

# Hamden Housing Authority 2022 Annual Report

## Governing Board of Commissioners

Mary Desarbo, Chairwoman

Marvin Michalsen, Vice Chairman

Dr. Phillip Goldblatt, Treasurer

Robin LaFrance, Secretary

John Cabral, Jr., Assistant Secretary, Treasurer

Hazelann B. Cook, Executive Director



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## HAMDEN HOUSING AUTHORITY

### Opening Remarks:

As I reflect on 2022, what stands out for me from this third year of the COVID-19 pandemic is the continuity of operations, service, and focus to help ensure the well-being of the people we serve while remaining a high performing, sustainable and fiscally responsible agency. This report reflects many achievements and strides we have made this past year to provide the people we serve with safe, quality, affordable housing, and services.

Our Hamden Housing Authority employees were amazing and remained as dedicated as ever. We believe that our staff is our most valuable asset. Our post pandemic procedures and policies set in place equipped our team with the resources needed to better assist our communities. The staff was mindful in executing the day-to-day operations and our team rose to every challenge they faced with incredible strength, dedication, and hard work. They have infused our organization with renewed energy and purpose.

I am pleased to take you through last year and highlight HHA's challenges and achievements.

Respectfully Submitted,



Hazelann B. Cook  
Executive Director

## Mission Statement

*The Hamden Housing Authority's (HHA) mission is to provide safe, decent, affordable, and sanitary housing for persons of low-and moderate-income. The Housing Authority believes that all persons have the right to quality affordable housing.*

*HHA is committed to helping people in need without regard to any protected class status including, without limitation, any such status based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, lawful source of income, disability, age, marital status, and/or familial status.*

*HHA shall endeavor at all times to protect its residents from discriminatory housing practices. In accordance with its Fair Housing Policy Statement, programs funded and administered by the Hamden Housing Authority shall comply with the provisions set forth in Section 46a-64c of the Connecticut General Statutes, as well as with all other applicable provisions both state and federal laws, and regulations that prohibit discriminatory housing practices.*

# Administration & Departments

## Governing Board of Commissioners:

Mary Desarbo	Chairperson
Marvin Michalsen	Vice-Chairperson
Dr. Phillip Goldblatt	Treasurer
Robin LaFrance	Secretary
John Cabral, Jr.	Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

## Executive Director:

Hazelann B. Cook

## Departments:

Administrative Office	203-281-7774	<a href="mailto:hha@hamdenhousing.com">hha@hamdenhousing.com</a>
Finance Office	203-248-9036	<a href="mailto:finance@hamdenhousing.com">finance@hamdenhousing.com</a>
Section 8 Programs	203-281-7669x101	<a href="mailto:section8@hamdenhousing.com">section8@hamdenhousing.com</a>
Elderly/Disabled Housing	203-248-9036	<a href="mailto:hha@hamdenhousing.com">hha@hamdenhousing.com</a>
Congregate Housing	203-248-9376	<a href="mailto:congregate@hamdenhousing.com">congregate@hamdenhousing.com</a>
Resident Services Coordinator	203-287-8977	
Maintenance	203-248-9036	<a href="mailto:maintenance@hamdenhousing.com">maintenance@hamdenhousing.com</a>



### **Pandemic Protocol:**

As January 2022 began, we found ourselves in the same predicament we have been in for the past 3 years, still in a pandemic. During this time COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations were starting to decline across the United States. However, deaths were still rising, and community transmission was still high statewide. The Hamden Housing Authority continued to follow the pandemic safety protocols that were established back in March of 2020 which made the daily operations run efficiently.

We monitored the CDC guidelines very closely and made the necessary adjustments throughout the year to ensure the wellbeing of our residents and our staff. HHA received a few hundred COVID-19 test kits and masks from the town of Hamden along with the State of Connecticut. The test kits were distributed upon request, (when residents experienced symptoms) and the masks were given out to the residents and staff multiple times throughout the year. HHA was able to provide COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots on sight to our residents and our staff. Information on COVID-19 was made available to our entire HHA community via the monthly newsletter and by our weekly phone calls to our residents.

Maintaining the day-to-day business operations during the pandemic, while keeping the staff, residents, and program participants safe, has been our top priority. In doing so, some decisions were made as safety precautions. The first was to continue all grievance hearings, briefings, and meetings via zoom, audio/video or by telephone. Conducting the hearings and meetings in this format has proven to be safe and accommodating for our residents and program participants. Another decision was made to secure the offices at 51 Worth Ave. Although the building is closed to the public, our staff remains diligent in meeting the needs of our clients and can be reached via telephone, fax, and email. Our staff is also available to our residents or program participants by appointment, which has been working very well.

The success of our organization heavily depends on our ability to remain healthy. This would not be possible if it weren't for our excellent Maintenance team who have been relentless in sanitizing the community rooms, offices, Congregate building, and all common areas throughout our community. Their efforts have proven to keep us all safe therefore I would like to acknowledge the entire Maintenance team by saying thank you for all that you continue to do for HHA.

**Housing Authority of the Town of Hamden**

**Finance Report**

**Schedule of Major Expenditures 1/1/2022-12/31/2022**

Apartment Renovations	\$ 100,054.79
Centerville Office New Roof	23,115.00
Maintenance Equipment	11,413.85
Resident Gifts and Events	10,101.21
Pruning and Landscaping	2,725.00
Alarms (Pull Cords HV)	4,700.00
Community Room Stove	2,320.00
Security Cameras	<u>8,301.02</u>
 Total Expenditures	 \$ 162,730.87

**Annual Financial Audit:**

Our annual audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, was completed by Maletta & Company, CPAs in January 2023. The auditors issued an unmodified opinion and did not disclose any findings or matters of concern. The audit was submitted and accepted by the US Department of HUD and the State of Connecticut Department of Housing and Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. A copy of the audited financial statements is available at the HHA office upon request.

### **New Policies Adopted:**

- **Criminal History Review Policy:** This policy states unless required by Housing and Urban Development (HUD), no applicant will be denied housing assistance or tenant-based assistance based on their criminal record without an opportunity to explain their circumstances during an informal meeting with the Executive Director or their designated representative. The goal of the Hamden Housing Authority (HHA) is to provide for the health, safety and welfare of our residents while also providing housing to individuals with criminal histories who demonstrate that they will be good tenants.  
Adopted by Board Approval: May 12, 2022.

### **Congregate Housing & Assisted Living:**

The Congregate Residents in many ways have had a difficult time during the first three years of this pandemic. Our tenants had to cope with complete isolation as social and community gatherings remained on hold during certain times of the 2022 year.

Throughout the year there was 2 small outbreaks of COVID-19 at our Congregate facility. During this time all residents and staff wore masks in hallways and in common areas while the Maintenance staff continued to sanitize the building to keep the virus from spreading. Meals were delivered to the residents' apartments by staff wearing masks and gloves. HHA followed the CDC guidelines, and all activities and group gatherings were canceled. HHA fully understands the serious effects of social isolation and loneliness on our Congregate Residents which include their physical and mental health and their quality of life. Socialization is vital in keeping our residents connected with one another. We encourage our residents to participate in group activities whenever possible to help boost their mood and creativity. Once it was safe to have the residents gather, we took full advantage by opening the dining room and allowing residents to meet for meals and activities.

The Congregate staff does a great job in scheduling many group events for our residents such as movie night, pizza parties, coffee, root beer and ice cream socials, bingo, gentle exercise, along with arts and crafts. The staff also schedule a variety of different guests like Mike the keyboard musician, who plays a multitude of



music. Twice a month the residents are provided a 2-hour pet therapy visit from three pet therapy dogs and their owner. Residents enjoy the dogs and look forward to every visit. Friends of the library visit to deliver and pick up books for those residents who can't get to the library. HHA also conducted several Flu and Booster clinics at the Congregate facility for the resident's convenience and safety. The holidays were a big hit as the residents were serenaded by the Southern Connecticut Baseball Team and mascot Otis the Owl singing Christmas carols outside their dining room windows.

The Congregate staff have been our Front-Line Essential workers for the past 3 years. Their courage, devotion, and hard work has proven to be a key factor in keeping our residents healthy and happy. On behalf of the Authority and the Commissioners, we thank and salute the entire Congregate Staff's remarkable achievement of keeping our residents their top priority.

The pandemic was not the only challenge we faced in 2022. We encountered a few tenants with behavioral issues which at times were very volatile. Mrs. Cook met with Connecticut's Senator Saud Anwar to discuss safety in our town and the possibility of having an appointed social worker through the State of Connecticut, who could help mediate dangerous situations before they escalate. Mrs. Cook and Senator Anwar also discussed the State providing a grant to help fund added security throughout our villages.

At that point there were no grants to help with security costs, therefore the decision was made to hire Investigative Consultants LLC. They are a very reputable security company who monitors our villages during the evening hours which includes an overnight shift at our Congregate Facility. Hiring Investigative Consultants has prevented dangerous behavior throughout all our properties and made HHA Residents feel much safer in their own communities.

## **Grants and Critical Needs Funding**

### **Congregate:**

Last year the Congregate Facility was approved for a *SSHP* grant in the amount of 3.7 million. This grant would cover the following much needed work such as exterior siding, insulation, new windows, a generator that will service the whole building if we should lose electricity, new heating / air-conditioning system, repaving parking area and 3 ADA compliant bathrooms. Secondino & Sons were selected to be the construction managers for this rehab and the work is set to begin sometime in the summer of 2023. Because we were unable to do all the bathrooms with this grant, the maintenance staff have taken the opportunity to remove the old tubs and install new walk-in showers in units when they become available. Installing walk-in showers will make it safer and easier for residents. The Maintenance staff has also been installing new kitchen cabinets, countertops, and flooring in the units that need these improvements. Utilizing our Maintenance staff for these upgrades has been a huge time saver and a cost-effective way to modernize the apartments.

### **Affordable Housing:**

In November of 2022, Tri-Con Construction, whose bid was accepted by HHA, started the rehabilitation on the Affordable duplexes (4 units) on Morse Street, in Hamden.

The scope of the work includes:

- New energy efficient windows and doors including new sliding glass doors.
- New energy efficient heating and cooling pumps.
- New bathrooms, which include bathtub/shower combo, sink and toilet.
- New parking areas and driveway.
- New Sidewalks.
- New insulation and vinyl siding.
- New Decks.

The work is going very well, and it is scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2023. The Affordable residents have been accommodating to the contractors' schedule, which keeps the rehab on schedule and makes the process run smoothly.

### **Resident Services Coordinator & Resident Care:**

The Resident Services Coordinator Report on Hamden Housing Authority continues to be a very successful and quite important for all HHA residents including our Congregate residents. One of our core components of this program is to help our residents remain living independently by identifying problems before they become emergencies. In summarizing the Hamden Housing Authority's 2022 year, we continued to manage the challenges of Covid-19 and all the ramifications thereof.

We remained in contact with each resident by calling them once a week to make sure they were ok and if not, how we could be of any assistance. This approach was started back in March of 2020, when the pandemic started. Our priority remained the well-being of our residents by maintaining contact with them so that they did not feel forgotten. Residents still look forward to our weekly calls and have expressed how much they appreciate HHA taking time out for them. Last spring, as our lives had begun to get back to some kind of normal, HHA wanted to do something sweet for Valentine's Day, so we delivered Chocolate Valentine's hearts to all our 224 Residents. During the summer of 2022, HHA had the ice cream truck visit each one of our properties 4 times. Twice in June and twice July to offer free ice cream to all the residents. For the Christmas holiday, HHA presented beautiful plush throw blankets to help keep the residents warm on those cold nights.

Hazelann Cook, the Executive Director, is the driving force behind the concern for our tenants. Making our residents feel special is vital in taking care of them. Mrs. Cook conducted weekly staff meetings by Zoom, to ensure the staff were aware of any resident issues. These meetings kept the staff united in our mission of serving the residents and keeping them safe. The families and friends of our residents were very grateful for all our efforts.

As the Covid restrictions have been lifted, we continue to stay in touch with the residents. They have enjoyed these chats and truly look forward to sharing both their pleasures and displeasures. Hamden Housing Authority under the leadership of Hazelann Cook continues to thrive.



### **Section 8 and RAP Rental Assistance Programs:**

The HHA manages 305 Voucher holders in Hamden, as well as a large portfolio of Vouchers and RAP Program Certificates for an additional total of 1,570 participants.

In keeping with the 2020 Pandemic protocols that were set in place, the staff maintained open communication with the families participating in these programs and continued to provide landlord and tenant rent relief. The team works hard to process annual program activities such as recertifications, interim reexaminations, and tenant moves on time.

Throughout the 2022 year, HHA continued full annual Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections while continuing to use the CDC safety guidelines that were recommended. Annual inspections are vital to ensure that the subsidized properties were being properly maintained.

Throughout 2022, the HHA staff had been met with many challenges, however they continued to adapt to meet the needs of the Section 8 and RAP program participants. Our staff fully understands our role in helping families improve their lives and our quest in building strong communities.

### **Safety Committee:**

Security precautions for staff and residents were discussed. Installation of security cameras in all our locations were completed this year. Additionally, security guards were hired to patrol Centerville Village and Hamden Village in the evenings, on foot and in marked cars. A security guard was hired to replace the nighttime attendant, who retired at our congregate building. Staff and residents expressed feeling safer with their presence at our locations.

### **HHA's Website:**

The Website has continued to be another source of information for our residents and the community in 2022. Monthly maintenance is done to keep all data current. Daily calls received in our HHA office have been directed to our website for further information regarding waitlist, property locations, and qualifications for our program, including a list of other organizations that can assist those seeking specific services.

We have included on the website the 2021 Annual Report, the HUD Annual plan, including the Legal Notice for the Section 8 Department. The monthly newsletter is also posted on our website under the Resident News and Information page for those computer savvy residents. The website is user-friendly, informative and a helpful resource for our communities.

### **Noteworthy Accolades:**

- **Rent Calculations:**

HHA staff completed a certification course on HUD regulations pertaining to rent calculation, and the formulas for correctly calculating rent for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. This certification will also assist our HHA staff to calculate annual income, income exclusions, the earned income disallowance; calculate assets, asset income, adjusted income, and verification; and determine minimum rent and utility allowance.

**Closing Remarks:**

This has been a remarkable year for HHA, as we continued to navigate through another difficult time due to the pandemic. I am amazed at how our organization stayed committed to our mission while at times enduring challenges both professionally and personally.

Our staff worked tirelessly to make a meaningful, positive difference in the lives of the families we serve. We couldn't have done it without the leadership of our Governing Board of Commissioners, who always guide and support us each year. It is an honor to serve the community alongside so many individuals who are passionate about our mission and I am proud of all that we accomplished together.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mr. Marvin Michalsen, who has retired from his position on HHA's Board of Commissioners as Vice-Chair. His contributions to the Hamden Housing Authority over the past 18 years has been invaluable. HHA has benefited immensely from his support, guidance, and encouragement. I would like to thank Marvin for his service, and I wish him well in his future endeavors.

I am pleased to report that the Hamden Housing Authority, once again, succeeded in achieving our Mission Statement in 2022, of providing safe, decent, and affordable housing to low-and moderate-income families.

Respectfully submitted,



Hazelann B. Cook  
Executive Director