

# FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE



## COMMUNITY UPDATE 2022



[www.provhousing.org](http://www.provhousing.org)

# MISSION

PHA provides and develops quality and safe affordable housing opportunities and services to address the needs of Rhode Island Residents



# VISION

PHA, working with residents, will be a best-in-class leader in creating safe, vibrant communities that promote pathways to opportunities and be a place where people are proud to live and work

# OUR VALUES

PHA is driven by our dedication to our 5 core values:  
**Excellence, Accountability, Innovation,  
Respect, and Equity.**



Our values shape our actions and decisions to fulfill and achieve our mission and vision, ensuring and re-envisioning a better future for the Providence Community.

# 2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

**IDENTIFY AND PURSUE  
OPPORTUNITIES TO PRESERVE AND  
EXPAND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**



**PROVIDE SAFE AND HEALTHY  
COMMUNITIES WITH PATHWAYS  
TO VIBRANT FUTURES**

**CULTIVATE, ENHANCE, AND  
EVALUATE STRATEGIC  
PARTNERSHIPS**



**CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE PHA  
INTERNAL MANAGEMENT AND  
OPERATIONS**

# Message from the Chair and Executive Director

As the Chair of the Board of Commissioners and the Executive Director of the Providence Housing Authority (PHA), we are pleased to present the PHA's 2022 Annual Report.

The high level of interdepartmental collaboration and teamwork involved in developing our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan prepared the PHA for overcoming the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, the PHA adapted to meet emerging needs while working to accomplish the goals of a strategic plan fueled by core values of excellence, accountability, innovation, respect, and equity. We implemented new ways of delivering services and models of internal and external collaboration to accomplish key components of the plan. We emerge from the pandemic experience stronger as an organization, with a better understanding of how housing intersects with health for the people we serve. We are committed to do everything we can to address the inequities the pandemic exposed in terms of economic, educational, health care and, of course, housing opportunities.

One key area of success this year has been beginning a robust examination of how to best to improve and expand our role in meeting the housing needs of the families and the community we serve. We are proud to announce that the PHA has engaged the nationally recognized and award winning EJP Consulting Group to assist us in assessing our real estate assets to develop a plan for preserving our existing housing and creating new affordable housing opportunities far into the future; while expanding our work to deliver aligned supportive housing services.

Looking forward, the PHA is focused on the future and its vision to be a best-in-class leader in creating safe, vibrant communities that promote pathways to opportunities; the pages that follow provide an update on our progress this past year in realizing that vision.

Respectfully,



**Nicolas Retsinas**  
Chair



**Melissa Sanzaro**  
Executive Director



**Nicolas Retsinas**  
Chair



**Melissa Sanzaro**  
Executive Director

**"Looking forward, the PHA is focused on the future and its vision to be a best-in-class leader in creating safe, vibrant communities that promote pathways to opportunities."**



## GOAL 1

# Identify and Pursue Opportunities to Preserve & Expand Affordable Housing

### Utilizing Existing Resources to Preserve & Expand Affordable Housing Options: Project-basing Housing Vouchers

The U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allows housing authorities to project-base up to 30% of its authorized Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) units in specific projects, including new housing, rehabilitated housing, or existing housing that needs the project based vouchers to remain affordable for very-low income residents. The PHA is committed to project-basing up to 30% of its voucher units as a strategy to increase the number of affordable units in Providence and deconcentrate poverty.

In FY 2022, PHA issued a Request for Proposals and awarded 50 project-based vouchers to six landlords/developers, an investment of \$8.8 million over the life of the subsidy contracts. Twenty-six vouchers preserved units of existing affordable housing and 24 vouchers will leverage the creation 126 units of new affordable housing units at three developments scheduled to be occupied in 2023 and 2024.

The future Joseph Caffey Apartments and Jordan Caffey Townhomes new construction projects are prime examples of the impact of investing vouchers in new development. A long period of disinvestment and neglect of the former Barbara Jordan II Apartments in the City's South Providence neighborhood resulted in the affordable housing development becoming uninhabitable. HUD began foreclosure proceedings in 2017, triggering concern about the possible loss of critically needed affordable units. Through the intervention of Rhode Island Housing and a partnership between Omni Development and Wingate Companies, a new development comprised of 12 Buildings and 83 apartments will emerge on the site in 2023. PHA has awarded project-based vouchers to the Caffey developments to help leverage funding and ensure that 16 of the units will remain accessible to Section 8 families with incomes below 30% of AMI.

## Notable Outcomes

- HUD awarded 42 HUD Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) and PHA brought an additional 75 HUD Mainstream Vouchers online to provide new housing resources for vulnerable families. The subsidy value of these vouchers is over \$1.4 million annually.
- In May 2022, HUD commended PHA for its successful efforts to link homeless families in the EHV progra with landlords. PHA's utilization of EHVs has been significantly above the national average.
- With funding provided by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of RI, an incentive program engaged 38 new landlords in the Section 8 program.
- Engaged nationally-recognized EJP Consulting Group to guide PHA in considering options for repositioning public housing real estate assets, preserving units, and creating new housing resources and services.



"When I connected with the PHA's Homeownership Program, I felt like God had sent me three angels - Reinaldo, Nayda, and Milady - to guide me in realizing my dream. I would not have been able to become a homeowner without them."  
- Confessora, Homeowner

### Expanding Housing Options: Using Existing Housing Vouchers to Support Homeownership

The PHA's Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Homeownership program allows families to use their voucher to buy a home and receive monthly assistance in meeting homeownership expenses. To participate in the program, the family must meet specific income and employment requirements, be a first-time homeowner, and satisfactorily complete the pre-assistance homeownership and housing counseling program.

Confessora is a participant in the PHA's Section 8 Program who cares for her elderly father, has a home-based child care business, and serves as a foster mother.

Her dream of homeownership began in 2008, and over the years she worked hard to save money, improve her credit score, and learn all that she could about the process of homeownership. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, she was forced to put her homeownership dream on hold.

In early 2022 Confessora engaged with the PHA's Section 8 Homeownership Program and was provided education about financial literacy, improving credit ratings, and homeowner responsibilities. With coaching and encouragement from staff, Confessora successfully purchased a home in June. She thanks PHA staff Reinaldo Gonzalez, Nayda Anaya, and Milady Gonzalez for guiding her through the complex process involved in buying her first home.

### Notable Outcomes

- Recognized by HUD as an approved housing counseling agency, awarded a substantially increased \$56,000 grant from HUD to provide services, hired a HUD certified housing counselor, and assisted families interested in Homeownership.
- 51 families are currently using a Section 8 voucher to support homeownership
- Engaged 74 residents in homeowner preparation programs such as budgeting, credit counseling, and goal setting



Confessora (left), her family, and PHA Staff Reinaldo Gonzalez (right).



## GOAL 2 Provide Safe & Healthy Communities with Pathways to Vibrant Futures

### Promoting Resident Wellness: Leah's Story

The PHA's Wellness Resource Center (WRC) is a holistic approach to healthy living in public housing that includes prevention education, access to mental health services, support for victims of crime, addiction treatment and counseling, case management, referral to outside agencies, and access to activities that promote healthy living.

Leah was referred to the WRC by her Property Manager due to a serious lease violation by a household member. She was initially hesitant to engage with WRC staff fearing that, if she disclosed the challenges she was facing, she might place herself at risk for eviction. Despite declining services several times, the persistence of staff resulted in Leah participating in some WRC group activities. As her trust in staff grew, she began to disclose the scope of challenges in her life, including domestic violence, trauma, and substance use disorder (SUD). Leah credits the PHA's WRC with assisting her in leaving an abusive relationship, relocating closer to supportive family, and engaging in services that support her recovery from trauma and SUD. Today, Leah is nearing two years in recovery, has been employed, is studying to become a domestic violence peer specialist, and is working to establish a weekly Narcotics Anonymous meeting at the PHA.



"The PHA wouldn't give up on me. They helped me to see things I never would have thought were possible for my life. Now I'm in a healthy relationship, financially stable, and sober – I finally have the things I deserve. Now I want to give back and help my community."  
– Leah S, PHA Resident

### Notable Outcomes

- With CODAC Behavioral Health Services brought onsite health clinics to PHA communities.
- Expanded the VOCA Community Safety Program and provided case management services for 190 residents recovering from the trauma of violence.
- Began pilot of PHA Pride, an initiative designed to provide support and resources to LGBTQ+ youth.
- Established the Critical Incident Response Team and provided services, support, and expedited referrals to resources for 54 residents experiencing crisis situations.
- The PHA Wellness Resource Center served 597 residents by providing direct services, support, and referrals to partner agencies.
- Provided 3,174 doses of vaccine, 8,000 test kits, and over 30,000 masks to PHA residents over the course of the pandemic.





## Public Housing as a Foundation for Educational Achievement: Overcoming Obstacles to a College Degree

As a young child, Lorena and her mother Irni were unable to afford an apartment of their own and had no option but to share a small bedroom in her grandmother's home. In such a crowded environment, a quiet space for studying was often difficult to find. Lorena clearly remembers the day when she and her mother moved into their own apartment at the PHA where she had her own bedroom and a quiet space to study, read, do homework, and sometimes dream about the future. Coming from a family where few family members graduated from high school, Lorena's mother valued education and was committed to her daughter graduating from high school and pursuing higher education. A graduate of Classical High School in Providence, Lorena will graduate from Rhode Island College (RIC) in 2023 with a bachelor's degree in nursing. At RIC Lorena is recognized for her scholarly achievements, leadership, and commitment to excellence in nursing. While enrolled in college, Lorena also has worked part time.

"Unlike many of my peers who must work full-time to help parents pay for rent and utilities, having access to affordable housing meant that I could focus on my education."

- Lorena, PHA Resident and RI College Student

PHA staff learned about Lorena's achievements and encouraged her to apply for scholarships available to public housing residents. Lorena is the 2022 recipient of the Tina M. Sullivan Memorial Scholarship from the Public Housing Association of Rhode Island.



## Notable Outcomes

- PHA's Youth Workforce Immersion Program served 63 youth, with an 85% retention rate.
- Developed hybrid models of education and workforce development program delivery to provide access to economic and educational opportunities during the pandemic.
- Sixty two percent of families participating in the PHA's Family Self Sufficiency program showed an increase in earned income, with an average increase of \$16,794.
- Assisted PHA families in securing nearly \$2.1 million in Rent Relief RI fund payments for rental and utility assistance necessary to preserve their housing through June 30, 2022.
- Conducted a comprehensive resident survey and developed place-based strategies for promoting safety and security on PHA properties
- Received two awards from National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials for the PHA's response to Covid-19 pandemic and for the Wellness Resource Center.

# GOAL 3

## Cultivate, Enhance, and Evaluate Strategic Partnerships



### Proactively Addressing and Preventing Homelessness: The Mainstream and Emergency Housing Voucher Programs

In today's tight rental market, securing affordable housing can be a nearly impossible task for many low-income families. The extremely low-income families served by the PHA's HUD-funded Mainstream Voucher and Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) Programs often have additional barriers to securing housing, such as a lack of a landlord history, a prior eviction for non-payment of rent, a poor credit history, or disabilities that make navigating the housing search and leasing process difficult. The Mainstream Program serves non-elderly disabled households with a preference for homeless households. The EHV Program, funded by American Rescue Plan, is exclusively for those experiencing homelessness. Both programs work through a partnership between the PHA and the RI Continuum of Care (RiCoC) to determine families who are homeless - and the RiCoC refers such families to the PHA.

A partnership among the PHA, the RiCoC, and RiCoC member agencies is making a significant impact in the lives of Mainstream Voucher and EHV families by assessing family needs, providing housing search navigation assistance and case management services, outreaching to landlords to attract their participation in the program, and forging landlord/tenant relationships that foster long-term housing stability. In FY 2022, this collaboration made the dream of permanent rental housing a reality for 44 families and engaged 43 new landlords in the PHA's rental voucher programs. We thank the RiCoC and member agencies Amos House, Crossroads RI, House of Hope, Sojourner House, and others for their collaboration in proactively addressing and preventing homelessness through their support of the PHA's Mainstream and EHV programs.

### COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: RI CONTINUUM OF CARE

"The Rhode Island Continuum of Care (RiCoC) is thrilled to have partnered with the PHA to connect households experiencing homelessness with Mainstream and Emergency Housing vouchers. The PHA has been a leading housing authority in Rhode Island committed to collaborating and devoting resources towards the long term solution to homelessness: affordable housing. The RiCoC looks forward to continuing these strong partnerships to end homelessness among families in and around Providence and throughout Rhode Island."

- Michelle Brophy, Chair, RI Continuum of Care

### Notable Outcomes

- Provided EHV and Mainstream program families with funding for security deposits, furniture, and moving costs, as well as providing rental incentives to landlords, thanks to HUD and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of RI Funding.
- Expanded PHA's interagency Resident Services Program Coordinating Committee to include more organizations serving PHA residents.
- With the RI Department of Health, City of Providence, RI Disaster Medical Assistance Team/Medical Reserve Corps, Lifespan, Providence Community Health Centers, CVS and Walgreens pharmacies and other partners, provided equitable access to Covid testing, vaccines and PPE while establishing a team approach that can be applied to future public health crisis situations.



Above: Hungry Ghost Press Owner Chris Morrison with PHA youth intern Kiana

“Participating in the PHA’s program has provided me with a source of paid internships that support the growth of my business while allowing me to help youth discover their talents and build skills necessary for entering the workforce – something I wish had been provided to me as a young person.”

–Chris Morrison, Owner, Hungry Ghost Press

## Partnering with Employers to Engage Tomorrow's Workforce: PHA's Youth Workforce Immersion Program

The PHA's Workforce Immersion Internship program helps youth explore career interests, develop soft skills necessary for employment, and gain hands-on workplace experience. Youth participating in the program have varied employment interests and this past year brought the challenge of finding internships in an arts-related setting.

Hungry Ghost Press owner and accomplished artist Chris Morrison did not hesitate to respond with an enthusiastic yes when asked to host youth interns from the PHA at his retail shop. Every intern engages in a variety of tasks during the placement including learning how to provide quality customer service, the basics of merchandising, and designing a piece that becomes a T-shirt or other print item. The internship experience at Hungry Ghost Press focuses on immersing youth in a culture of teamwork and collaboration while also providing them with the opportunity to discover their career interests and build new skills necessary for successful employment.

Hungry Ghost Press has hosted eight interns since becoming an employer partner in November 2021. Interns describe Chris as a caring mentor. Chris and the team at Hungry Ghost Press have supported our efforts to expand our program by assisting in recruiting three other employers to join our partnership, and we are most grateful for that support.



## Notable Outcomes

- Secured 17 new partnerships with employers that allowed youth to gain new skills and experience in the world of work.
- In partnership with the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, and with funding from RI Housing, completed the Manton Pathway, a walking and biking pathway that provides residents with direct access to the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Bike Path.
- In partnership with a group of Rhode Island housing authorities, entered into an agreement to participate in an off-site solar farm to supply a source of sustainable energy and reduce PHA's energy costs.
- Introduced residents in three family public housing developments to gardening and nutrition with funding from the National Resources Conservation Service

# GOAL 4

## Continuously Improve PHA Internal Management & Operations

### A Team Approach: A Property Management & Facilities Maintenance Partnership in Pursuit of Excellence

In FY 2022, PHA Executive Director Melissa Sanzaro empowered the Property Management and Facilities Maintenance Department middle management team (see photo below) to identify barriers to high performance in operations, develop innovative strategies, and pilot and evaluate new initiatives. This inter-departmental team met monthly to generate ideas, plan new strategies, and track progress of their initiatives. One product of this team's work was a new system for performing HUD-required annual inspections of public housing units that holds great promise for better identifying and addressing needed repairs, increasing customer satisfaction, and enhancing the PHA's capacity to apply preventive measures to protect property and preserve tenancies.

This new system features four district components:

- Inspections conducted by a team consisting of a Property Manager and a Facilities Maintenance Foreman;
- Direct engagement with residents by the team during the inspection to identify needed repairs, assess any need for resident services by the family, gather information about unit conditions, and address any issues that if left unresolved might later jeopardize a tenancy;
- Use of technology to conduct the inspection, record results, and generate and track work orders; and
- Customer surveys and auditing of work orders to measure resident satisfaction with services and track work order turnaround time.

At the end of FY 2022, PHA teams had conducted inspections of a majority of the PHA's 2,606 public housing units using this new system and were on track to complete all inspections in a one year period.



### Notable Outcomes

- Partnered with HUD in a national piloting of new NSPIRE property inspection protocol.
- Completed a \$2 million lead paint abatement project at Chad Brown Apartments.
- Produced updated policies, streamlined processes, staff training, and enhanced customer service in the Leased Housing Department.
- Secured training for Fifty-eight staff members in customer service and trauma informed practices.
- Leveraged technology and adopted new processes to allow residents, program participants, landlords, and vendors to do business electronically and more efficiently with PHA.

“This new inspection system has resulted in more detailed identification of conditions in units and resident needs not previously known to PHA. During and after inspections, staff have connected residents to a wide range of resources, such as homemaker services, behavioral health intervention, adult education programs, emergency rental assistance, and even a referral to a college scholarship.”

– Jacqueline Martinez, Deputy Director of Housing Programs and Operations



The PHA's Resident Advisory Board at the 2022 Appreciation Luncheon  
Front row (left to right): Diana Freeman, Lawrence D'Alfonso, Ingrid Bentsen, Elizabeth Gillens, Hattie Harris, and Maria Mendez  
Back row (left to right): Rebecca Wills, Executive Director Melissa Sanzaro, Ivette Morengo, Antonio Rivera, Vivian Medina, Jorge Nurena, and Philip Morris  
Not pictured: Terry Allen, Julia Carmona, Lonzie Doggett, Francisco "Jimmy" Lara, and Theresa Robinson.

## Resident Involvement: A Key Element in Continuous Management and Operational Improvement

The PHA is fortunate to have access to the counsel of its Resident Advisory Board (RAB), a 17-member group of resident representatives nominated to serve by their neighbors at their respective public housing developments.

The formal role of the RAB is to advise the PHA in the development of its Annual Plan submission to HUD. RAB members also play an important role in sharing information about PHA programs and policies with their fellow residents and often lead recreational and community building activities in their home developments. Members are active participants in monthly meetings with PHA that include updates from

staff and RAB members, presentations by outside organizations, discussions, and leadership development. PHA Resident Liaison Priscilla Cintron works closely with members to maintain open lines of communication and develop collaborative projects.

Committed to supporting continuous improvement in PHA management and operations, RAB members are dedicated to bringing resident concerns and perspectives to decision-making at PHA. Among all of PHA's many partnerships, none is valued as highly as our ongoing partnership with our residents to fulfill the PHA's mission and vision. Our RAB members embody the partnership spirit by challenging us to do our best and providing support for undertaking new initiatives.

## Notable Outcomes

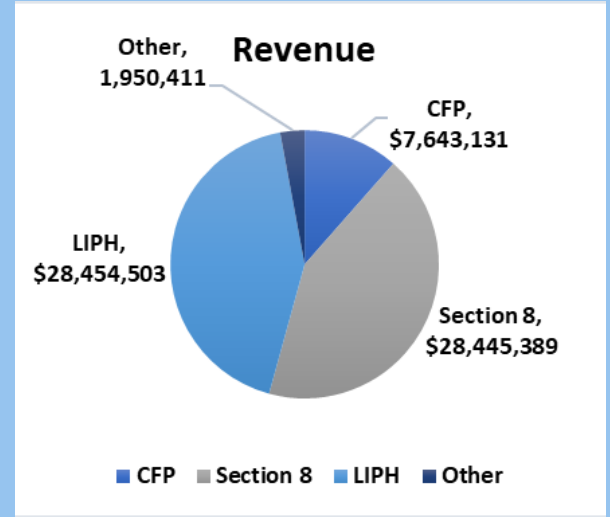
- PHA's Finance Department earned 24.61 out of 25 points in HUD's Public Housing Assessment Center rating system.
- \$1,446,755 in grant funding supported facilities improvements and program operation in FY 22.
- Secured new members to the Resident Advisory Board to ensure residents from all developments have a voice at PHA.
- Implemented a new mass messaging system that allows PHA to communicate with residents via text, voicemail and e-mail; 481 mass messages issued in FY 2022.
- Implemented best practices identified in a 2021 cybersecurity assessment.

# FINANCIALS FYE 6/30/21

## REVENUE

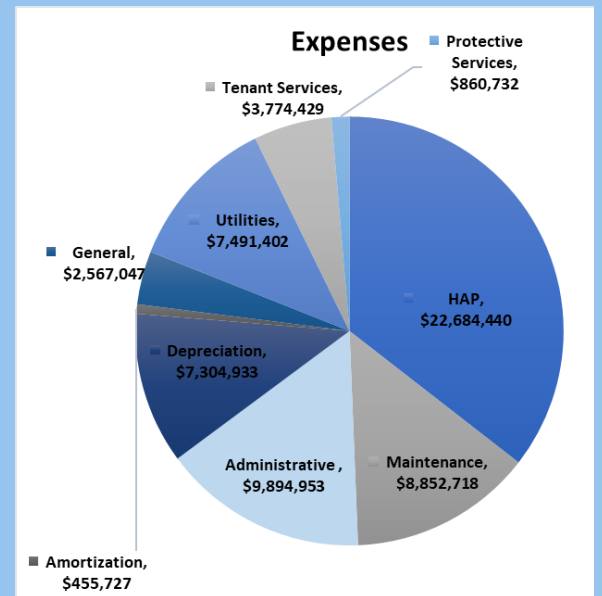
Capital Fund Program.....	\$ 7,643,131
Section 8.....	\$ 28,445,389
Low-Income Public Housing.....	\$ 28,454,503
Other Programs*.....	\$ 1,950,411
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Total revenues.....	\$ 66,493,43

\*Other programs includes federal, state, city, and foundation grants.



## EXPENSES

Housing Assistance Payments (HAP).....	\$ 22,684,440
Ordinary Maintenance.....	\$ 8,852,718
Administrative.....	\$ 9,894,953
Depreciation.....	\$ 7,304,933
Amortization.....	\$ 455,727
General.....	\$ 2,567,047
Utilities.....	\$ 7,491,402
Tenant Services.....	\$ 3,774,429
Protective Services.....	\$ 860,732
<hr/>	
Total Expenses.....	\$ 63,886,381



FY 2021 is the most recent fiscal year with audited financials.

The difference between Revenue and Expenses reflects HUD Cares Act funding to be expended in FYE 6/30/22.



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

Goods & Services  
Purchased

**\$6,586,592**

Maintenance  
Contracts

**\$853,720**

Construction  
Contracts

**\$4,532,735**

Rental Voucher  
Subsidies to  
Landlords

**\$22.7  
Million**

Number of Families  
Served by PHA  
Housing Programs

**5,613  
Families**

Number of People  
Served by PHA  
Housing Programs

**12,219  
People**

Number of Persons Employed by PHA

**232 People**

Family Self-Sufficiency Program  
Participants with Increased Income

**62%**

Utilization of Voucher Subsidy

**99%**

PHA Public Housing Occupancy Level

**98%**



[www.provhousing.org](http://www.provhousing.org)



(401) 751-6400



100 Broad Street,  
Providence RI 02903



@provhousing