2019 Annual Report
We are pleased to present this annual report showing the St. Paul Public Housing Agency’s continued high performance in managing Housing Choice Vouchers and publicly owned housing. We are proud that the PHA’s housing and services are helping 21,000 St. Paul residents lead better lives.

In 2019 the PHA completed the largest single conversion in the history of HUD’s Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, to move most of the PHA’s “public housing” into a different funding and regulatory framework: HUD’s Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) program. The conversion assures residents, staff and the community that the PHA’s affordable homes and apartments will continue to be managed, maintained and improved to the same high standards, now with stable, predictable funding under long-term contracts with HUD. Most significantly, the PHA’s housing continues to be publicly owned and debt-free.

The simultaneous closing of the eight RAD transactions on October 3, 2019 (shown in photos on p. 14) followed two and a half years of intensive preparation. Staff involved residents throughout the process, sending many written explanations and hosting 42 meetings with residents, most with professional interpreters for several languages. Residents and other stakeholders praised the PHA’s inclusive process. As this report was written the PHA Board and staff are working through the transition year to full PBRA operation, with high hopes for an equally successful future.

Message from our Board Chair and Executive Director

We are pleased to present this annual report showing the St. Paul Public Housing Agency’s continued high performance in managing Housing Choice Vouchers and publicly owned housing. We are proud that the PHA’s housing and services are helping 21,000 St. Paul residents lead better lives.
Hi-Rise residents enjoy a number of health and wellness activities at their building and in their community, through a partnership with St Paul-Ramsey County Public Health’s Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP). Residents are moving more, building social connections, and spending time in nature. Trips to Saint Paul Regional Parks for fishing, nature scavenger hunts, and bird watching are highlights of the summer and fall season with the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Park Ambassadors. Residents have explored Como Regional Park, Hidden Falls Regional Park, Crosby Farm Regional Park, Harriet Island Regional Park and Marydale Park.

“Stop for Me” Crosswalk Safety events, in partnership with the St. Paul Police Department and ACOP, take place at several hi-rises locations due to their proximity to busy city streets. Ward 4 Councilmember Mitra Jalali Nelson and neighbors joined Seal Hi-Rise residents for a Stop for Me event to raise awareness about pedestrian safety and transit access along Territorial Road. Stop for Me events have also taken place along Arlington Avenue, Cleveland Avenue, Dale Street, Marion Street, Payne Avenue, University Avenue and White Bear Avenue at crossing locations identified by residents as high priority for safety. Residents are coming together to improve walkability and safety for everyone in their communities.

“Nature is the best remedy. I’m so happy to be out here instead of cooped up in my apartment,” shared one resident during a summer park trip.

Another resident shared, “I’m bringing my grandkids back here. They are just going to love it!”

The annual Presidents Council Hi-Rise Officers Recognition event brings together hi-rise residents and PHA staff to pay tribute to council officers from the sixteen hi-rises who have volunteered to “improve the quality of life and create a positive living environment” for all residents in their buildings. During the 2019 event, residents shared success stories and received important PHA Board meeting updates from Commissioner John Cardoza, the hi-rise representative to the PHA’s Board of Commissioners. Individual hi-rises were recognized for their support and participation in resident-focused programs. As in previous years, the event took place at the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation’s Wilder Center. Numerous Resident Council officers have participated in the Wilder Neighborhood Leadership Training Program, which has enabled these residents to become stronger leaders in their respective hi-rise communities.
Through some of our more than 100 partnerships, the PHA organized several educational and recreational activities for family sites throughout the year. Adults and youth participated in spring events, National Night Out, gardening, early childhood literacy activities, employment and career fairs and Free Bikes 4 Kidz.

One highlight from 2019 was an invitation from the City of St. Paul to promote early childhood learning. The PHA hired a VISTA member who worked closely with MN Community Care to educate parents about the importance of learning to read at an early age. Parents and youth were also treated to a visit by Mayor Melvin Carter III who attended a Literacy and Resource Fair at McDonough Homes. Youth made bookmarks, story books and eagerly received free books donated by the Free Book Buggie.

The PHA continued its partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension Ramsey County Master Gardener Program. PHA residents that participated in the Garden Mentor Program, taught by Ramsey County Master Gardeners, went on a field trip to Frogtown Farm. They got a tour of the farm, learned about the history, ate some fresh produce, pulled weeds, and had a picnic!

"Bounce Back" is a new PHA initiative with Allina Health that promotes health through happiness, kindness, resiliency and social connections. A pilot Bounce Back program was created with the youth at Roosevelt Homes, combined with PHA Youth Connections weekly summer meals, summer reading program, yoga and movie programs. This collaboration proved successful, with a total of 32 kids signed up in the first six-week program. Bounce Back highlighted a different theme each week, such as kindness, happiness, caring for the environment and building connections with other youth in the community.

In 2019, the PHA and the Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM) partnered on a year-long project to create STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programming for both adult and youth residents. In coordination with all 20 Resident Councils, the PHA Section 3 Coordinator and the SMM trained and supervised a volunteer steering committee comprised of residents from all PHA sites. The residents on the steering committee created, planned, marketed and facilitated the program, accomplishing two goals simultaneously. The programming came directly from residents, for residents; and the steering committee members developed marketable skills in event management. They chose to develop a series of Science Fairs for both family sites and hi-rises. Over the course of several months, they selected the activities, the dates and the locations, created a marketing plan, helped deliver flyers, recruited volunteers, and worked the fairs. It was an extraordinary system-wide collaboration that brought over a hundred residents from all sites to Roosevelt Homes and then to Wilson Hi-Rise. The steering committee is now fully trained to plan and host events into the future.
On Tuesday, August 6, 2019, the PHA partnered with Neighborhood House and St. Paul Parks and Recreation to host another successful National Night Out (NNO) celebration at Dunedin Terrace Family Homes on St. Paul’s West Side. PHA residents and neighbors came together to enjoy the food, music, activities and an informational fair!

Starting in 1984, NNO has been an annual event that brings together neighbors and local law enforcement officers to strengthen relationships and build camaraderie.

This year’s NNO participants included ACOP (the PHA/St. Paul Police Department community policing partnership), Gray Ducks Yoga, Eureka Recycling, Dunedin Family and Hi-Rise Resident Councils and more. Dunedin Hi-Rise and Family residents, PHA staff and community members had a fun-filled day while getting to know their neighbors, community service providers and members of the Saint Paul Police Department.
Five more public housing residents received $1,000 scholarships through the PHA’s George and Nancy Latimer Public Housing Resident Scholarship Program. The scholarships help pay tuition and other school costs for public housing residents and HCV (Section 8) participants who are pursuing post-secondary education. This is the twenty-fourth year that the Board of Commissioners has budgeted for such scholarships. The scholarships are paid from the Building Fund, not from the PHA's HUD funding. The PHA also received an anonymous contribution of $1,000 to help pay for these scholarships. With the current awards, the PHA has awarded 135 scholarships totaling $113,500.

"The St. Paul PHA is thrilled to be receiving 96 additional Mainstream Vouchers, which are specifically dedicated to non-elderly persons with a disability, who need a stable place to call home. The PHA appreciates the ten non-profit and mission-driven service agencies who partnered with us in submitting our application. These agencies will refer clients to the PHA who are most in need, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and then assist them in finding and locating a stable place to live with their newly awarded voucher."

- Dominic Mitchell, PHA’s Housing Choice Voucher Programs Director

In Fiscal Year 2019, the PHA Commissioners Scholarship Fund awarded $675 to employees for educational purposes, bringing the total amount awarded during the fund’s history to $15,360. To distribute the latest pool of money available, in July 2018 and February 2019 Human Resources notified employees that scholarship funds were available. Three employees submitted requests totaling $657.

In 1998 Commissioner Richard Willits started the scholarship fund by giving back his per diem payments for attending Board meetings, saying he wanted to help PHA employees pay education-related expenses that are not covered by the PHA’s tuition reimbursement plan. The tradition was continued by his successors, former Commissioners John Wilking and Marty Strub (who contributed a total of $8,800), and now by Commissioner Pete Verdeja (who has contributed $1,575 to date).
On July 31, 2019, NAHRO (National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials) informed the St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) that its Merit award entry, Community Solar Gardens, Sustainable Energy Use, won a National Award of Excellence. NAHRO’s Awards of Excellence highlight ways in which housing agencies make a difference in their communities.

PHA Commissioners and staff attended the NAHRO’s National Conference & Exhibition in San Antonio, TX on October 10, 2019 to accept the award.

“We are so pleased that NAHRO chose to recognize the PHA for its pioneering work in the area of Community Solar Gardens. We hope that this encourages other housing authorities to look for green energy opportunities. It is better for our environment, and a way to save money and reinvest the savings in affordable housing preservation and development.”

-PHA Deputy Executive Director/Governor Louise Seeba

The PHA owns and manages 4,273 units of affordable housing and is therefore a large consumer of energy. The Community Solar Garden program was created by the Minnesota Legislature, and it provides Minnesotans with convenient opportunities to invest in renewable resources. Under the program, the PHA entered in a 25-year community solar garden agreement with Geronimo Energy to provide 10 hi-rises and the PHA’s Central Administrative Office building with 100 percent solar energy. The 10 hi-rises provide affordable housing to 1,600 low income seniors and other individuals.

The agreement will save the PHA an estimated $120,000 per year in energy costs and offset the entire annual electrical consumption in these 11 buildings with clean, renewable resources. The PHA will save nearly $1 million in energy costs over the life of the contract. The PHA’s cost savings will be reinvested to provide residents with capital improvements and affordable housing opportunities.

The PHA received six Awards of Merit from national NAHRO in 2019. NAHRO’s Awards of Merit showcase the innovative work done by the agency. The winning programs included:

- Community Solar Garden
- Ravoux Hi-Rise Plumbing Modernization
- Small Business Development Training
- “Stop for Me” Crosswalk Safety Events
- The Computer Peer Team
- Valley Hi-Rise Plumbing Modernization

The PHA’s Community Solar Garden (CSG) contract with Geronimo Energy represents a Local “Win-Win.” First, there were no up-front capital costs for the PHA. Second, there are no annual operating expenses for the PHA. (Both of these costs are covered by Geronimo Energy.) Third, our CSG subscription agreement produces $120,000 per year in cost savings, guaranteed to the PHA for 25 years. Finally, switching from fossil fuel to solar reduces the PHA’s carbon footprint which is good for the planet. Go-earth!

-PHA Executive Director Jon Gutzmann

On July 31, 2019, NAHRO (National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials) informed the St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) that its Merit award entry, Community Solar Gardens, Sustainable Energy Use, won a National Award of Excellence. NAHRO’s Awards of Excellence highlight ways in which housing agencies make a difference in their communities.

PHA Commissioners and staff attended the NAHRO’s National Conference & Exhibition in San Antonio, TX on October 10, 2019 to accept the award.
On October 3, 2019, the PHA successfully closed its RAD transaction converting 3,855 units to RAD Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA). The St. Paul PHA will never privatize public housing. Under RAD PBRA, the PHA retains full ownership, and will continue to maintain and operate this deeply affordable precious asset. And because we are a debt-free conversion, we have no need to access LIHTC funds or other forms of financing that require the creation of a non-profit affiliate to hold the asset. RAD also offers the following advantages over traditional public housing funding:

• Through RAD, we are locking in for 20 years the better 2018 capital and operating funding Congress recently appropriated;
• We will receive annual inflation adjustments of 2% to 3% on that better money over the next 20 years;
• We will meet all projected capital needs for the next 20 years without the need for any debt financing. And we look forward to working within the HUD multi-family regulatory framework with the advantages it offers our converted properties.

After months of weekly staff training sessions, meetings, and decision-making, PHA staff were ready to kick off the RAD lease signing sessions for residents in the 3,855 RAD units. Led by Resident Services staff, all PHA departments contributed to achieving the goal of getting every adult household member (over 5,000 adult household members) to sign a series of documents, including the new Multifamily Model Lease. Staff scheduled over 133 resident sessions at various sites, most with interpreters, providing every resident with multiple opportunities to hear the full explanation and ask questions before signing the lease. With that step completed, the Agency successfully converted all LIPH households in eight Asset Management Projects (AMPs) to the RAD program.

"Hats off to the St. Paul Public Housing Agency for not just the scale of what they have accomplished (the single largest closing in RAD history), but the way in which they accomplished it, with real involvement from staff, residents, and other stakeholders. And, as a result of the agency’s excellent stewardship of their public housing program over the years, they are now able to convert all their properties without any debt, which furthers the long-term preservation of the assets.”

- Greg Byrne, Director of HUD’s Affordable Housing Transaction Division
On December 12, 2019, the PHA held a celebration event marking the completion of a multi-million dollar upgrade of its Montreal hi-rise.

The St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) invested $5 million to fund plumbing modernization in the 185 apartment homes and common areas at Montreal Hi-Rise, to preserve the building for current and future generations of low-income residents of St. Paul. Funding included $4.25 million from HUD’s Capital Fund Program and $750,000 subsidy from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines’ Affordable Housing Program.

Montreal Hi-Rise maintained high occupancy throughout the modernization.

On November 14, 2019, the PHA held a press event to celebrate the completion of a multi-million dollar upgrade to its Dunedin Terrace public housing development. The Dunedin Terrace family housing development offers 88 apartments in 22 two-story four-plex buildings.

The press event was held at the Dunedin Terrace community room with a brief program followed by unit tours led by PHA staff - special thanks to the following speakers for attending the celebration and being a part of the program:

- PHA Board of Commissioners - Missy Thompson and Gy Chajili
- Rebecca Noecker, Councilmember Ward 2
- Jennifer Ho, Minnesota Housing Commissioner
- Chao Lee, Senior District Office Representative for Congresswoman Betty McCollum
- Rommel Lee, Outreach Director for U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar

The St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) has invested $9.1 million over seven years to modernize the 88 four-plex style family apartment homes at Dunedin Terrace, to preserve them for future generations of low-income families. Funding included $6.085 million from HUD’s Capital Fund Program and $3.025 million from the State of Minnesota’s Publicly Owned Housing Program (POHP) Loan Program. Dunedin Terrace maintained high occupancy throughout the modernization.

Outcome: Resident Satisfaction

Montreal Hi-Rise residents are delighted with their renovated apartments as shown by comments like these:

- “The construction crew kept it on schedule and the employees of the construction crew were very nice.”
- “If there were any issues from the project, they took care of it right away.”
- “It made our building much nicer.”

On December 12, 2019 the PHA held a celebration event marking the completion of a multi-million dollar upgrade of its Montreal hi-rise.

The St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) invested $5 million to fund plumbing modernization in the 185 apartment homes and common areas at Montreal Hi-Rise, to preserve the building for current and future generations of low-income residents of St. Paul. Funding included $4.25 million from HUD’s Capital Fund Program and $750,000 subsidy from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines’ Affordable Housing Program. Montreal Hi-Rise maintained high occupancy throughout the modernization.
The PHA celebrated one year of smoke-free in July 2019. The PHA went smoke-free on July 30, 2018 in compliance with HUD's Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule. The PHA worked closely with Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health, with funding from the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) grant, for 18 months prior to the effective date of the Final Rule in order to prepare for the enormous policy change. Two other key partners during this transition included the American Lung Association and the Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota.

Since the implementation of the Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule, many community partners have provided additional resident and staff training as well as cessation support. Popular cessation support activities included the drop-in Smoking Cessation Stations offered throughout the PHA's 16 hi-rises. Residents were informed about the Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule and cessation support assistance in multiple languages. The PHA's partner organizations assisted in promoting the Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule during events such as tax preparation nights, Resident Council meetings and health fairs, and provided multi-lingual staff who could provide interpretation and translation services.

PHA staff and Resident Council leadership also took advantage of training and skills building opportunities related to the Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule including:

- Policy and enforcement training from the Public Health Law Center;
- Training on unique smoking cessation challenges for people living with mental illness and substance use disorders from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI); and,
- "Mindfulness" training workshops using movement and learning to reduce stress.

The major renovation project at Mt. Airy Homes that began in 2015 has reached its final phase of work. In 2020 the PHA and its consultant (Braun Intertec) will complete a $13.4 million exterior renovation to 273 units in 91 townhome buildings. This work was necessary to remedy deterioration caused by excessive interior humidity and water penetration through the original porous stucco exteriors installed in 1959. The finished product includes new shingle roofing, soffits, fascia, gutters and downspouts. Deteriorated sheathing, wall studs and window frames were replaced with new windows, additional rigid insulation, new cement board siding and plastic trim. Interior amenities include new air conditioner sleeves, bathroom interior finish and ventilation upgrades. The PHA's annual grants from HUD's Capital Fund Program are the primary funding source for this work.

The PHA celebrated one year of smoke-free in July 2019. The PHA went smoke-free on July 30, 2018 in compliance with HUD’s Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule. The PHA worked closely with Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health, with funding from the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) grant, for 18 months prior to the effective date of the Final Rule in order to prepare for the enormous policy change. Two other key partners during this transition included the American Lung Association and the Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota.

Since the implementation of the Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule, many community partners have provided additional resident and staff training as well as cessation support. Popular cessation support activities included the drop-in Smoking Cessation Stations offered throughout the PHA’s 16 hi-rises. Residents were informed about the Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule and cessation support assistance in multiple languages. The PHA’s partner organizations assisted in promoting the Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule during events such as tax preparation nights, Resident Council meetings and health fairs, and provided multi-lingual staff who could provide interpretation and translation services.

PHA staff and Resident Council leadership also took advantage of training and skills building opportunities related to the Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule including:

- Policy and enforcement training from the Public Health Law Center;
- Training on unique smoking cessation challenges for people living with mental illness and substance use disorders from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI); and,
- "Mindfulness" training workshops using movement and learning to reduce stress.

The major renovation project at Mt. Airy Homes that began in 2015 has reached its final phase of work. In 2020 the PHA and its consultant (Braun Intertec) will complete a $13.4 million exterior renovation to 273 units in 91 townhome buildings. This work was necessary to remedy deterioration caused by excessive interior humidity and water penetration through the original porous stucco exteriors installed in 1959. The finished product includes new shingle roofing, soffits, fascia, gutters and downspouts. Deteriorated sheathing, wall studs and window frames were replaced with new windows, additional rigid insulation, new cement board siding and plastic trim. Interior amenities include new air conditioner sleeves, bathroom interior finish and ventilation upgrades. The PHA’s annual grants from HUD’s Capital Fund Program are the primary funding source for this work.
Atinuke Adegoke • Steve Ahner • Barb Alis • Diane Anastasiou • Steven Anderson • Tim Angaran • Richard Auchter • Vanessa Austin • Chris Avalos • Ben Awaah • Jessica Bader • Keith Bakken • Margarita Barry • Alix Bebus • Jan Bednarek • Bruce Bjorklund • Ron Bokar • Matt Bokar • Sandy Bornsdale • Coco Brady • Tim Braun • Charisse Brown • Stevie Bryant • Latoya Bullock • Michael Caliri • Mike Carey • Nick Casci • Betsy Christensen • Tim Cloutier • Jennifer Cogdill • Dolores Conlon • Paul Connolly • Jennifer Cook • Brandi Day • Ronald Degrooten • Don Dick • Samuel Dreger • John Falzone • Lisa Feidell • Brett Feller • Parise Fitzpatrick • Kevin Foote • Beth Forrest • Kenneth Francis • Tim Franko • Lisa Frarotta • Mark Fratello • Camilla Gagnon • Breonna Giant • Laura Garaghy • Agnella Garry • Scott Haggard • Tony Han • Matt Hager • Jean Hall • Kim Healy • Choong Her • Christine Her • Kari Her • Paul Her • Al Hester • Brenda Hibbard • Glenn Hobson • Angie Hoogen • Jenna Houdie • Alisa Huckleberry • Jordan Huckleberry • Traci Hunt • Kenneth Huntington • Julia Hupperts • Kathy Inamagua • Mark Isakson • Howard Jackson Sr • John Jaeger • Paul Jaeger • Tre’Vontae James • Carol Jerde • Gloria Jiles • Liu Johnson • AZ Jones Jr • Adam Junior • Delance Montgomery • Denece Moore • Bee Moua • Mai Moua • Ying Moua • Timothy Mudge • Jo Murphy • Kyle Nelson • Tim Nelson • Ana New York • Barbara Newton • John Newton • Yu Ngyuen • Phung Nguyen • Vinh Nguyen • Mike Niedzielski • Gino Nitti • Sarah Nob • Jim Noval • Mahdi Osman • Joseph Pariseau • Bob Peterson • Richard Phillips • Mary Pisani • Caroline Poe • Steve Polianowski • Ernesto Puente • Martin Puente • Julianna Quast • Mark Quilling • Matt Rapp • Anthony Rea • Reggie Reckers • Richard Robin • Adam Rob • Jim Rooney • Larry Ros • James Ruberto • Patrick Rucci • Xochilt Ruiz • San Santos • Sheree Sasse • Nancy Schmidt • Sotta Seem • Nina Sonnenblick • Corina Serrano • Said Sheik Abdi • Bob Sherry • Patrick Shimota • Mike Silvan • Anne Sinner • Julie Sitzmann • Dave Spiegelberg • Mike Stack • Mark Stack • Stephanie St. Jacque • Jonathan Turner Bargen • Lis Unklesky • John Urban • Adam Urban • Jacob Urban • Theresa Urban • Rich Urban • Joe Urban • Sean Ure • Audrey Ure • Anthony Ure • Beth Urquhart • John Urbanski • Bee Vang • Diana Vang • Mai Her Vang • PangKu Vang • Richard Yang • Sayang Yang • Thao Xiong • Thao Xiong • Mai Her Vang • PangKu Vang • Richard Yang • Sayang Yang • Thao Xiong • Thao Xiong
The PHA was awarded the Government Finance Officers Association Certification of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 15th consecutive year in 2020 (for FY 19). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by the management and staff of a governmental unit or agency.

Note: Financial statements are prepared using generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) as applied to governmental entities. For more complete information, please see audited Comprehensive Annual Financial report, March 31, 2019.
Photo #1 & #2 above: Resident Services staff 2nd week winners for getting most leases signed for RAD.

Photo #3 above: RAD Project leaders Angie Holm and Jordan LaSota

Graphic Design by Mai L. Moua

Photography by Tom Dunn, Rod Wilson, PHA Staff & friends

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER