



Elizabeth Edgerton, Interim Executive Director

February 8, 2023

Raleigh City Council
222 W. Hargett Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Members of the Raleigh City Council,

On behalf of the Raleigh Housing Authority's ("RHA") and its Board of Commissioner's commitment to regularly update our partners on RHA activities, please accept this annual report. During 2022, RHA completed its 35th consecutive year with no financial audit findings. RHA continued to be designated as a "High Performer" for the 25th consecutive year for HUD's Public Housing Assessment System and for the 15th consecutive year for the Section 8 Voucher program.

Public Housing and Section 8 Programs

Raleigh Housing Authority provides safe, quality, affordable housing to low and moderate income families in the greater Raleigh community while promoting personal responsibility and self-sufficiency of residents and maintaining the fiscal integrity of the agency. RHA accomplishes these goals through its public housing and section 8 programs. Section 8 provides housing vouchers for individuals and families between 0-50% of the area median income ("AMI") while public housing provides housing assistance for those between 0-80% AMI. Rent amounts are calculated to be affordable at approximately 30% of each household's income.

Each year, RHA staff extensively reviews and updates its internal plans for these programs. Plans go through a rigorous public review process and updates are voted on for approval by RHA's Board of Commissioners. Items included in 2022's plan reviews are not limited to: opening and closing waiting lists, the application process, tenant selection, receiving housing assistance, landlord contracts, housing inspections, continued occupancy requirements, the public housing pet policy and more.

Housing preferences and special admissions for applicants are offered in order to assist in addressing the housing needs according to program policies. Preferences for admissions currently offered to applicants under one or both programs include:

VAWA Protection referrals based on incidents or actual or threatened domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or related criminal activity.

Coordinated Entry referrals in continued support of the City's initiative to coordinate services established to end homelessness through the Continuums of Care.

Olmstead Act referrals to assist with increasing housing opportunities for individuals with disabilities who are transitioning from, or at serious risk of entering, institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, adult care facilities, and other restrictive, segregated settings.

Support Circle referrals for homeless families that have successfully participated in the Support Circle program offered by a number of faith-based organizations.

Displaced Families for those who have been displaced through no fault of their own because of a natural disaster, governmental action, or due to the acquisition of local affordable housing complex which no longer continues to maintain its affordable housing status to its current residents.

Police Officers to provide additional security for public housing residents.

Partnerships

RHA continues to work with a number of partners, some of which RHA has collaborated with for decades, as well as developing partnerships with new service providers. Below are just a few examples of RHA's partnerships with other agencies in our area.

City of Raleigh – RHA provides meeting space on-site at its community centers at 971 Harp Street and throughout its communities. This year, classes and meetings were held with the City both virtually at multiple properties and on-site at Heritage Park. RHA residents and the City continue to benefit from the lease agreements for the recreation field and the land for the adjacent Halifax Parks and Recreation center and the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources center located within Walnut Terrace. These lease agreements run through December 2023 and November 2025 respectively.

Communities in Schools of Wake County (CISWC) – This non-profit currently operates five Learning Centers in our public housing communities. CISWC curriculum includes the Smart Academy, a program that focuses on science, math, and motivating students to learn. This program is available to both public housing and non-public housing children. Programs for 2022 focused on exercising, education and literacy development.

Inter-Community Council, Inc. (ICC) – This is the 501(c) 3 organization formed in 1974 by residents of public housing and advocates for public housing families. This organization is comprised of resident elected representatives at RHA's public housing properties. The ICC provides guidance to RHA in areas of concern to residents and is an active participant in the development of policies.

St. Saviour's Center – The Center is located next to Glenwood Towers and offers health and wellness programs for RHA residents at no cost to them. The Diaper Train provided free diapers to low-income parents and seniors alike through their program. The Center assisted with the vaccination clinics at the senior buildings and worked with Meals on Wheels to provide food to our residents. Building space is offered to additional partners at the St. Saviour's Center complex including Wake Relief and Haitian Church while seasonal services like nursing students provide free health screenings to our senior residents.

There are numerous other community groups that provide services to RHA families. A few of those agencies are Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, Arts Together, Step-Up Ministries, Raleigh Nursery School, Jobs for Life, The Food Bank of NC, Wake Tech Community College, Green Chair, many churches and faith organizations, and other community groups. RHA and its residents appreciate the support of the greater community, especially in light of changes to daily life. We are beyond grateful for the continued support that our community provides to RHA residents.

By the Numbers

HUD cut the funding available to pay local landlords in 2013. Although funding levels have improved since then, Congress and HUD have maintained reduced funding levels. Currently the administrative fee that RHA receives for the operating of the Housing Choice Voucher (“HCV”) program is set at 89% of the eligible funding level. The operating subsidy provided to supplement public housing rents to cover public housing operations is currently 104.94%.

Currently, RHA provides 1,251 public housing units, 193 RAD units, 484 affordable workforce units, and 3,921 Housing Choice Vouchers. RHA maintained a 98.36% occupancy rate in all of its units and 93% utilization in the HCV program. There are waiting lists for both the voucher and public housing programs. The waits can range from six months to six years depending on the program and the needs of the applicant. Applicants who live or work in Wake County are prioritized over applicants from outside the county. RHA receives, on average, 220 applications per month. RHA’s waiting lists have remained open while many other housing authorities have closed their waiting lists.

Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD)

At the end of 2022, RHA successfully converted a total of 193 Public Housing units across four properties to project-based assistance under the Rental Assistance Demonstration (“RAD”) program supported by HUD. RAD offers greater flexibility to ensure the preservation of RHA’s affordable housing, the ability to leverage new resources to address capital needs, and provides a more stable and reliable funding source. RHA’s goal with RAD is to ensure the long-term preservation of affordable, quality housing for current and future residents.

RHA staff held forty resident meetings in multiple locations and formats over a period of three years to ensure ample resident notification and feedback. Converted residents continue to receive housing assistance following conversion provided they remain in good standing with their lease obligations. This conversion provides residents with a greater variety and choice of housing options than they previously received under public housing.

Heritage Park Redevelopment

RHA released a Request for Qualifications in August 2021 for a co-developer to partner with RHA on the redevelopment of Heritage Park. Heritage Park is a 122 Public Housing property on approximately 11.61 acres in downtown Raleigh. After a careful selection process, RHA chose the joint venture team of Brinshore Development, LLC and Raleigh Raised Development as co-developers for the project. RHA is dedicated to preserving all of the current affordable units and expand quality housing opportunities to additional families across a range of incomes. RHA is working with the co-developers to identify a master planner.

Residents will be invited to participate in the redevelopment efforts in the upcoming months through the master planning process. Workshops, surveys and other communications will be provided to residents to help gather feedback. This redevelopment will involve a robust community engagement process to ensure resident input is received. RHA expects the planning and financing process to take at least 12-months. All current residents of Heritage Park who are in good-standing with their Lease and continue to meet minimum qualifications will have the right to return to the redeveloped Heritage Park site.

Site construction is anticipated to be completed in phases to allow some residents to remain on-site during redevelopment. RHA will be increasing the number of affordable units within the site and will specifically set aside 122 units for families whose income is 0-30% AMI. A net addition of affordable housing will allow for us to assist an even greater number of families within the Heritage Park community.

Safety and Security

RHA is acutely aware of the need for affordable housing in our area and the barriers many of our most vulnerable residents face. Despite the emergence of the COVID-19 drastically changing RHA's operating procedures, our agency operated in a way to ensure that RHA remained dedicated to continuing to provide essential housing services in a safe manner for clientele and staff. We continue utilizing technology to minimize exposure risks to our staff and clientele. Vaccination clinics were provided at RHA's main office building and senior citizen buildings.

Throughout 2022, our agency continued to focus efforts on providing sufficient safety and security measures to its residents, staff, and properties. Steps are taken annually and at specific junctures to provide information on the Violence Against Women Act and domestic violence in general. RHA works with the Raleigh Police Department in an effort to deter crime and educate residents on the importance of community watch and crime prevention. RHA continues increasing its number of surveillance cameras to its communities. Currently there are over 1,000 RHA units within range of security cameras.

Improvements to RHA Properties and Services

The Raleigh Housing Authority is proud of its standards of services and is always looking for opportunities to modernize and improve the Agency. Last year, four communities were tested for radon and mitigation was provided as needed. Electrical updates were provided and ventilation revised to update several properties. Staff worked on the elevator systems at its senior buildings and is currently working to upgrade the fire alarm system at the Carriage House. Physical updates to help improve resident quality of life were completed including parking lot striping as well as adding more benches and picnic tables in common areas.

Another item that RHA has been focusing on is providing greater connectivity to its residents. This has included partnering with the City through its Digital Literacy program to provide electronic devices to residents, partnering with Google Fiber to expand the number of communities that qualify for free internet access and working to improve RHA's internal communication methods to allow for greater visibility and transparency. While connectivity is not a housing service per se, we strive to improve quality of life and empower residents in a multitude of ways.

Staffing and Board of Commissioners

RHA has continued to strive to provide excellent housing services while operating with a number of positions hiring. RHA has implemented a livable wage rate for its employees which is reviewed annually. During 2022, the Board of Commissioners completed a vigorous and extensive interview and recommendation process to fill the open Chief Executive Officer position. The Board has chosen Ashley Lommers-Johnson as RHA's next CEO and he will start in this capacity effective April 17th. All nine Board of Commissioners positions are currently

filled with the next Commissioners term expiring in 2024. Despite the current economic climate in our area following the pandemic, RHA continues to push towards its goal to become a larger housing presence in Wake County.

Other Achievements During 2022

RHA continued working with the Building Futures Initiative program to increase and improve employment opportunities for residents to participate in Section 3 employment, education and training opportunities in the construction and building performance sectors.

Project based vouchers were added to RHA's voucher program. These vouchers are used at RAD properties as well as can be requested for properties owned by outside landlords. This program will allow us to grow the Section 8 program and offer more affordable housing units throughout Wake County.

RHA was awarded Emergency Housing Vouchers as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. RHA and the Partnership to End Homelessness have been working together to lease these vouchers to individuals and families who are (1) homeless, (2) at risk of homelessness, (3) fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, or (4) recently homeless. During 2022, 48 families were successfully housed under this initiative. Additionally, a desk audit of this program was performed by our local HUD office with no findings.

RHA is in the process of developing a five year Strategic Plan for the Agency. This Plan will help to identify RHA's vision, long-term goals, and objectives as well as help evaluate progress towards these items. This will be the Agency's first Strategic Plan will help provide a clearer direction for the Agency to grow and expand. Additionally, a Communications Plan is in discussions to help further direct the Agency's path.

RHA and the Salvation Army have implemented a Memorandum of Agreement to partner together to house individuals within their shelter system into public housing to reduce the amount of homeless individuals within our jurisdiction.

Summary

As new programs are developed and expanded, RHA continually analyzes the benefits of each program, the needs of the community, and the agency's administrative capacities. Our Agency and staff are sincerely grateful for the continued partnership with our local government agencies. We are excited to see the impact that working together brings to affordable housing in Raleigh and Wake County.

We hope this update is of value to you and we look forward to you joining our Board on future property tours. We are also including an agency fact sheet with useful information. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Arne Morris
RHA Board Chair



Elizabeth Edgerton
Interim Executive Director

cc: Marchell Adams-David, Raleigh City Manager
Larry Jarvis, Director of Housing and Neighborhoods
Lorena McDowell, Director of Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization
David Ellis, County Manager
Wake County Commissioners