



Housing Authority of Cook County

NEWS

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THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF COOK COUNTY RELEASES 2016 YEAR END HIGHLIGHTS

Agency Remains Committed to Housing Most Vulnerable & Improving Quality of Life for All Families

(Cook County) – The Housing Authority of Cook County (HACC) today released top 2016 highlights, and reiterated its mission of providing affordable housing and improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable.

In 2016, the HACC met all Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulatory compliance standards and continued to make smart investments by leveraging more than \$100 million from non-public housing resources to rehabilitate its housing portfolio.

Completed investment plans included the rehabilitation of two low-income public housing buildings in Evanston – the Jane Perlman and Victor Walchirk apartment buildings - which are the first senior/disabled HACC high rise buildings to be completely rehabilitated. Perlman and Walchirk were built in 1978. The rehabilitation investments are valued at more than \$25 million and are the first in Cook County to utilize the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program. The Albert Goedke and Armond King apartment buildings in Skokie are currently under construction.

Plans are also underway to rehabilitate 750 units of affordable housing within the south suburban sites of Robbins, Harvey, Park Forest, Ford and Chicago Heights. The \$74 million investment will be the largest public works project for minority and low-income south suburban communities at a time when affordable housing is growing increasingly scarce.

In addition to investing in infrastructure, the HACC continued to make human capital investments for its most vulnerable residents a priority. Through its unwavering support to provide help for victims of domestic violence, the HACC allocated 27 housing vouchers to the YWCA for domestic violence survivors who have short- and long- term housing needs.

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The HACC opened wait lists for the first time since 2009 at family sites in Ford Heights and Chicago Heights. Under the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, an additional 200 families were issued vouchers and were able to secure safe, affordable housing with the rental assistance provided by the voucher. Despite Federal funding cuts, the HACC increased its voucher utilization from 12,783 vouchers in 2015 to 14,500 in 2016, achieving maximum utilization within the HCV Program.

Building upon the Agency's goal to educate and empower residents to move to opportunity areas with better schools, transportation and jobs, the HACC expanded its mobility counseling and landlord outreach programs to increase participation and awareness in defined areas of greater opportunity. To date, the HACC has successfully moved 62 families, including 96 children to dozens of opportunity areas throughout suburban Cook County.

Under the HACC's Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program, the HACC continued to close the gap for low income minorities to complete the homeownership program. Through the FSS program, more than \$20 million was allocated to assist future residents in the process of purchasing and maintaining a home. In 2016, nine low income residents have become proud homeowners. Since 2005, 61 low income residents have become homeowners.

The HACC also collaborated with the Workforce Development Agency and the Robbins Community Help Organization and hosted two job fairs attracting more than 500 residents countywide to the Robbins site. Resume workshops, training and job opportunities for Section 3 residents were available with immediate hiring on the spot.

Beginning in October 2016, free legal workshops for residents were made available at all HACC family sites under a Juvenile Re-entry Assistance Program grant. Services include expungement of juvenile & adult records; sealing of criminal records; waivers or certificates for work; and free, confidential legal consultations with an attorney. Public housing authorities and legal services organizations are collaborating by helping public housing applicants or residents between the ages of 18 and 24 expunge their arrest records.

Complementing the Agency's self- sufficiency goals is the investment in education. Seventeen disadvantaged students were accepted into the HACC Scholar's Promise Program dedicated to improving the quality of life for young adults. The students reside at HACC properties or receive housing vouchers and have successfully completed their first semester at Prairie State College.

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The Agency's commitment to help homeless families was launched as a pilot program called *Families First*. The *Families First* pilot was developed with the assistance of the HACC's Housing Choice Voucher Program and HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant Program. The pilot program is the first of its kind for Cook County and is designed to help 100 families on the verge of becoming homeless to obtain housing assistance, including support services to re-build lives and return to self-sufficiency within a two-year timeframe. Eleven families have been housed since the program launched in spring of 2016.

The Housing Authority of Cook County also marked another milestone by becoming the first and largest public housing agency in Illinois to implement a no-smoking policy at **all** of its public housing sites - one year in advance of the HUD mandated rule.

Diversity goals remained a top priority for 2016 and the HACC continued to increase its MBE/WBE participation goals and recorded more than \$2 million in expenditures towards minority firms. Minority hiring and providing minority business opportunities will be a top administrative priority for 2017.

The Housing Authority of Cook County is the second largest public housing agency in Illinois and owns and operates 23 housing properties.

For more information about the Housing Authority of Cook County, please visit us at www.thehacc.org; www.facebook.com/theHACC or www.twitter.com/theHACCTweets.

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