
The 2015 Annual Report

of the City of Columbus – Housing Authority

City of Columbus





Table of Contents **p.2**

Section 1:

Executive Director	p. 3
Department Overview	p. 3

Section 2: Policy Changes

Resolutions passed in 2014	p. 4
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Section 3: 2014 Accomplishments

Agency Wide	p. 5
Public Housing	p. 5-6
Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers	p. 6-7
Family Self-Sufficiency	p. 7-8
Heritage Woods Phase II	p. 8
Waiting List	p. 8-9
Homeownership	p. 10
Appointments	p. 10
HUD Funding	p. 11

This Annual Report is prepared for the citizens of the City of Columbus and the 2015 public officials:

Columbus Mayor:

The Honorable Kristen Brown

Columbus City Council:

Dascal Bunch

Ryan Brand

Frank Jerome

Frank Miller

Tim Shuffett

Kenny Whipker

Jim Lienhoop

Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority:

	<u>Term Ends</u>		<u>Term Ends</u>
<i>Dascal Bunch</i>	<i>City Liaison</i>	<i>Eric Frey</i>	<i>12/2018</i>
<i>Jim Keller-Chairman</i>	<i>12/2017</i>	<i>Amy Kaiser</i>	<i>12/2015</i>
<i>Beth Stroh</i>	<i>12/2017</i>	<i>Graziella Bush-Vice Chair</i>	<i>12/2015</i>
<i>Lester Burbrink</i>	<i>12/2016</i>	<i>Tiffany Tipton-Resident Member</i>	<i>12/2018</i>



Executive Director

As Executive Director (ED), I oversee operations and activities of all Columbus Housing Authority business. The ED is responsible to the CHA Board of Commissioners regarding planning, direction and implementation of all programs and policies of the agency and attends each meeting acting as Secretary of the Board of Commissioners. Work as ED involves problem solving; long and short term planning; development of policy and procedures; approval and preparation of budgets and reports; and supervision of good internal controls to ensure that the agency's systems are accurate, efficient and in accordance with professional and governmental standards and regulations.

Department Overview

The Columbus Housing Authority has 14 staff members. The following list acknowledges those staff members along with their titles:

Deborah Holt, Executive Director

Donald Wood – Finance Administrator (supervises staff below)

Melisa Ison – Lead Administration

Jill Sharp – Public Housing Manager (supervises staff below)

Rebecca Tibbs – Receptionist/Administration to Public Housing Manager and FSS Coordinator

Stella Collins – Section 8 HCV Supervisor (supervises staff below)

Julie Malson – HQS Inspector/Receptionist

Jane Coquerille – Section 8 HCV Case Manager

Janie Ahlbrand – Section 8 HCV Case Manager

Steve Zink – Public Housing Facility Manager (supervises staff below)

Doug Sweeney – Lead Technician

Jenny Hampton – Renovator/Lawn Maintenance

Steve Seckman – Technician

Jill Swain – Family Self Sufficiency Coordinator (FSS)



Policy Changes in 2014

February: Resolution 1-02202014- Board adopts FYE 6/30/2015 Low Rent/Capital Fund Program Operations and Section 8 Administrative Fee budgets moved to approval by Beth Stroh, seconded by Graziella Bush, and unanimously approved by the Board.

March: Resolution 03202014- to approve CHA's Annual Plan and Five-Year Capital Fund Project Plan was moved to approval by Lester Burbrink, seconded by Beth Stroh, and unanimously approved by the Board as written.

July: Resolution 02202014-07172014- to amend the FY2015 Section 8 HCV Budget and *rescind employee salary increases* for all employees was moved to approval by Graziella Bush, seconded by Lester Burbrink, and unanimously approved by the Board.

August: Resolution 08212014- to approve submission of SEMAP was moved to approval by Lester Burbrink, seconded by Gary Gossett, and unanimously approved by the Board.

October: Resolution 10162014- to inform the Board of HUD's increased Fair Market Rent (FMR) Schedule was moved to approval by Amy Kaiser, seconded by Graziella Bush, and unanimously approved by the Board. CHA's payment standard was changed from 95% to 90% in October 2013. No change to the payment standard is being made. CHA's payment standard will continue to be 90%. HUD publishes the FMR schedule each year. It is mandatory for housing authorities to follow this schedule.

October: Resolution 10162014-A- to renew CHA's attorney Grant Tucker's contract was moved to approval by Lester Burbrink, seconded by Beth Stroh, and unanimously approved by the Board. Grant is increasing his hourly fee to \$150. He has not changed this since 2002. Every three years, CHA is required to advertise for bids for an attorney. Grant was the only one to submit a bid.

November: Resolution 2014-11-3- to clarify and establish terms of office for commissioners to comply with Indiana Law IC-36-7-18-7 was approved through commissioner signatures. Commissioner Beth Stroh signed the resolution prior to the meeting.

November: Resolution 11202014- to increase Public Housing and Phase II late fees from \$25 to \$50 was moved to approval by Beth Stroh, seconded by Graziella Bush, and unanimously approved by the Board.



2014 Accomplishments

Agency Wide

*Section 8 HCV program scored 150 maximum points for SEMAP 2014 – (HUD Section 8 Management Assessment Program).

*Excellent Audit for CHA's FY 2014 (7/1/2013-6/30/2014) – 14 consecutive years *with no audit findings*.

*2014 – Collection of fraud recovery from Section 8 HCV – \$6,794.35 and Public Housing fraud recovery and move out charges – \$9,813.51 for a total of \$16,607.86 for the 2014 calendar year. Tenants cannot reapply for either program until the debt is paid in full. The waiting list to interview for HUD Housing December 30, 2014 was Section 8 – 571 applications and Public Housing – 175 one-bedroom applications, 253 two-bedroom applications, and 82-three bedroom applications. Staff estimates a family is pulled from waiting lists within 12-18 months.

*All applicants and tenants in federal housing are afforded appeal processes for denials on the waiting list and for terminations of tenancy. The ED holds these appeal hearings. In 2014, there were 51 applicant hearings; 17 denial decisions were upheld and 34 decisions were overturned that allowed the applicant to proceed through the waiting list process. Once tenants are in either Section 8 or Public Housing and receive notice of serious program infractions, these tenants also have the right to request hearings regarding their tenancy. Of 2014 tenant termination hearings, 16 were for Section 8. Nine terminations were upheld and seven terminations were overturned giving these tenants another opportunity to remain in housing. One tenant requested a formal hearing with an objective hearing officer (Merlyn Bartlett, retired law judge), which ended in CHA winning the termination and involved our attorney. In Public Housing, where CHA is the landlord, there were four appeal hearings (in addition to court cases). Four hearings were heard but the decision to evict was upheld. One ended in a *formal* hearing with an objective hearing officer (Executive Director Joe Klumpp of Bedford Housing Authority). The eviction was upheld.

Public Housing

*Homework with an Officer, in its third year at Pence Place, has a weekly average of ten children meeting with uniformed officers to do homework, tutor, and make friends! Several parents also attend to help out.

*In April 2013, Public Housing won a Women's Giving Circle grant of \$1,000 for homework supplies, snacks and drinks. There are still some funds left from this grant being used for snacks. We continue to see tenants and neighbors at Pence enjoying the updated park at Pence Street Park. Tenants have shown their pride in the neighborhood by volunteering to paint and plant flowers. The entire neighborhood has benefitted from the removal of several dilapidated, abandoned homes.



*Healthy Communities helped Heritage Woods and Sycamore Place with their Community Gardens. Families learned how to plant, tend and harvest their own food; they are also helping with smoking cessation at Sycamore Place.

The demographics of Sycamore Place have changed over the years leaning towards younger, disabled tenants who smoke more. Moving this building to a smoke-free environment without resorting to evictions will be a long-term commitment.

* 2014 CDBG grant was used to replace aging HVAC in several apartments at Heritage Woods.

*2014 PILOT – \$21,843 'payment in lieu of taxes' grant was completed the fall of 2014 with seven furnaces and AC units replaced with 92% efficiency furnaces at Heritage Woods and Scattered Sites. Many of the original furnaces had been in place nearly 31 years.

* CPD Officer Paul Garnett and his wife, Sarah, are beginning their second year living in a Heritage Woods apartment with Paul as a resident police officer. HUD allows PHAs to offer free rent to police, fire and emergency workers for living and parking their 'duty' cars on property and providing additional security to the developments. CPD officer LaShawn Tyler has lived at Pence Place for three years.

*Regarding evictions or move-outs in the past 6 months: July 2014 through December 2014 there have been seven evictions: three for utility violations, two for damage and vandalism, one for non-payment and one for a drug violation. One family purchased a home, four voluntarily withdrew, one deceased, two transferred to other CHA units due to family size.

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

*September 2014 – Section 8 submitted FY2014 SEMAP to HUD. The department scored 150 points (highest possible score) receiving bonus points for staff efforts to avoid concentrations of poverty in neighborhoods. Staff discusses with tenants the advantages of living in more progressive, developed neighborhoods, such as easier access to better schools and parks, and close proximity to shopping and essential services.

* When a landlord refuses to make a Housing Quality Standard repair, CHA is allowed to 'abate' the landlord's portion of rent until the item is fixed. If the landlord refuses to make the repair, the tenant may look for another unit to rent. Five rent abatements occurred in 2014. Four abatements were resolved. One landlord refused and the tenant was allowed to move.

*HUD's funding methods are not typical accounting. HUD calculates each agency's funding by the amount of money budgeted by Congress, not by the actual cost of rental subsidy multiplied by number of vouchers. CHA estimates current HUD funding will allow 525-550 households based on average current rents. This is an ever-fluctuating number due to markets and economy as well as funding. Staff has worked very hard this past year to stretch funding in the Section 8 HCV program without having to recall any vouchers. The tricky balance is leasing enough vouchers to satisfy HUD's requirements *and* having



enough money to cover the cost of rents. Admin fees (funding used to pay staff and operating costs) are based on unit months leased (UML). Therefore, lower UML equals lower admin fees available to cover administrative expenses and staff salaries.

*CHA is noticing a distinct rise in market rents in the Columbus area which makes affordable units for low income families more difficult to find. Families are also having difficulty coming up with deposit money for units and utilities.

*Seventeen new landlords were added to the Section 8 Landlord List in 2014. CHA has 151 active landlords.

*Section 8 ended December 2014 with a total of 111 new lease ups; 119 units turned over. We had a high of 528 units leased in March and a low of 508 in October ending the year in December with a monthly average of 513 leases. Two case managers have an average case load of 225 families. The supervisor manages 90 – 100 cases in addition to supervisory responsibilities. The end of year waiting list was 571 for the Section 8 HCV program.

Family Self-Sufficiency Program

*CHA was awarded another year of HUD's FSS Grant 2014-2015. This grant pays the salary and benefits for a Coordinator for Family Self-Sufficiency. Even though this program has been operating at CHA for 20 years, CHA must compete each year for the funding.

*The FSS Coordinator's responsibility is to encourage participants to have attainable goals, become self-sufficient, earn more income, and manage their family and daily life in a constructive, healthy manner. Housing rental amounts are based on income. Escrow in the FSS program is earned by increasing income. When income is increased, the tenant continues to pay the *lower amount of rent* and the increased amount of tenant rent is '*set aside*' in an escrow account. In 2014, there were eight five-year graduates of the FSS program. All are still receiving housing assistance. FSS served 62 families. Two Public Housing participants are escrowing; one at \$509 every month! The total amount of escrow set aside monthly is \$17,144.57. There are 26 Section 8 participants that have positive escrow balances and 19 are actively escrowing with an average escrow balance of \$5,787. The total escrow balance for Section 8/FSS participants is \$66,847.16. Of FSS participants, 68% are employed; 32% are unemployed; 18% have some post-secondary education; 15% have Bachelor's Degrees; 14% have obtained GED's; 8% have obtained Associates Degrees; 2% have obtained Master's Degrees; and 11% do not have GED's. Four participants voluntarily withdrew from the program this year. One ported to another county, and three were terminated from the program due to non-compliance.

*2014 – FSS received \$1,000 from Women's Giving Circle to host a Community-Wide Fashion Show. Over 88 people attended and raised \$234 in ticket sales. Laverne Sorrells Photography took pictures. Models received makeovers from A Better Cut. Clothing was donated from San Souci, and the event was held at Yes Cinema. Door prizes included a manicure from Handzz and Strandzz; mums from Duck



Creek Gardens; gift cards from Applebee's, Kohl's, and Savory Swine; gas gift cards; and a haircut from Beth Foist.

*The FSS Advisory Board has a new President, Dara Shumaker, who is a previous participant in the program, and there are several new Board Members. The Board continues to meet monthly with an array of new goals and projects for 2014-2015.

*The School Supply Program provided school supplies to 1,133 children in 2014. This program received a \$5,000 grant from Heritage Fund, \$19,000 from Cummins and many other community donations.

Cummins employees stuffed the backpacks. Arts Cleaners allowed organizers to use their carts to transport the backpacks to the Fair Oaks Mall for distribution. Fair Oaks Mall donated space with the School Supply Program paying for electricity. This program began in Columbus about 18 years ago as an FSS project. It has now become an important event in the community.

*Other donations received by FSS: First Presbyterian – \$1,100; United Way – \$200; and the Charlotte Aldenhagen Fund – \$2,494. We are so grateful for our faithful donors!

*FSS now has a Facebook page that is only available to FSS Participants.

Heritage Woods Phase II

Located on 9th Street, Heritage Woods Phase II is a 22 unit apartment complex adjacent to Heritage Woods. It is owned by Columbus Housing Finance Corp. with property managed by Columbus Housing Authority. This development was previously a LIHTC that has now satisfied its federal requirements. It is a market rate apartment complex with rents of \$550 per month for a two-bedroom townhouse. Most of the apartments are rented on the Section 8 program. The loan for the property was refinanced in 2013 to take advantage of lower interest rates and will be paid off in five years.

Waiting List

Public Housing and Section 8 HCV waiting lists are fairly equal in size because many families apply to both lists. We realize approximately one-third of the applicants follow through to receive housing, meaning two-thirds drop off the waiting list for various reasons. CHA has tried to make positive improvements to keep the waiting list as current as possible by conducting updates biannually to make sure addresses are up-to-date and applicants are still interested in receiving assistance. We offer to make email contact rather than postal mail if needed, and we add emergency contacts when the applicant moves frequently.



Currently, there are 707 applicants on the *Public Housing waiting list*. 625 of those have the Bartholomew County preference. A breakdown of ethnicity follows:

- 602 White
- 65 Black
- 10 Hispanic
- 6 Black/White
- 6 Declined/Did not provide information
- 5 Other
- 4 Native American
- 3 Asian
- 3 Hispanic/White
- 1 Native American/White
- 1 White/Hawaiian/Other Pacific
- 1 Hawaiian/Other Pacific

There are 689 applicants on the *Section 8 waiting list*. 580 have the Bartholomew County Preference. A breakdown of ethnicity follows:

- 568 White
- 80 Black
- 10 Hispanic
- 7 Other
- 6 Black/White
- 5 Hispanic/White
- 5 Declined/Did not provide information
- 3 Native American
- 1 Native American/White
- 1 White/Hawaiian/Other Pacific
- 1 Hawaiian/Other Pacific
- 1 Asian
- 1 Asian/White

*CHA will continue outreach to all areas of the Columbus community for housing assistance.



Homeownership Program

CHA originally had six homeownership units. To date, two have been lost to foreclosure, two voluntarily withdrew from the program and two homeowners still participate in the program. These remaining two mortgages are current on their loans.

Appointments

One maintenance technician was hired in August 2014 due to the death last summer of Maintenance Technician Joe Hinson, who had a heart attack upon arriving at work. CHA's main receptionist left in December 2013. Management has chosen not to hire a replacement but has moved admin staff to cover the position. One Section 8 case manager is planning to retire in late 2015. At the January 2015 board meeting, Jim Keller was re-elected as Board Chair and Graziella Bush as Vice-Chair. Donald Wood, Finance Director has been with CHA since 1995; Deborah Holt, Executive Director since 1999; and Jill Sharp, Public Housing Manager since 1999. The rest of the staff terms are from fourteen - four years!



HUD Funding

One of the biggest concerns regarding HUD Housing is the mystery of funding they supply. CHA's fiscal year begins 7/1 and very frequently we not know how much funding will be available from HUD until late in the calendar year. The budget developed in February is based on the knowledge of the previous years' funding received and information derived from HUD news, congressional news, and word-of-mouth. Because of time restraints, we work with that funding 'guesstimate' but plan on the adjustments that will be needed once more accurate information comes from HUD, often times eight – nine months into the fiscal year. It's a very frustrating process. CHA received approximately \$3.5 million in total funding for 2013 and approximately \$300,000 less in 2014. 2015 is expected to be comparable. We will *not* know until mid-fall 2015. At the same time, HUD is pushing to have the vouchers and Public Housing units *full*. The question managers struggle with – will there be HUD subsidy to pay the rents? We keep a tight rein on occupancy and an even tighter rein on spending.



CHA Main Office (Heritage Woods)



Heritage Woods Gardening





Heritage Woods Free Little Library (North High School Senior Project)





Sycamore Place





Pence Place



View Of Pence Place from Pence Street Park





Pence Place Homework With An Officer

