

# Inspired by Possibilities

*A renaissance in public housing*



2022 ANNUAL REPORT



# Possibilities become practical results

The Chelsea Housing Authority mission is focused on affordable housing. However, we see the opportunity for more. That is, to create and manage public housing that supports our city's growth and prosperity. We demonstrate some of the ways in which we work toward that ideal in our report on the Innes Apartment renovation, a centerpiece development that will provide housing and economic benefits for residents and the city at large. We also highlight an outstanding resident and partner organization who show how the drive to succeed and the programs that aid it are firmly supported here at the CHA. There is more, and we invite you to read all about it!

## Executive Director's Message

To the Chelsea Community:

July 2022 saw the completion, through the ModPHASE Program, of the \$7 million Union Park modernization. The modernization focused on new kitchens and baths at the 56-unit state elderly development. Also, after six years of planning and designing, we broke ground in October 2022 on the \$155 million Innes Apartments redevelopment as part of the DHCD's Partnership to Expand Housing Opportunities (PEHO) Program.

This Annual Progress Report profiles our Occupancy/Admissions Department and the important work that it does daily, and recognizes our resident of the year, Rosa Portillo, who immigrated to the United States from EL Salvador. We highlight CONNECT, our Partner of the Year, who provides resident services for our new state Self Sufficiency Program. We also say farewell and happy retirement to two longtime maintenance employees with 62 years of combined employment with the CHA.

As I enter retirement after serving the Chelsea Housing Authority for the past 22 years, with the last 11 years as Executive Director, I want to thank the CHA Staff, the Board of Commissioners, our Resident Leaders, DHCD, HUD, City Officials, and our Community Partners in helping us to restore public trust in the Chelsea Housing Authority. It has been said, "What you do for yourself dies with you when you leave this world; what you do for others lives on forever."

I wish the Chelsea Housing Authority continued success in serving others in the Chelsea Community.

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*



# Innes Apartments project breaks ground



After years of planning and designing, the Innes Apartments entered the construction phase in October 2022.

The redevelopment/repurposing project is the first in the DHCD’s Partnership to Expand Housing Opportunities (PEHO) program, which establishes public-private partnerships between Massachusetts’ housing authorities and developers to create mixed-income communities.

The Innes complex was constructed in the 1950s and has suffered from decades of delayed modernization. The capital needed for modernization has far exceeded available public funds. However, by partnering with private developers, a renaissance such as the new Innes community becomes possible. Innes residents will live in privately managed homes in a mixed-income community while remaining public housing clients who retain all of their current public benefits and protections.

CHA Executive Director Al Ewing called the groundbreaking “the culmination of years of collaboration and hard work. However, this celebration is just the beginning of new lives for our residents and future generations of people

who depend on the Chelsea Housing Authority. I am proud of the team we put together who put our residents first and equally proud of the dedication and commitment of our residents who spent countless hours advocating for themselves and their neighbors to ensure these new homes will meet their needs – the stewardship of this team will be an example for generations to come.”



## FAST FACTS:

- The eight apartment buildings will be demolished and replaced with a 350,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art community
- Innes Apartments will provide 96 public housing units for its current residents, an additional 40 units of middle-income housing for new families, and 194 market-rate apartments near public transportation
- Innes will include onsite amenities for residents and ground-floor retail space to activate the Central Avenue Smart Growth area
- The \$155 million in funding came from public agencies, DHCD, the MassWorks program, the City of Chelsea, Cambridge Savings Bank (and participants Eastern Bank and Harbor One Bank), Marcus Partners, JMC and JJC
- Lead contractor, Plumb House, Inc., projects move-in for early 2024

# Resident of the Year

## ROSA PORTILLO



Rosa Portillo immigrated to the United States from El Salvador after spending her youth living in a small house with no electricity and limited resources. Having experienced hardships upon moving to the United States, the unemployed Rosa applied to the CHA for an apartment for her and her family. In public housing she found stability and was able to start rebuilding her life, but has strived for more. When she found out about the state's self-sufficiency program (SSP) offered at the CHA, she was one of the first to sign up. Via SSP, she has succeeded in learning conversational English, budgeting and finance. She also learned about TND's CONNECT program. Taking full advantage of the program's offerings, Rosa soon found work at a private company. In short order, Rosa's enthusiasm and dedication earned her an award from her employer.

Working with a finance and employment coach, Rosa took educational classes, accessed technology and built her

previously non-existent credit. In just a few years, she built a strong credit history and credit score that qualifies her for loans. With her eyes set on homeownership, Rosa is currently building an SSP escrow account, and she continues to learn skills from English to computers and software. She is setting an example for her children about the importance of seizing opportunities and working hard to achieve a better life.

In addition, Rosa is planning to learn to drive a car with the goal of expanding her employment reach and quickening the dream of homeownership. With new-found confidence, she also ran for and was elected to the new Prattville Resident Council. In short, Rosa is building the foundation for a bright future. We are proud of what Rosa Portillo has done through our SSP program and that is why we have named her Resident of the Year for 2022.



# Partner of the Year

## CONNECT



CONNECT is a collaboration of resident service programs such as tax prep, workforce development, financial literacy, continuing education support, assistance with rental support applications and employment coaching. Serving Chelsea residents for over a decade, CONNECT has partnered with CHA staff to help residents build a better, independent life. This long and strong relationship made CONNECT the obvious choice to be our partner as we applied for a new state Self Sufficiency Program grant.

Now in a second year of partnership, our team has exceeded enrollment requirements and we are already seeing residents break through. Several of the 40 SSP participants have made major career advancements. This includes one of our first participants, Rosa Portillo, who has demonstrated how participants can compound their success by availing themselves of the additional self-help programs of CONNECT such as the financial coaching offered by Laura Lucas and her team.



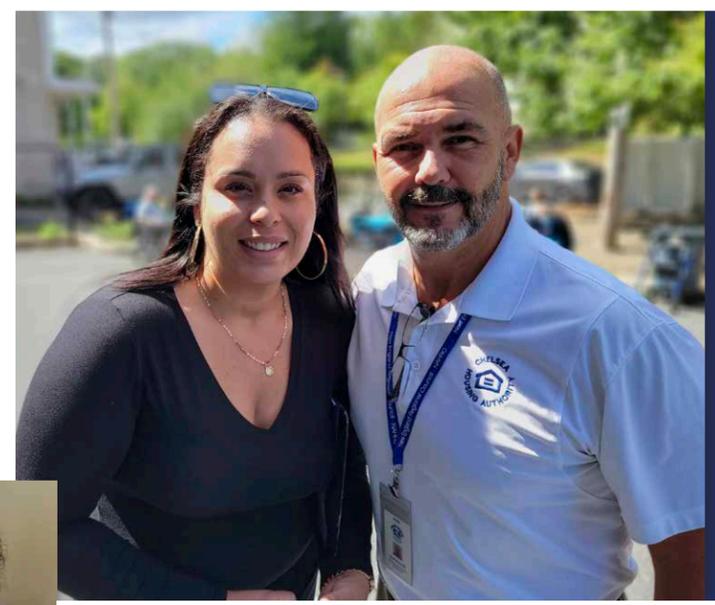
*"This program gives people the encouragement to get into work and develop a savings habit."*

**- Laura Lucas, Senior Financial Coach Manager**

The CHA is well structured to support resident success: Matt Frank's Supportive Services Department meets monthly with CONNECT's Financial Coach Manager Laura Lucas, Property Manager Carmen Ortega who helps recruit residents, and Carmen Torres who helps manage FSS and SSP for the CHA. Together, they coordinate support for participants as well as recruit residents for the program. Because of their strong partnership and effectiveness, we are proud to name CONNECT Partner of the Year for 2022.



Day in the Life





Al's tenure was one of rescue, and then forward motion. For example, he innovatively secured PEHO re-development funds that enabled the Innes public-private project to proceed, and achieved the goal of helping elderly CHA residents age in place through ModPHASE funding.

As former Maintenance Director Richie Russell said, "Thanks to Al's tenacity, what happened with Innes was a first in the Commonwealth. Al ensured that the shovels hit the ground before retiring."



## Al Ewing retires

Al Ewing's first day as CHA executive director back in 2000 was something else. State and federal investigators crowded the CHA offices asking questions, making demands... and they would be there relentlessly for the next two years.

Many naysayers said the CHA, in receivership, was beyond saving. Al was there to turn things around, and met plenty of resistance for it.

But turn things around the former Army man did. He took on the challenge, never strayed – and prevailed. Al now leaves a 2023 CHA squarely focused on the mission of benefiting residents, staff and the city.

Before leading the CHA, Al held management positions at Digital Equipment Corporation and the Department of Education. This experience plus his military discipline steeled him to the task ahead.

But more so, it was his character. "We are going to do things right, and we are going to do the right thing." And, "Don't mistake kindness for weakness." These Al Ewing quotes get to the heart of the man who:

- In just over 100 days got a better receivership to satisfy the demands of the authorities
- Methodically transformed indebtedness to financial stability
- Through actions, regained the trust of community, staff, residents and city authorities

It's all about leadership. Deputy Director Dianne Cohen says of Al, "He has always led by example and allowed his staff the space to grow and learn and develop. I heard 'Be hard on the problem, fair on the staff,' regularly. He could truly team-build, and then judiciously look at a situation from all angles to make a decision. But once he makes up his mind, that's it, he holds his ground."

We thank Al Ewing for leading the way to make the CHA the gold standard of Massachusetts housing authorities. We know his retirement plans include lots of family time, travel, reading, and helping a nephew start a business. Enjoy.

# PROFILE

## Occupancy Department

The Occupancy Department is often the first contact that prospective residents make with the CHA. It is a department focused on fairness in the process that spans prospect screening to leasing. Led by Ineudira Barbosa and her team of Krystina Sunsini and Chantal Cuevas, the department often hosts interns who train here then go on to work in other CHA departments after absorbing the foundational mission of providing all in need fair and equitable access to quality housing.

The department team members have constantly sought ways to improve job efficiency, and ease processes and increase accessibility for clients. For example, they enthusiastically reduced paper use, and now handle over 85 percent of the department's paperwork electronically – this was particularly beneficial during Covid lockdown and social distancing protocols. The team focuses too on learning new and better administrative methods as demonstrated in the 15 professional training sessions they attended in 2022.



### IN 2022, THE OCCUPANCY DEPARTMENT:

- Screened over 2000 applicants
- Reviewed 400 priority applications
- Processed over 400 hardcopy applications in addition to online applications
- Housed about 62 elderly and disabled applicants in public housing and an additional 15 families at our family sites
- Issued 20 AHVP vouchers
- Relocated 60 Public Housing tenants for the PEHO project and 56 Union Park tenants for the ModPHASE Project



## Staff by department

### EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Albert R. Ewing, *Executive Director*  
 Diane L. Cohen, *Deputy Director*  
 Diane Goodrich, *Administrative Assistant*  
 Paul Nowicki, *Director of Operations*

### PROPERTY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

Alexandra Jimenez, *Property Manager Margolis, Union Park and Buckley*  
 Jacqueline Matos, *Property Manager, Scrivano and Mace*  
 Carmen Ortega, *Property Manager, Fitzpatrick and Prattville*  
 Raja Khallaayoun, *Recertification Specialist*

### OCCUPANCY DEPARTMENT

Ineudira Barbosa, *Occupancy/Admissions Manager*  
 Krystina Sunsini, *Occupancy Specialist*  
 Chantal Cuevas, *Administrative Assistant*

### SUPPORTIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Matthew Frank, *Supportive Services Manager*  
 Carmen Torres, *Family Self Sufficiency Coordinator*

### FINANCE DEPARTMENT

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

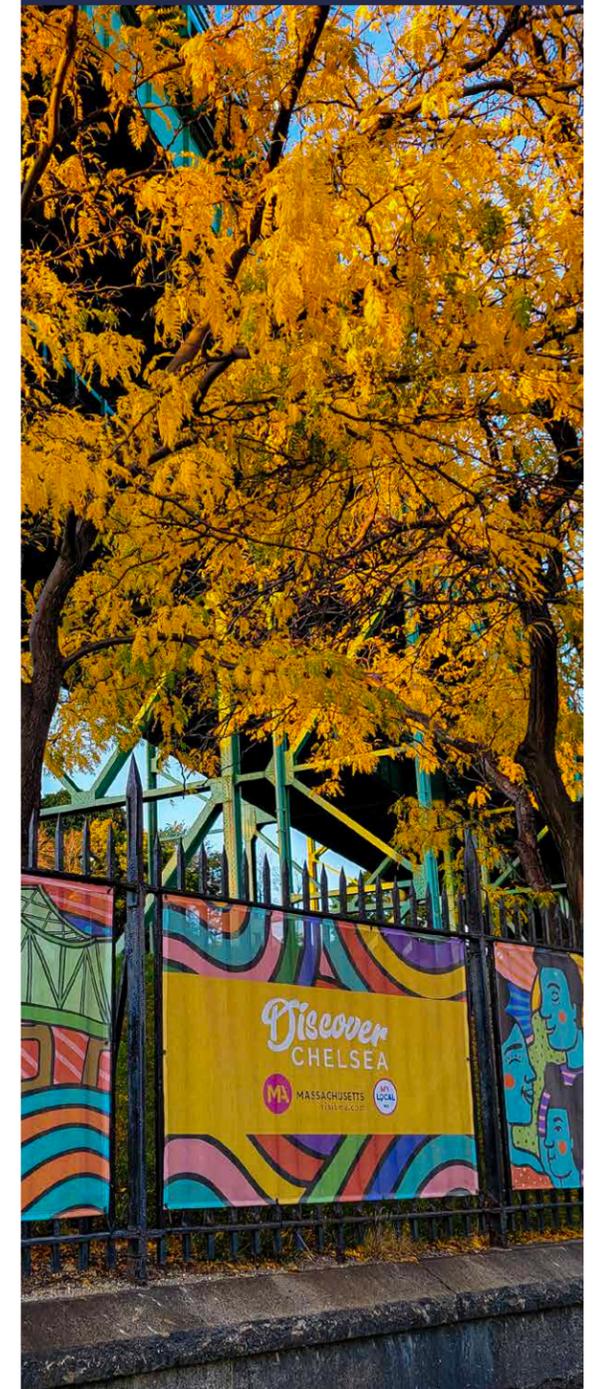
### LEASED HOUSING DEPARTMENT

Iris Perez-Feliciano, *Director of Leased Housing*  
 Celina Hernandez, *Program Representative*  
 David Hospedales, *Program Representative*  
 Chneatha Perry, *Program Representative*  
 Lillian Serrano, *Program Representative*

### MAINTENANCE AND MODERNIZATION DEPARTMENT

Gregory Beatrice, *Director of Maintenance and Procurement*  
 James Krasco, *Maintenance and Modernization Supervisor*  
 Eric Montefusco, *Working Foreman*  
 Ibro Omeragic, *Mechanic/Carpenter*  
 Song Soung, *Maintenance Mechanic*  
 Wayne Brooks, *Mechanic/Painter*  
 Dennis Bankus, *Mechanic/Painter*  
 Sean Landry, *Mechanic/Carpenter*  
 James Granara, *Mechanic/Electrician*  
 Damon Webster, *Maintenance Mechanic*

Guillermo Romero, *Groundskeeper/Custodian/Mechanic*  
 Jason Rosario, *Groundskeeper/Custodian/Mechanic*  
 Anthony DiChiara, *Maintenance Mechanic*  
 Roberto Figueroa, *Groundskeeper/Custodian/Mechanic*  
 Mark Thompson, *Groundskeeper/Custodian/Mechanic*  
 Ana Chirinos, *Groundskeeper/Custodian*  
 George Travis, *Groundskeeper/Custodian*  
 Keithan McKoy, *Groundskeeper/Custodian*  
 Frank Jankowski, *Mechanic/Plumber*





# Retirements

## ANGELO ZIRPOLO

Angelo began his career at CHA in 1986 as a groundkeeper’s custodian and over time he advanced to be CHA’s top maintenance mechanic. After 35 years of dedicated work, Angelo retired in August of 2022.

A conscientious worker, Angelo was dedicated to getting his work done well and ethically. He was always happy to apprentice many of the younger staff members who came after him and pushed them to excel beyond what they thought they were capable of.

Well-liked by the entire staff, his immediate colleagues describe him as friendly and full of humor and life.

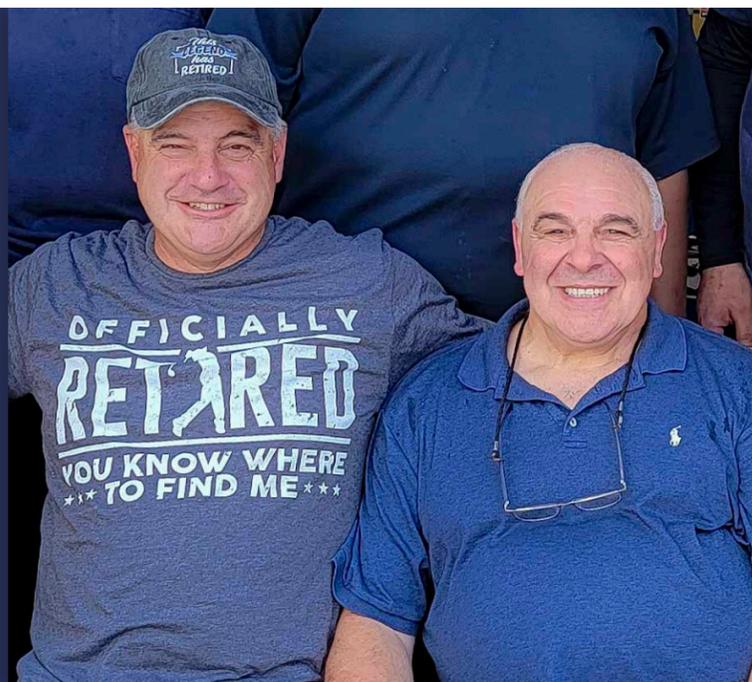
After emigrating from Italy, Angelo settled down in East Boston where he lived for several years. He worked tirelessly to improve the lives of his family and give them every opportunity while never forgetting his Italian roots. This family-oriented man, whose children are the center of his life, counts spending time with his family as his favorite thing to do.

## JOHN FAULSTICH

John served as the CHA’s plumber since 1995 before retiring in August of 2022. In his 27-year career, this top plumber encountered and solved every plumbing problem possible as he provided reliable heat and hot water to nearly 900 units.

John’s co-workers called him the most interesting and kind person in the room. A family man with a unique personality, he was known as the man with a plan, always prepared and ready for anything. He developed tight relationships with his fellow team members and looks back fondly at his time with the CHA.

John now plans to spend more time in Maine with his friends and family skiing and snowmobiling. He will also continue to devote time to his kids’ lives and their pastimes, as when he stepped in to coach his son’s soccer team when the team was without a coach. We wish him the best as he enjoys having more time to spend on his favorite things with loved ones.



# Scheduled capital projects

## COMPLETED IN 2022

- ModPHASE, Union Park redevelopment project
- Margolis elevator replacement
- Main office outdoor meeting space project
- Main office HVAC and floor replacement
- Buckley and Fitzpatrick Paving
- Buckley mailbox replacement
- Buckley carport sprinkler replacement
- Buckley façade study
- Prattville interior and exterior camera project
- Buckley interior and exterior camera project

## ON DECK FOR 2023

- Prattville fire alarm replacement
- Buckley fire alarm replacement
- Margolis carport ceiling and plumbing project
- Scrivano, Mace and Margolis window replacements
- Prattville floodproofing project
- Fitzpatrick structural study

## UPCOMING COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

- Prattville internet accessibility project
- Mace basketball court replacement





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