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# Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority

## **Report to the Community**

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In 2014, Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) leadership created a five-year strategic plan to achieve five identified goals. Under each goal, there were objectives that made the work clear-cut and measurable. Here is a summary of how CMHA has progressed toward accomplishing those goals.

## 2014–2019 Strategic Plan Report Card



	Before 2014	2019
Efficiency and Fiscal Responsibility	B	A-
Improve Processes and Performance	B	A-
Revive Our Communities	C	A-
Quality Customer Service	D	B-
Rebranding	C	B+

Fall 2019

Dear Stakeholder:

In 2014, Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority created a strategic plan that laid out a road map for the next five years. That work included engaging a cross section of our community and residents with input sessions and questionnaires to develop a full SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis.

This report card focuses on how CMHA seized the opportunities to achieve the defined larger organizational goals. Those originally identified opportunities include:

- Streamlining processes
- Developing employees professionally
- Building and sustaining community AND private business partnerships
- Identifying and developing alternative funding streams
- Expanding client demographics
- Strengthening public/private partnerships
- Expanding real estate footprint
- Developing affiliate organizations
- Rebranding

Over the past five years, CMHA planned and executed its work with our approved vision statement in mind: A future in which CMHA uses sustainable funding models to preserve and develop quality, affordable housing in partnership with community stakeholders.

Our vision is **bold** but definitely achievable. By taking strategic steps, the agency experienced a very successful five years (as you will read in this document). And building on those successes, CMHA will continue on this journey, using our mission as a roadmap: To be a leader in the housing industry, locally and nationally, by striving for exceptional housing opportunities while achieving high levels of customer satisfaction, promoting self-sufficiency and contributing to neighborhood stability through our development activities while continuing our Gold Standard of being an asset to the community. We will achieve this by strengthening public/private partnerships, creating entrepreneurial opportunities for resident-owned businesses, section 3 businesses and section 3 residents.

Although we have a lot of work ahead of us as we strive to provide much needed quality affordable housing to the Hamilton County community, I am proud of the work we have done and all that has been accomplished. CMHA is a strong positive community asset and this report card shows that. And I am excited by the prospect of creating our next multi-year strategic plan. Having that kind of document to drive our work toward measurable goals has proven successful in the past and I believe it will continue to be in the future.



Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory D. Johnson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Gregory D. Johnson, MS, PHM, EDEP  
Chief Executive Officer

# GOAL 1

## Efficiency and Fiscal Responsibility

CMHA leadership developed a plan to move the organization to a sustainable financial model. In order to broaden financial diversity and create revenue streams to help support sustainability for the future, CMHA has used some of these methods to achieve this bold goal. Ground lease payments, earning developer fees, garnering retail space rental fees and property management fees.

This concerted effort has helped CMHA diversify its revenue stream. During 2014-19, CMHA sought and received over \$30M in tax credits, for the preservation of Baldwin Grove and Sutter View, the new developments of West Union Square and Cary Crossing. CMHA also contributed over \$1.5M to the development of the Central YMCA and provides on-going operational subsidy for the entire project.





In addition to taking on a Best-And-Final-Offer (BAFO) approach to solicitations, CMHA thoroughly analyzed organizational spending and challenged itself to aggressively save and to spend more wisely. Tactics like using the Wex Card for gas purchases yielded considerably more savings than originally budgeted and bulk purchasing garnered significant and sustainable savings. All of CMHA's contracts for services delivered are now performance-based. While actively lowering cost for the most frequently purchased goods/services, CMHA has also reduced its bad debt by 20 percent. Since 2014, CMHA began—and will continue—to utilize new financing mechanisms for rehab and new construction. Those mechanisms include: Neighborhood Stabilization Program, HOME Funds, Federal Home Loan Bank grants, FHA 221 (d), FHA 223 (f), Seller Notes and bridge financing.

Effectively managing human resources helps CMHA move toward being more efficient. And recruiting and training a vital team is yet another way that CMHA has experienced success. We now provide a five-day structured onboarding. And since 2014, CMHA has held 74 onsite professional trainings for staff. These were designed to provide meaningful continuing education (including CEUs and CLEs, as required). CMHA also took part in a fun team-building chef competition called What's Cooking? The professional results of which were remarkable.

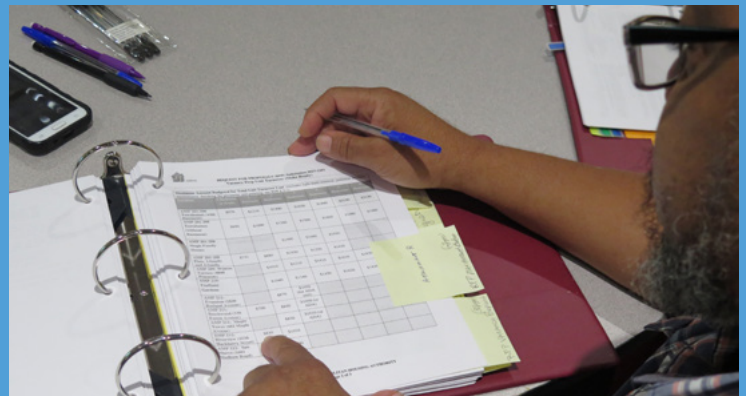
CMHA is implementing new software that will soon create online applications for the Asset Management and Housing Choice Voice programs. In addition, this will afford a better landlord portal improving landlord communication regarding the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Wireless web access is now available around campus and 100% of those connected also have Wi-Fi capability. In addition, CMHA created and successfully managed the Cary Crossing online application.

## GOAL 1 BY THE NUMBERS

- Bulk purchasing saved CMHA **\$846,000** through FY2019. That number is expected to grow another **\$100,000** by the end of FY2020
- Actively reduced bad debt by **20%** over five years
- Secured more than **\$36,000,000** in investment for work at Baldwin Grove and Sutter View
- MBE and WBE Businesses awarded **\$39.2M** of **\$113.5M** contract dollars
- **\$46.6M** of **\$156M** dollars spent were with Section 3 Businesses

## GOAL 2

# Improve Processes and Performance



To achieve this goal, CMHA further managed a more efficient and cost-effective internal operation, while striving towards improving our customer interface. During this five-year period, CMHA Section 3 programming was rightfully designated as a “Best Practice” and our Building for the Future initiative was further positively recognized by HUD. We are proud to earn these awards and to be a model for other housing authorities around the country.

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) recognized CMHA with two Awards of Merit, including one for Pre-Proposal Workshops and one for the Building for the Future initiative. CMHA earned an Ohio Auditor Award for exemplary financial reporting. CMHA developed and implemented a thorough emergency response and contingency plan. In addition, to serving those timely and critical needs, CMHA also instituted training protocols. Finally, CMHA opened a new Housing Choice Voucher Call Center to make efforts to better serve our housing choice voucher residents and landlords.

Beyond these accolades and larger organizational successes, CMHA has worked to engage residents at every level. CMHA hosted several staff and resident conversations regarding its Smoke-Free implementation.



Communicating with residents, staff and the community helped that implementation run smoothly. And now, all CMHA properties are 100% smoke-free. Ongoing communication is also a key component of the transformation happening now and beyond 2019. An example of CMHA's commitment to improved communication is the formation of a specific internal team to plan and provide real-time updates to residents, staff and the community regarding the transformation process.

We have created and implemented a new online Request for Tenancy Approval portal. And our CEO, Gregory Johnson periodically hosts community and staff coffees to discuss any issues a member of our community might have. This transparency is critical to our organizational success and numerous staff members have taken advantage of this time to talk one-on-one with leadership.

## GOAL 2 BY THE NUMBERS

- Hosted **45** “Cookie and a Chat” sessions with management from the Housing Choice Voucher Program
- Held **4** public events and hosted more than **30** resident conversations about smoke-free implementation
- Held **74** onsite professional trainings (including CEUs and CLEs, as required)
- Offered **30** free classes for property owners/managers — CMHA U — promoting overall success, featuring subject matter experts
- Promoted **51** team members from within during the strategic plan period

## GOAL 3

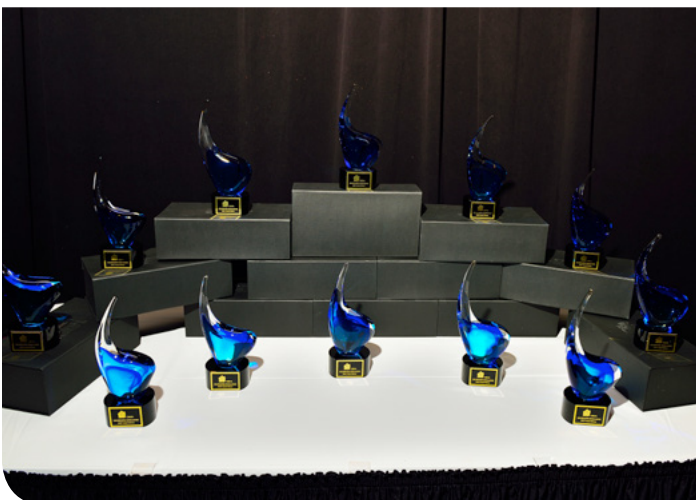
# Revive Our Communities

Much of the work we do is one-on-one, but we recognize that connection with individuals helps create partnerships to promote healthy and stable neighborhoods throughout Hamilton County. One person at a time, CMHA is committed to reviving communities.

Using a strong organizational model, CMHA has developed a new website, providing better access to community, vendors and other stakeholders. We have hosted annual Landlord Appreciation banquets, as well as provided annual customer, staff and stakeholder surveys that yielded positive results. Internally, providing structured annual staff performance reviews helps ensure better customer service and employee satisfaction. And by developing clear tools and protocols, we are better able

to achieve CMHA's objectives and goals. All of this allows for better community-wide engagement. Another great example was the first-ever Housing Symposium at the Cincinnati Convention Center, hosted by CMHA. It was an enormous success.

CMHA strongly believes that providing affordable housing is a critical way to revive communities. We do that by purposefully diversifying our housing stock, including Cary Crossing, Reserve on South Martin and West Union Square, to name just a few. CMHA also actively improving quality-of-life for our residents by offering all buildings that are now non-smoking.





CMHA helps promote family self-sufficiency through strong community partners and private corporations. These partnerships help CMHA provide critical tools that truly move families to self-sufficiency such as the M.O.V.E. program, targeted neighborhood BBQ's, First Learning Initiative, Teen Job Events/College Connection Workshops and Home Ownership Development and Resume Writing/Interviewing Skills. All programs are made available to residents, in addition to credit counseling, banking and other financial services. They are just a part of the enormously effective Family Self-Sufficiency program that is exceeding participation and success goals.

CMHA is uniquely positioned to continue as an asset to Hamilton County neighborhoods by creating jobs, partnering to provide job training and being a launch pad for successful Section 3, Women-Owned and Minority-Owned businesses.

During 2014–19, CMHA formally assessed 100% of its properties for long-term planning. That includes not only existing assets, but also working toward developing mixed use/mixed income planned communities. “Mixed use” means a development that incorporates two or more of residential, retail and/or commercial components onsite. “Mixed income” means a housing development including diverse types of housing units — apartments, townhomes, and/ single-family homes for individuals with a range of income levels.

As part of CMHA's effort to revive our communities, the organization works to deconcentrate poverty in several ways. Those efforts include: connecting residents to social services and case managers to address barriers that families and individuals have as they strive for self-sufficiency specifically advertising through multiple media sources to ensure we are reaching a diverse audience of families.

Our Housing Choice Voucher Department created “HCV-On-The-Go” where staff members visit communities and groups to better educate them about the HCV program and all that it provides. Our team called on apartment complexes throughout the county to provide program information and to help improve the overall perception of the HCV program. In addition, CMHA partnered with Cincinnati Real Estate Investment Association (REIA) and Vena Jones-Cox (“The Real Estate Goddess”) to hold real estate investment seminars, hoping to recruit even more landlords to the program. These are several of the ways that CMHA has actively engaged the community to increase activity and participation with partnering organizations like Greater Cincinnati Realist Association, Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Apartment Association and REIA.

## GOAL 4

# Quality Customer Service

As with any organization that wishes to improve customer service, Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority strives to provide superior customer service and quality affordable housing.

Some examples of striving towards our customer service goals include implementing a live business-hours Housing Choice Voucher customer call center. CMHA also uses a One-Call system for better and more thorough resident communications, when needed. And assigning an internal Six Sigma team to

make recommendations on how to improve customer service. Dedicating ourselves more thoroughly to customer service proves our commitment to improving overall communication to our residents and the wider community.

Along with the efforts previously stated, CMHA staff has attended multiple customer service trainings internally and externally. CMHA serves as a bridge to re-employment, encouraging the hiring of CMHA residents and Section 3 residents throughout Hamilton County.



# GOAL 5

## Rebranding



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- Created/implemented organization-wide **Gold Standard expectations**
- **Mission/vision/values/guiding principles** statements developed, approved, posted and encouraged throughout all work done by, for and on behalf of CMHA
- Revamped the external **website** to be more user-friendly and informative
- Positive community and media **outreach**

## AWARDS EARNED

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- 2016** NAHRO – Program Innovation - Community Revitalization Reserve of South Martin
- NAHRO – Program Innovation - Project Design Reserve of South Martin
- NAHRO – Resident and Client Services – Providing skills for rewarding careers
- 2017** Nan McKay Resident Service Award – Large Housing Authority
- NAHRO - Administrative Innovation – Pre-Proposal Workshop
- NAHRO – Program Innovation – Resident Client Services – Building for the Future
- 2018** NAHRO – Program Innovation – Resident Client Services – Breaking the Cycle of Poverty
- NAHRO – Program Innovation – Affordable Housing – Changing Lives at Cary Crossing
- 2019** NAHRO – Project Design – West Union Square

## VISION STATEMENT

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To shape our future by utilizing sustainable funding models to develop quality, affordable housing solutions in partnership with our community stakeholders.

## MISSION STATEMENT

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To be a leader in the housing industry by providing exceptional housing opportunities while achieving high levels of customer satisfaction, promoting self-sufficiency and neighborhood stability, and being a long-term asset to the community. We will achieve this by developing public/private partnerships, rating entrepreneurial opportunities and by employees and residents holding themselves to our Gold Standards of Excellence.

## GOLD STANDARDS

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The CMHA Gold Performance Standard refers to the principles and values against which the agency performs. It's how every CMHA employee will be measured, from the top down, as well as our partners, vendors, contractors, and consultants. We will conduct our work with integrity, professionalism, accuracy and exceptional quality. We will hold ourselves and each other accountable. We will provide timely and accurate communication both internally and externally. And above all, we will treat one another with respect and dignity that each of us deserves.

### CMHA Main Office

1627 Western Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45214  
(513) 721-4580  
M – F, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### Housing Choice Voucher Program

1635 Western Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45214  
(513) 977-5800  
M – F, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### Asset Management Eligibility Office

1088 W. Liberty St., Cincinnati, OH 45214  
(513) 421-CMHA (2642)  
M – F, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### Talk2Us Hotline

(513) 721-CMHA (2642)

