should not come to work if your are sick. You should not report to work if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever (100 4 F or higher) or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or running nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, stay home and call your doctor.

To review other results by county or any general questions relative to COVID-19, please visit the Illinois Department of Public Health’s website at: www.dph.illinois.gov.

Some of the affordable housing provided by local housing authorities and IHDA funding.



Macoupin County HA—Willow View Townhomes



HA of the County of Williamson—Reddick St. Apts.



HA of Marion County—Woodlawn Apartments



HA of Champaign County —Parkview Senior Apts.



NAHRO—Professional Development

Event Calendar-Professional Development

Date	Event	Location	Date	Event	Location
4/30-15/21	NAHRO Public Housing Occupancy, Eligibility Income & Rent Calculation Certification Exam	Online	6/9-10/21	Excellence in Customer Service Virtual Classroom	Interactive Zoom Meeting
5/12-14/21	Succession Planning Virtual Classroom	Interactive Zoom Meeting	6/10-25/21	NAHRO HCV Homeownership Proficiency Test	Online
5/12-13	E-Learning: SEMAP	Interactive Zoom Meeting	6/15-18/21	Commissioners’ Fundamentals Virtual Classroom	Interactive Zoom Meeting
5/17-21/21	Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Virtual Classroom	Interactive Zoom Meeting			
5/17-25/21	HCV Occupancy, Eligibility, Income & Rent Calculation Virtual Classroom	Interactive Zoom Meeting			
5/19-20/21	Financial Management Training Program: Staff Development	Interactive Zoom Meeting			
5/21-6/5/21	NAHRO HCV Occupancy, Eligibility, Income and Rent Calculation Certification Exam	Online			
5/21-6/5/21	NAHRO HQS Certification Exam	Online			
5/26/21	Ethics for Management	Online			
5/27-28/21	Repositioning: Where Do I Start?	Interactive Zoom Meeting			
6/2/21	Financial Management Training Program: Increasing Non-Federal Revenue	Interactive Zoom Meeting			

Thanks to our Supporters

What to Consider Before Accepting a Property Donation

Local, municipalities and private owners may offer to donate property to your affordable housing organization. While there are clear advantages to these donations, including the potential to increase housing stock in the area, you should consider several factors before accepting donated property. Property donations aren't unusual in the affordable housing industry, said [Robert Silverman](#), professor of urban and regional planning at the University of Buffalo's School of Architecture and planning. "City-owned property is often transferred to a developer either at fair market value or as part of a land dedication so a project can move forward," Silverman said. Sometimes parcels are vacant, while "other times they may have a structure on them that either needs to be demolished or revitalized," he added. Some municipalities create programs encouraging the [use of vacant public properties for affordable housing development](#), offering the property to nonprofit and mission-driven developers before opening up the bid process to for-profit-developers.

According to Silverman, private donations occur as well, though a private owner's motivations for donating property tend to differ from those of a municipality. "A property may need substantial renovations, and an owner may not want to revitalize it, so donating it could provide tax benefits to the donor," he said. "The donor may also want to donate a property to avoid tax debt if it is idle and not generating revenue." In any donation, public or private, affordable housing developers "need to take the condition of the property into consideration," Silverman said.

Popular Property Donations—before the COVID-19 pandemic, it wasn't unusual for municipalities and private owners to donate vacant commercial spaces, said Keely Stater, director of research and industry intelligence for the nonprofit [Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation \(PAHRC\)](#). The pandemic has sped up the trend, leaving commercial properties like malls, office spaces, and motels empty or underutilized, she said. Motels become popular donation properties because many were already in need of renovation or close to shutting down before the pandemic, Silverman noted. Their residential design allows for a cost-effective conversion to apartments compared to other structures or new construction. "When the pandemic hit, some [motel] owners might have looked into donating their less profitable properties to PHAs nonprofits to lower their carrying costs," he said. "Any type of real estate that became less profitable during the pandemic may have become a candidate for this type of donation, such as older retail space or office spaces."

Some housing providers use motels to shelter homeless families temporarily, Stater said, so it makes sense to rehabilitate them into affordable housing units. Any unused or underutilized property has potential, including former schools and vacant land. Even retired military bases serve as affordable housing in some communities, according to Stater. The

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development administers a program to make suitable federal properties available to nonprofit organizations to assist local homeless populations.

Questions to Consider

- *Is the property the right fit?* - Consider whether the property addresses your community's needs today and in the future. "do people actually want to live here?" Stater said of property offered via donation. "Is the property close to schools and transit?" A neighborhood assessment can help uncover valuable data, such as crime statistics. Contact your local police department to obtain neighborhood crime reports, and take advantage of online databases such as the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. PAHRC offers a free opportunity search tool that maps out neighborhood specific data on health, education, labor market access, transit, and desirability. You should also determine whether your organization has the resources to develop and maintain another property. Do you have the right insurance coverage? Your existing policy might not be able to cover the intended use of the donated property. If the property requires significant changes to accommodate housing units, is there adequate funding in place for redevelopment? Do employees have the capacity to take on additional responsibility?

- *Is the property in good condition?* - Your assessment process should include the extent of renovations needed for a particular property. For example, do motel rooms already have small kitchens? If you must add kitchens, what kind of plumbing and electrical upgrades are required? If residents can't occupancy a property immediately due to renovations, the property can become a security liability (e.g., vandalism, theft, etc.). Hire a qualified firm to conduct a building inspection. The inspection serves to uncover any adverse conditions such as aging HVAC and fire protection systems, structural damage, or mold. Make sure the inspection firm has the proper state and local licenses, which vary by state. The firm you hire should consult with local building and health department officials to identify potential risks associated with the property.

- *Are there any legal concerns?* - Be on the lookout for legal red flags that can potentially add unexpected costs and complications. Examples of these red flags include:

- * Contractual obligations;
- * Commitments to others (e.g., existing tenants);
- * Liens, including outstanding taxes;
- * Violations of federal, estate, or local laws; and,
- * Historical landmark designations.

Another consideration is whether the donor has a clear title to the property. Talk to the current building owner or contact the applicable department within your municipality. Use the findings to help determine whether the property will positively con-

tribute to your housing portfolio—or be a detriment.

- *What expenses might arise?* - while a donated property is free at face value, there are hidden costs to consider. "There needs to be an assessment of how much money it will take to get the project where you want it," Stater said. For example, a new property owner may be held liable for environmental cleanup, even if the owner was not involved in or did not know of environmental contamination on the property, according to the federal [Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act \(CERCLA\)](#). Before taking a property title, establish a baseline of the property's environmental health by working with municipal officials and an environmental consultant, who can conduct site assessments based on CERCLA standards. Take the cost of maintaining the property (e.g., mowing, snow removal, security) into consideration. If the property isn't immediately available for housing, there's no income to offset those costs. Utility fees are another potential unexpected cost. Determine if there are any open or past due utility payments associated with the property. Before accepting the property, confirm whether you'll be responsible for any remaining utility payments.

- *Are there any stipulations?* - consider whether the donation comes with any contingencies. For example, a municipality may ask to retain a portion of donated property for storage space for a certain amount of time. Would this affect your organization's development plans? Local zoning laws may also restrict development plans. For example residential uses may not be allowed in commercial zones. If your organization plans to refurbish a property, ensure the project scope doesn't conflict with zoning regulations. When considering a property donation from a municipality, "it's a partnership," Stater said. The municipality should be part of the plan to avoid development hurdles. "You don't want a fenced-in building that just declines until you can do anything with it," she added. "There needs to be a transition plan to get things done as soon as possible."

Contact me any time or visit the [HAI Group](#) website for information on our insurance programs, risk management services, online training, and more!

Email: jnielsen@housingcenter.com

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7 Better Alternatives to ‘How are You?’ for the Time of COVID

Better conversation openers to spur more meaningful conversations and genuine connection—Jessica Stillman of Inc.

“How are you?” was never a great question to kick off a meeting or conversation. As author and Wharton School professor Adam Grant pointed out on Twitter, “How are you?” rarely starts a meaningful conversation. It prompts us to summarize our emotions instead of sharing the stories and insights behind them.” It’s an even worse opener during the current crisis. As psychologist Jane Dutton explained on the TED Ideas blog, the question falls particularly flat on Zoom. “People are pretty tired of the same old ‘How are you doing?’ questions,” she observes. And if someone is actually suffering at the moment (as so many of us, unfortunately, are) the casualness of the question suggests you don’t really want to know how they are, forcing the other party to perform fake cheerfulness. Psychologists say this sort of “toxic positivity” has real mental health costs.



So what are some better alternatives to “How are you?” for the COVID-19 era? Dunne, Grant, and others have suggestions:

- ⇒ **What surprised you this month?** — Grant insists it’s better to ask about experiences than emotions, suggesting this offbeat opener as an example.
- ⇒ **What did you do this week that you loved?** — “Ask a question that taps quickly into something that’s meaningful to people and conveys, ‘I am genuinely interested, and I genuinely care,’” suggests Dunne, who offers the above question as an example.
- ⇒ **Tell me a highlight of your day.** — Another happy alternative from Dunne.
- ⇒ **Tell one story of a silver lining that happened this week.** — Both Grant and Dunne endorse this variation on the idea of asking people to share a little positivity. “Talking about silver linings acknowledges that something negative has happened, but it also touches on the positive that you’ve made of it,” Dunne explains. She suggest this might be a good opener for a big group Zoom call.
- ⇒ **What’s something you’re excited about?** — Thrive Global recently rounded up suggestions of alternative openers from readers. This one comes from Craig Inzana, a content creator from Omaha, who used this question even before the pandemic: “It’s open-ended enough for someone to talk about their work, their favorite TV show, or anything else that they’re loving at the moment. I love watching someone’s face light up when they get to talk about something that excites them.”
- ⇒ **What’s been keeping you busy?** — “I’ve recently found that asking people more specific, but not intrusive, questions leads to a more authentic exchange,” Marta Chavent, a management consultant in France told Thrive Global. Her favorite version of this approach is the question above.
- ⇒ **What have you learned about yourself lately?** — One last idea via Thrive Global: “Not only have I realized that they usually open up and are willing to share personal stories, but they also get excited about sharing something positive related to personal growth,” California-based marketing director Isabelle Bard said of her suggestion.

Looking for more alternative conversation starters for pandemic times and beyond? We’ve offered lots here on Inc. in the past.

Membership Renewals

It's that time of year!! Time to consider renewing your membership or consider joining the Illinois Chapter of NAHRO. Your decision to continue or join ILNAHRO through membership keeps the association strong and helps us in our common mission of seeking excellence in both public and affordable housing, as well as, community and economic development.

If you are not a member, this is your opportunity to join forces with other PHA's and CD organizations. Please consider joining us this Fiscal Year, there are exciting things on the horizon as we "Reposition, Renew and Refocus –in providing more Affordable Housing.

Please renew or join **TODAY**. You can visit our website at www://ilnahro.org. Send a copy of your completed application along with the appropriate payment to:

***ILNAHRO, Springfield Housing Authority
200 North Eleventh Street
Springfield, IL 62703.***

This will ensure that your membership benefits continue or begin promptly. Let us know if we can be of service at any time.

ILNAHRO Mission Statement

NAHRO makes available resources for its members and others who provide decent, safe, affordable housing, and viable communities that enhance the quality of life for all Americans, especially those of low– and moderate-income by:

- Ensuring that housing and community development professionals have the leadership skills, education, information and tools to serve communities in a rapidly changing environment;
- Advocating for appropriate laws, adequate funding levels and responsible public policies that address the needs of the people serve; are financially and programmatically viable for our industry; are flexible, reduce regulatory burdens and promote local decision-making; and,
- Fostering the highest standards of ethical behavior, service, and accountability to ensure public trust.

NAHRO enhances the professional development and effectiveness of its members and the industry through its comprehensive professional development curriculum, including certifications; conferences; and publications. These efforts work to equip NAHRO's members with the skills, knowledge and resources necessary to succeed and prosper in a changing environment.

ILNAHRO Welcomes You to Join



Dear ILNAHRO Member:

It is that Time of Year!!! Time to consider *renewing* your membership or consider *joining* the Illinois Chapter of NAHRO. Your decision to **continue** or **join** ILNAHRO through membership **keeps the association strong** and **helps us in our common mission** of seeking excellence in both public and affordable housing, as well as, community and economic development.

During a time when our agencies are facing a decline in economic support, the question may be – “*Why Membership?*” Your membership in the state chapter of NAHRO provides services that benefit you and your organization every day. ILNAHRO has committed itself to providing services such as:

Training and networking through ILNAHRO’s cutting edge annual conference that offers the best in our training fields. Additionally, ILNAHRO offers centrally located training opportunities throughout the year at its Peoria Training Center in Peoria, Illinois.

Legislative Advocacy and Legislative Advocacy Opportunities by providing sample ‘sign-on’ letters to issues affecting affordable housing; Senate and House Bills that directly affect and shape public policy.

Informational Resource through a monthly newsletter that contains up-to-date information on housing issues, regional, and national trainings, workshops, and the latest in legislative developments.

“*Hot-Off-The-Press*” e-mail blasts that provide information on legislative issues that affect agency operations.

State recognition of resident accomplishments through its annual Resident Recognition Award.

Your membership gives you access to members-only discounts for training, to name a few benefits!

Annual Membership Period: October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021

If you are not a member, **this is your opportunity** to join forces with other PHA’s and CD organizations. Please consider joining us this Fiscal Year, there are exciting things on the horizon as we “Build Communities Together—Through Affordable Housing”.

Please **renew or join TODAY**. Complete the attached form and return it with the appropriate payment to: Brenda Bruner, Executive Assistant, Springfield Housing Authority, 200 North Eleventh Street, Springfield, Illinois 62703. This will ensure your membership benefits will begin promptly.

Let us know if we can be of service at any time.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Hocker
VP of Member Services

ILNAHRO Membership Renewal Form

2020-2021
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM
Illinois Chapter of NAHRO
(Please Print or Type All Information)

Contact Name:					
Agency/Company Name:					
Address					
City:		State:		Zip Code:	
Telephone:	()	Fax Number:	()		

Please provide up to five (5) staff emails for "Agency" membership:

E-mail:		Name:	
E-mail:		Name:	
E-mail:		Name:	
E-mail:		Name:	
E-mail:		Name:	

Type of Membership (Check one or both):

	Agency (\$75.00) from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021
	Individual (\$25.00) from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021

Check the one below that applies to the business of your agency / company:

Public Housing/Section 8
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Commissioners
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 Other Affiliated Member (specify): _____

Please make your check payable to: **Illinois NAHRO**
Mail to: Jackie L. Newman, President
 Springfield Housing Authority
 200 North Eleventh Street
 Springfield, Illinois 62703
 Phone: (217) 753-575, Ext. 206 or info@ilnahro.org



Come Advertise with Us!!

Advertising Rate Sheet

The Illinois Chapter of NAHRO is a professional membership association of housing and community development agencies and individuals. All editions will be sent by e-mail to the entire ILNAHRO membership and posted on the ILNAHRO website.

The newsletter is distributed the entire year and our current subscription list encompasses over 200+ members/individuals.

Submission deadlines are 20th of each month.

The advertising rates for the newsletter are as follows:

Finished Ad Size (width x length)		Cost Per Issue	Cost For All 10 Issues
Full page	7.5" x 10"	\$75.00	\$675.00
Half Page	7.5" x 5"	\$50.00	\$450.00
Quarter Page	3.5" x 5"	\$30.00	\$270.00
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Business Card	3.5" x 2.5"	\$15.00	\$135.00

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\$100.00

If you are interested in advertising with us, please send a high-resolution file (at least 300 dpi) to info@ilnahro.org by submission deadline indicated above. Acceptable files include: .tiff, .eps, .pdf, or .jpeg or .png. If you have any questions please contact Brenda Bruner, Executive Assistant at the Springfield Housing Authority at 217/753-5757, ext. 206 or by email at brendab@sha1.org.

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aquick@ihda.org

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815/904-2681

debalfredson@wchauthority.com

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217/753-5757, Ext. 313

melissah@sha1.org

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Whatever the season, make it your best!

