

STRONGER FOR THE CHALLENGE

A resilient CHA innovates

2021
Progress
Report



Delivering on our mission in new ways

The past year was a year of change – specifically how we delivered on our mission. The challenges posed by COVID-19 not only strengthened our core commitment, they inspired us to be creative in finding ways to serve our residents and community. In rising to the challenge, we took the CHA to the next level.



Executive Director's Message

To the Chelsea Community:

2021 was a very challenging year at the Chelsea Housing Authority (CHA) as we continued to address the lingering effects of COVID -19.

One of the main challenges: Adapting to serving our applicants and residents remotely via technology. While our communication systems and delivery processes changed, our mission remained constant in serving the needs of low-income elderly, disabled and families in our community – helping them live more independently while aging in place.

Focused on our mission, the CHA continued to *move forward*.

This progress report updates and highlights key partnerships and programs, and the innovative technologies that have enhanced service delivery. For example, new electronic messaging boards improve communications throughout our developments. We can now inform residents via English and Spanish robo-calls. Residents and landlords can sign documents electronically on our new interactive website. What's more, we are lowering CHA utility costs thanks to our Net-Metering solar energy contract with our partner Lodestar. A related improvement, providing internet access at our Prattville and Fitzpatrick family developments, will further increase communication and information availability thanks to a Wi-Fi grant from Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

We continue to move forward improving our infrastructure with the remodeling of 56 elderly/disabled units at Union Park and the \$150M redevelopment of our Innes Apartments on Central Ave.

Also of note for the year, we recognize and highlight the contributions of our Resident of the Year, Mildred Valentin Torres; the work of our Section 8 department, which earned the CHA High Performer status from HUD; and the success of an FSS graduate who purchased a home.

Through the leadership of our Board of Commissioners and the commitment and dedication of our staff and community partners, the CHA is committed to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing with adequate supportive services so that all our residents can continue to move forward.

Regards,

Albert R. Ewing

Albert R. Ewing
Executive Director



CHA Commissioners

Our commissioners provided exceptional ideas and guidance over the past year.



Bertram Taverna
Chair



Juan Vega
Vice Chair



Sharon Caulfield
Treasurer



Betzaida Acevedo
Assistant Treasurer



Antonio Hernandez
Member

Union Park modernization moves to the finish line

The Union Park project is nearing completion. The excitement is building toward a ribbon cutting that officially introduces needed improvements such as wheel-chair accessibility and a community room upgrade.

Initiated in 2016, the full modernization of the 56-unit development for the elderly and individuals with disabilities will enable residents to age in place. It has been funded by a \$7,128,450 Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development ModPHASE grant, the purpose of which is to preserve and improve existing public housing and expand resident access to supportive services.

Breaking ground in the fall of 2020, the full modernization project (spanning apartments, common spaces and grounds) has proceeded smoothly. Residents can soon appreciate this community asset featuring:

- Exterior door and window replacements
- Interior painting
- Kitchen and bath replacement
- New flooring
- Mechanical improvements such as plumbing, electrical switches and wiring
- Baseboard heating and thermostat replacement and new fire protection systems
- New electronic door access system for all building doors
- Community room improvements
- Exterior improvements including new lines for the fire suppression system and asphalt re-grading for ADA accessibility
- Two new ADA Accessible Units converted from two existing units





Resident of the Year

MILDRED VALENTIN-TORRES

Long-time CHA Margolis Building resident Mildred Valentin-Torres has, over the years, applied her past business experience as a legal executive assistant to helping the Margolis community. Mildred's tenure on the Margolis Resident Council has included many years as its president. Thanks to her advocacy, leadership and relationship-building skills, Margolis residents have enjoyed Thanksgiving dinners, summer BBQs, holiday gatherings and many other activities. She has been instrumental in raising money for events via outside donations (while turning the Margolis community room kitchen into a great space to raise funds). She also assisted the CHA in coordinating trainings for resident councils from the Mel King Institute as well as Mass Union of Public Housing Tenants.

The business-minded Mildred has kept meticulous track of donations, ensuring transparency and accountability, and the seasonal color and design of her financial binders provide insight into her joyful artistic side.

While she is stepping back from her duties as president, her friends and neighbors can count on continued advice and goodwill. We are happy to name Mildred as Resident of the Year for 2021.

Technically speaking: Messaging boards

Some of the most obvious and visual upgrades to the CHA communications landscape are the large information screens situated at our Margolis, Buckley and Union Park senior/disabled residences and at our main office and maintenance buildings.

While most people take technology updates for granted – everything from new websites, to new phone apps, to virtual interaction with organizations – seniors and those with lower fixed incomes are often left out. For us, 2021 presented an opportunity to bridge that “digital divide.”

The five new messaging boards help close the gap by providing residents with the information they need, such as COVID-19 protocols, resident activities and information about construction or service disruptions. Easily and quickly updated, they offer large, readable fonts, English/Spanish text and adaptability by location for complete message relevancy.

Residents are saying that the boards help them stay up to date. Our partner organizations say that disseminating information about their on-site events is a lot easier and more efficient. Together with the CHA’s robo-call phone system and emails, residents are in the know! What’s more, we plan to integrate video for an even more comprehensive information resource.



Technology explosion

There's no other way to say it – technological improvements exploded across the CHA throughout 2021. We implemented technology solutions to meet the challenges posed by COVID and lockdowns – and in the process established a firm tech foundation for the future!

The tech advancements of 2021 are saving time, costs and minimizing the need for face-to-face interaction. Examples include:

- The applicant process for public housing applicants has been expedited with DocuSign, which enables residents to sign electronically
- E-newsletters are making producing and distributing information much easier
- Residents can now pay rent online
- New wi-fi connectivity, which helps enable all of the above, will be implemented thanks to a grant and a collaboration with the city and the MAPC
- Landlords will soon be able to use a new portal on our website for information updates



Saluting Family Self Sufficiency graduates

CHA is proud to offer programs to our residents and advocate on their behalf. One of the most successful programs we have had over the past few decades has been the Federal Self Sufficiency Program (FSS.) Created in the 1980s, FSS is a federal program for our federal tenants designed to help them define self-sufficiency goals and objectives, and offer coaching and resources to reach their goals. Graduates from the FSS program have gone on to complete college, buy homes and advance in careers. FSS has been such a success that when Massachusetts created a pilot state version called the Self Sufficiency Program (SSP) we eagerly applied and are in the process of building out the first year of recruitment and coaching.

Our Supportive Services Department manages both programs, which have capacity for more than 50 CHA residents and voucher holders. On the federal side, FSS Coordinator Carmen Torres walks participants through the process from start to finish and works with organizations such as banks when residents need specific guidance or assistance. On the state side, Support Services Manager Matt Frank and Property Manager Carmen Ortega recruit and interact with residents who are then set up with TND-Connect for coaching and goal planning.



Carmen Lima, former CHA resident, sits in front of the house she was able to purchase thanks to support from FSS.



Property Manager Carmen Ortega signs up a resident for SSP.

Resident services improve quality of resident life

The CHA partners with multiple non-profits and government agencies to bring our residents much needed services and assistance – with the aim of improving quality of life. All of these partnerships and programs have value, whether the focus is on systemic issues or immediate resident needs.

But our long partnership with Chelsea Community Connections (CCC) was particularly valuable during the COVID pandemic and its lockdowns. Cara Cogliano and the CCC team worked with our property managers and staff to distribute essential household items to residents in need while also building an onsite presence in Prattville where a member of their staff began holding office hours to learn what CCC can do to bring residents needed items.

We salute their work for CHA residents as well as their extensive work in the community at large. The CCC ensures families have access to warm jackets, household items and the other goods that many of us take for granted. During the height of the pandemic lockdowns, CCC obtained and organized the distribution of thousands of diapers for families when other sources dried up and supply chains were breaking.

Surely, our efforts with Chelsea Community Connections help make Chelsea the best it can be! For that we name them Partner of the Year for 2021.

Note: For more information, visit chelseacc.org



A circular photograph showing a large, light-colored sign with the text "CHELSEA HOUSING AUTHORITY" on the top line and "INNES APARTMENTS" on the bottom line. The sign is mounted on a concrete pillar. In the background, there is a brick building and some greenery.

CHELSEA HOUSING AUTHORITY INNES APARTMENTS

Innes Apartments redevelopment project

We made great planning progress in 2021 to transform our Innes Apartment complex into a high-value community asset in keeping with Chelsea's downtown renaissance. The mix of housing, business, recreation and resident services is powered by a collaboration between the Commonwealth, the City of Chelsea, the Joseph J. Corcoran and John M. Corcoran Companies, and the Innes Resident Association. Project highlights:

- All 96 existing units will be replaced
- We will add 40 new units for workforce housing (households earning 120% or less than AMI) plus 194 market-rate units inter-mingled throughout the property
- The \$150 million redevelopment will create an accessible, mixed-income, mixed-use community
- The project will generate over \$125 million in new revenue and economic development for the city and create hundreds of construction and permanent jobs
- 40 R smart growth zoning for transit-oriented development with Silver line transportation access for less reliance on cars and easy access to job centers
- 256 on-site parking spots

More than residences, the new Innes Apartment complex is all about creating a comprehensive community asset. It will feature:

- A range of affordable solutions for current residents and newcomers, including market-rate transit-oriented housing
- Business opportunities with small business retail and a daycare center
- A modern playground
- Robust resident services focused on job training, educational services and youth activities

The redevelopment team is working steadily toward an anticipated summer 2022 construction kickoff.

Turkey Giveaway with Innes Council



A Day in the Life



Dr Xeres and Donald Kingsbury during vaccine drive



Food Distribution at Pan Y Café by La Colaborativa



Vaccine bus at Prattville



Sergeant Star Chung showing off her Pride patches



Food Distribution for kids by StockPot Malden and the Shah Foundation at the Prattville site

PROFILE:

Leased Housing Department

Manager Iris Perez-Feliciano and the Leased Housing team administer several leased housing programs from HUD at the federal level and DHCD at the state level. These programs subsidize the rent of low-income families, the elderly and disabled residents who are awarded vouchers and find their own single-family home, townhouse or apartment.

In recent years, the team has also taken on the portfolios of neighboring communities like Saugus and Reading. The department's expertise and professionalism are evident by the recent influx of government vouchers awarded to the CHA.

The leased housing portfolio includes 569 federal Section 8 vouchers throughout the Boston Metropolitan, Lowell and Lawrence areas, which include:

- Veteran vouchers
- Enhanced vouchers
- 150 vouchers administered for the Saugus Housing Authority
- 125 vouchers administered for the Reading Housing Authority
- 108 vouchers for Amesbury Housing Authority
- 40 vouchers assisting non-elderly persons with disabilities

The department also administers 47 MRVP vouchers issued by the state. They include:

- Mobile vouchers
- Project-based vouchers
- DMH vouchers
- AHVP vouchers





Solar farms are generating clean power for the CHA.

Solar commitment; solar savings

The CHA meets a sizable portion of its electrical consumption with solar generation. This collaboration with the DHCD began in 2016 and has now produced a track record. Beyond the support for clean electrical generation, our contract with solar electricity provider Loadstar saves the agency about \$75,000 annually!

Drawing from two solar farms located in Acton and Watertown, the CHA receives deductions/credits on our bills from the main electric company. The CHA then pays Loadstar a specific amount per kilowatt produced at a lower rate than the main electric company. We see the biggest benefit in the sunny summer months – and even received one bill where solar generation resulted in a \$0.00 bill!

As Executive Director Albert Ewing notes, “The CHA has found this first project to be successful and is looking forward to beginning a new contract by the middle of 2022. Saving money and helping our planet is a winning combination in my book.”

Staff by department

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Albert R. Ewing, *Executive Director*
Diane L. Cohen, *Deputy Director*
Diane Goodrich, *Administrative Assistant*

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Arnaldo L. Velazquez, *Director of Finance and Administration*
Leslie Esturban, *AP/AR Clerk*
Geanna Cohen, *AP/AR Clerk*

LEASED HOUSING DEPARTMENT

Iris Perez-Feliciano, *Manager of Leased Housing*
Chyneatha Perry, *Program Representative*
Celina Hernandez, *Program Representative*
David Hospedales, *Program Representative*

OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

Paul R. Nowicki, *Director of Operations*
Jacqueline Matos, *Property Manager*
Alexandra Jimenez, *Property Manager*
Carmen Ortega, *Property Manager*

OCCUPANCY DEPARTMENT

Ineudira Barbosa, *Manager of Occupancy*
Krystina Sunsini, *Occupancy Specialist*

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Matthew Frank, *Manager of Supportive Services*
Carmen Torres, *FSS Coordinator*

MAINTENANCE AND MODERNIZATION DEPARTMENT

Gregory V. Beatrice, *Director of Maintenance, Modernization & Procurement*
James M. Krasco, *Supervisor of Maintenance & Modernization*
Iris Rivera, *Maintenance Coordinator*
Anthony V. Tiro, *Clerk of the Works/Inspector*
John Faulstich, *Maintenance – Plumber*
James R. Granara, *Maintenance – Electrician*
Ibro Omeragic, *Maintenance – Carpenter*
Wayne Brooks, *Maintenance – Painter*
Eric Montefusco, *Maintenance – Painter*
Sean D. Landry -- *Maintenance – Mechanic/Carpenter*
Song Suong, *Maintenance – Mechanic*
Angelo Zirpolo, *Maintenance – Mechanic*
Damon S. Webster, *Maintenance – Mechanic*
Guillermo Romero, *Maintenance – Groundskeeper/Custodian/Mechanic*
Anthony Dichiara, *Maintenance – Mechanic*
Jason Rosario, *Maintenance – Groundskeeper/Custodian/Mechanic*
Roberto Figueroa, *Maintenance – Groundskeeper/Custodian/Mechanic*
Mark Thompson, *Maintenance – Groundskeeper/Custodian/Mechanic*
Ana Chirinos, *Maintenance – Groundskeeper/Custodian*
Dennis Bankus, *Maintenance – Groundskeeper/Custodian*
George Travis, *Maintenance – Groundskeeper/Custodian*



Works in progress

Some of these projects started in 2021, will be completed in 2022. Others will start and be completed in 2022.

ModPHASE - This \$7 million dollar project, on-schedule for a first-quarter 2022 completion, is devoted to remodeling six buildings and community rooms.

Margolis elevators - Replacement of the two elevators began in April 2021. They are now in service. Additional improvements: solid surface finishes on lobby walls and new flooring for the lobby and entryways.

Buckley/Union Park cameras - Lan-Tel Communications is expected to complete the \$185,296 replacement of the camera system at 14 Bloomingdale Street (plus install new cameras at Union Park) in early 2022.

Prattville Apartments cameras - Lan-Tel Communications is on track to complete this \$294,622 camera system replacement in the first half of 2022.

Prattville floodproofing - MacRitchie Engineering is sealing foundation leaks, upgrading sump pumps and installing barriers at Prattville's maintenance building. Expected completion: July 2022.

54 Locke St Pergola/rear doors - Caruso & McGovern Construction is building an outdoor meeting space in the rear of the administration building at 54 Locke Street and replacing two doors.

Buckley/Fitzpatrick paving - Scheduled for a spring 2022 start, Cassidy Corp. will re-pave the driveways at 14 Bloomingdale Street plus three Fitzpatrick development parking areas.

Buckley mailbox replacement and upgrade - We anticipate this \$41,000 project to begin sometime in 2022 and take 15 days to complete.

Buckley carport sprinkler system replacement - This project, planned for 2022, will update the sprinkler systems at the Buckley ground-level parking area at 14 Bloomingdale Street.





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*Special thanks to Matt Frank
for his stellar photography.*