
The 2012 Annual Report

of the City of Columbus – Housing Authority

City of Columbus





Table of Contents

Section 1: Executive Summary

Director Role	p. 3
Department Overview	p. 3

Section 2: Policy Changes

Resolution 1	p. 4
Resolution 2	p. 4

Section 3: 2012 Accomplishments

Public Housing	p. 4-5
Healthy Communities	p. 5-6
Payment Standard	p. 6
Health Insurance	p. 6
Funding	p. 6
Homeownership Program	p. 7
Indiana Housing NOW	p. 7
CPD Involvement	p. 7
Appointments	p. 7

*This Annual Report is prepared for the citizens of the City of Columbus and
The 2012 public officials:*

Columbus Mayor:

The Honorable Kristen Brown

Columbus City Council:

Dascal Bunch

Ryan Brand

Frank Jerome

Frank Miller

Tim Shuffett

Aaron Hankins

Jim Lienhoop

Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority:

Jim Keller

Graziella Bush

Dascal Bunch

Amy Kaiser

Gary Gossett

Beth Stroh

Lester Burbrink

Jennifer Ruse



Executive Summary

Director Role

As Executive Director I am 'hearing officer' for applicant and tenant complaints /appeals of decisions made by CHA. In 2012 I conducted 32 applicant hearings where I *overturned* the original decision to deny them assistance-due to their criminal or rental history (i.e. allowed the applicant to continue through the interview process), and had 34 applicant hearings where I *upheld* the decision to deny them assistance. Regarding tenants informal hearings, I *overturned* 8 Section 8 decisions and 5 public housing decisions (i.e. allowing them a 2nd chance); and *upheld* 13 Section 8 decisions and 5 public housing decisions (i.e. these families were terminated/evicted from the programs).

In 2012 I had 97 hearings, an increase of 15 hearings from the previous year; 46% of the original decisions were overturned and 53% were upheld.

Department Overview

The Columbus Housing Authority has 15 staff members. The following list acknowledges those staff members along with their titles:

- Deborah Holt – Executive Director
- Jen Schoonover – Administration
- Donald Wood – Administrator
- Melisa Ison – Administration
- Jill Sharp – Public Housing Manager
- Jill Swain – Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator
- Rebecca Tibbs – Administration
- Stella Collins – Section 8 Coordinator
- Jane Coquerille – Case Manager
- Janie Ahlbrand – Case Manager
- Julie Malson – HCV Inspector
- Steve Zink – Public Housing Facility Manager
- Doug Sweeney – Lead Technician
- Joe Hinson – Technician
- Jenny Hampton - Rehab



Policy Changes

Resolution 1

The Public Housing lease was changed to a 1 year lease (previously month-month). This is in an attempt to curtail a public housing tenant from jumping programs when their S8 application reaches the top of the waiting list and they have only been on the PH program less than 1 yr. A one year lease for public housing will reduce turnover, reduce the expense of renovating additional public housing units, as well as reduce time spent processing applicants. If a PH tenant's Section 8 application comes to the top of the waiting list while they are in their first year of PH occupancy, they may request their application be moved to the bottom of the waiting list until they have completed their 1st year of public housing. In analyzing this change after 1 year the Public Housing Manager reports this has already reduced vacancies and increased tenant retention.

Resolution 2

CHA developed preferences for the waiting list for veterans, elderly and disabled persons. CHA already has preference for persons living, working or attending school in Bartholomew Co. If an applicant is in one of these categories, the application will be ranked based on its submission date and the category of 'preference'. As of 1/29/2013 the Section 8 waiting list indicates 20% of applicants have both Elderly/Disabled preferences. Of 489 Section 8 applicants, 10 are veterans and 344 families are extremely low income. As of 1/29/2013 there are 564 applicants on the public housing waiting list and 177, or 31%, have the elderly/disabled preference. 442 of these applicants are extremely low income families. It should be noted that many families apply to both waiting lists.

2012 Accomplishments

Public Housing

Maintaining full occupancy in both Section 8 and the public housing programs is paramount in 2012. The year started with Public Housing at 97.5 % occupancy; but more importantly, the goal is quicker vacant unit turnovers. The occupancy in Section 8 is more fluid. It's a very large program with maximum occupancy of 654 units. The process of tenant approval is cumbersome and we are relying on private landlords to rent to lower income families when the market is very tight in Columbus. In January 2012 Section 8 had 602 lease; a 92% occupancy. During this same period there were 54 families enrolled in CHA's Family Self-sufficiency program.



In May FSS had 53 participants, Public Housing occupancy was 99% and Section 8 had leased 96% or 629 families. Staff is working the waiting lists pulling 60 families approximately every 4-6 weeks. The waiting lists remain open. Some of the problems we face in going through the applications are low response to letters offering housing and past criminal arrests.

August/September brought public housing occupancy to 95%; Section 8 had 646 leased—98%. FSS had 51 participants and 1,750 children were served in the Community school supply assistance program.

I requested OIG-Indianapolis to visit Columbus to help investigate what appeared to be fraud in the Section 8 program. In the investigation a Section 8 tenant admitted to allowing a homeless person 'rent' a bedroom of her subsidized unit and was subsequently 'paid rent' by a local church. The church, the Section 8 tenant, and the renter were 'educated' about the violation/ and fraud. The Section 8 tenant had to re-pay the portion of rent received to the Section 8 program.

By October, all CHA parking lots were sealed and stripped and sidewalk repairs were completed. Public Housing occupancy was 95.5%, FSS has 53 participants and Section 8 had 639 families leased...losing ground from the previous month.

November & December brought an excellent audit for CHA...year 12 without any findings. The Section 8 program had a perfect SEMAP (Section 8 Management Assessment Score) of 150 points!

Section 8 finished 2012 with 650 filled vouchers of a possible 654...99.4%; public housing ended the year at 97% occupied with 2 leases scheduled in January and FSS had 53 participants. All in all, it's been a very good year.

Healthy Communities

Healthy Communities worked closely with tenants at the Sycamore Place, Heritage Woods and Pence Place apartments. Hearty, perennial plants were donated to Pence Place and planted by tenants and staff in the 'bunkers' near the parking lot. This area has been a continual maintenance problem and we are hopeful these plants are better suited for the bunkers, providing some color and tolerant of the heat. Sycamore Place tenants have really taken to 'small space gardening'. Tenants planted their 3 raised beds full of donated plants and seeds from Healthy Communities. This activity not only keeps tenants interested and active but also gives them something to 'tend', as well as being rewarded with the harvest. There were about 6 very committed families to try gardening at Heritage Woods this year, twice as many as the year before! Healthy Communities donated the cost of installing a water pump, hose and tool



storage to this new group of gardeners, who had some success but are already talking about the improvements they will make in 2013. Healthy Communities has been extremely supportive to public housing!

Payment Standard

In March the Board of Commissioners voted to raise the Section 8 'payment standard' that sets the price range for which tenants are allowed to rent, based on their income. By raising this payment standard, tenants will have greater success finding affordable units in Columbus and landlords are more willing to rent on the Section 8 program with CHA supporting reasonable, yet affordable rents. The payments standard was increased from 90% of fair market rent to 95% FMR.

Health Insurance

CHA received notice of a 25% increase in liability insurance and a 15.5% increase in Employee Health Insurance. CHA adopted the "working spouse rule" regarding health insurance. If the spouse has access to health insurance, they cannot be on CHA's insurance and their employer's insurance. CHA's Board agreed to continue carrying flood insurance on the properties that were flooded in 2008 at a cost of \$3783. If insurance is not carried, FEMA would not provide any assistance in event of a flood.

Funding

CHA applied for the 2012 Community Development Block Grant and proposed replacement of all windows at Pence Place. These windows are the original aluminum clad windows from 1980's. The seals have failed, the windows freeze and condense and are extremely inefficient. Once the applications were chosen and the budget reviewed, the City of Columbus invited CHA to receive partial funding for the project. CHA will be awarded \$95,625 which will be used to replace approximately 1/2 of the project's windows.

CHA ended the 6/30 fiscal year with a deficit in Section 8—(\$8,577) and Public Housing surplus of \$2,775. The Section 8 deficit was paid from Section 8 reserves.



Homeownership Program

In June CHA received notice that one of Section 8's six home-ownership units is being foreclosed. Housing Partnerships has been a joint lender with a local bank for these six units. CHA had been aware the tenant was in trouble and attempted to make contact to assist her. The tenant made no contact with CHA, none with Housing Partnerships and no contact with the bank. The tenant left the house in terrible condition and subsequently, applied for Section 8 rental housing assistance. Since the tenant left a housing program in non-compliance she is ineligible for assistance for at least 10 years. The homeownership program, although small with 5 remaining home owners, has been a very successful program. This is the first foreclosure since the program began nearly 10 years ago.

Indiana Housing NOW

In July public housing occupancy was 93% and staff interviewed 20 families for the vacancies. Section 8 had 644 leased of 654 vouchers available—98%...although the summer months often generate 'moving season', so it is a struggle to maintain the leases. Landlords and tenants have a new resource called Indiana Housing NOW. This is a toll free/on-line resource to assist renters and landlords to 'link-up' throughout the State of Indiana. Landlords 'advertise' the properties they have to rent; Renters enter the amount they can afford and the location/size of unit they need, and the website 'matches' the needs. CHA is marketing this to local landlords so a larger 'local' data base can be established. FSS promoted 'back to school' with the school supply program and parenting classes.

CPD Involvement

CPD and Public Housing manager met to discuss bringing together public housing tenants and CPD in a positive activity. Matt Myers attended the first tenant meeting and we were glad to realize that CPD was pleased with public housings 'tight management and surveillance equipment!' Myers said CHA's properties are the safest places to live in Columbus and suggest we use that as a marketing tool. This was also the beginning of Homework Help with an Officer, a weekly 1-hr. evening session for CPD volunteers and Pence Place kids to have snacks, do homework, and get to know each other. It's been quite successful and 10-15 kids regularly attend the weekly meetings.

Appointments

A new maintenance tech was hired and we made plans to hire our receptionist full time. December board meeting re-elected Jim Keller as Board Chair and Graziella Bush as vice-chair. Lester Burbrink wished to remain a board member and extended his term another 4 years.