



**Housing Authority of the Town of Hamden**  
51 Worth Avenue, Hamden CT 06518

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Mary Desarbo, Chairwoman  
John Cabral, Jr., Vice-Chairperson  
Dr. Phillip Goldblatt, Treasurer  
Robin LaFrance, Secretary  
Hazelann B. Cook, Executive Director

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## HAMDEN HOUSING AUTHORITY

### Opening Remarks:

The Hamden Housing Authority hit the ground running in January of 2023. Our organization functioned like a well-oiled machine as we maintained our stride of working through the fourth year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Authority's focus remained on the continual flow of the day-to-day business operations, quality of service, and most importantly, helping ensure the wellbeing of the people we serve. The HHA staff worked hard to serve our community, while remaining a high performing, sustainable and fiscally responsible agency.

The foundation of our organization continues to be our devoted HHA employees. Our team understands the responsibility we have in making a positive impact for those we serve. Our staff is committed, hardworking and motivated, and as a director, those are characteristics you cannot teach. I value my team's work ethic and understand how it contributes to our success. It gives me immense pride to be the leader of this amazing team.

In this report, I am proud to highlight the significant accomplishments we achieved while working through a few challenges.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Hazelann B. Cook*

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
John Cabral, Jr.	Vice-Chairperson
Dr. Phillip Goldblatt	Treasurer
Robin LaFrance	Secretary

## 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	<a href="mailto:hha@hamdenhousing.com">hha@hamdenhousing.com</a>
Maintenance	203-248-9036	<a href="mailto:maintenance@hamdenhousing.com">maintenance@hamdenhousing.com</a>

## **Pandemic Update:**

Early in 2023, the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the country started to slow down. HHA had neither or very few cases of COVID-19 with the staff or tenants. Throughout the following months, some cases were reported in our communities, as we continued to take all precautions and follow the CDC guidelines. HHA kept our tenants informed by publishing COVID-19 updates in our monthly newsletter. The newsletter also included vaccine locations, symptoms of COVID-19, steps to take if there was positive test result, and COVID-19 county checks, which showed the virus transmission by county in the State of Connecticut. We also had COVID-19 test kits available for tenants and staff members who were experiencing symptoms.

In the spring of 2023, COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths hit their lowest levels since the start of the pandemic. The masks were removed, and schools and businesses were back in-person. The Hamden Housing Authority, who had remained open during the pandemic, emerged from the three-year nightmare, and entered a tentative new normal. This new approach to doing business helped our communities keep in touch with our staff through phones, fax, emails, and Zoom.

Since March of 2020, the CDC's pandemic guidelines taught us a few things, such as social distancing, and how keeping distance between our communities and staff would be beneficial for everyone's health. For safety reasons, in January of 2023, HHA requested that all participants and tenants who would like to meet with their case worker or staff member, call and schedule an appointment. This allowed for privacy when speaking about their housing matters as well as making sure the staff members were available. This new way of doing business has been effective and has prevented an overflow of people to our offices located at 51 Worth Avenue in Hamden.

## Housing Authority of the Town of Hamden

### FINANCE REPORT

#### Schedule of Major Expenditures 1/1/2023 – 12/31/2023

Apartment Rehabs	\$ 147,507
Office Addition/Employee Restroom Upgrade	49,754
New Maintenance Truck	46,344
New Maintenance Garage	39,509
Solar Panels-Affordable	34,364
Landscaping and Pruning	8,333
Resident Gifts and Events	7,498
Safety Tinting Office Windows	3,000
Door Alarms-Congregate	2,444
Picnic Tables for Residents	2,348
Community Laundry-New Washer	2,192
	\$343,292

#### **Annual Financial Audit:**

Our annual audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, was completed by Maletta & Company, CPAs in January 2024. 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.

## Congregate Housing / Assisted Living, & Elderly / Disabled Housing:

Our **Congregate Residents** have been quite resilient and have adapted to this new normal very well. They follow our safety procedures and adhere to them when they are sick. Congregate Residents who are not feeling well wear masks in public areas of the facility and remain in their apartments separated from their neighbors. Early in the year, the Congregate staff implemented the programs and activities that were on hold due to the pandemic. The staff kept the healthy residents engaged with activities such as movie night, pizza parties, coffee, root beer and ice cream socials, bingo, gentle exercise, along with arts and crafts. The staff also scheduled a 2-hour pet therapy visit for the residents and had Mike, the keyboard musician, play a variety of songs. To ensure our Congregate Residents wellbeing, HHA provided a blood pressure clinic every month throughout 2023 and a Flu shot clinic in the fall. Utopia, the assisted living component, provides a nurse at our Congregate facility 3 to 4 times a week as well as providing an aide in the building weekly from 8am to 8pm. Offering these services to our Congregate residents does not only improve their health, but it also gives their families a chance to know their loved ones are being well taken care of.

In June of 2023, we held our summer picnic for all the Residents of the Hamden Housing Authority. The residents were happy to finally be attending the picnic and have an opportunity to see the entire community. It had been 2 years since we were able to have our summer picnic due to the pandemic. The residents were treated to their beloved DJ, who played all their favorite tunes while enjoying a delicious lunch which included hamburgers, hotdogs, chicken, salads, and a variety of desserts. During the summer of 2023, HHA had the ice cream truck visit each one of our properties four times. Twice in June and twice in July to offer free ice cream to all the residents. During the Christmas holiday, HHA gave Christmas gifts to our residents which included a holiday scarf, a holiday mug, hot cocoa, and sweet treats. They were also serenaded by the Southern Connecticut Baseball Team and mascot Otis the Owl singing Christmas carols while visiting all the Villages.

In 2022 HHA made the decision to hire Investigative consultants to aid in keeping our Residents and our communities safe. They monitor all our Villages as well as our Congregate facility throughout the week. This level of security has prevented suspicious and dangerous behavior and has made our residents feel much safer in their own homes.



## **Grants and Critical Needs Funding:**

### **Congregate:**

In 2022 our Congregate facility was awarded a SSHP grant in the amount of \$3.7 million dollars. This grant will cover the following much needed work such as exterior siding, insulation, new windows, a generator that will service the whole building, should it lose electricity, new heating / air-conditioning systems, repaving of parking area, 3 ADA compliant apartments and the remaining walk-in showers. Throughout 2023, Steve Ball along with Mrs. Cook spent countless hours coordinating the specifics for this rehab which included attending meetings with CHFA to help keep the rehab on task. In 2023, our maintenance staff renovated 16 bathrooms at our Congregate facility by removing the old tubs and installing new walk-in showers in units that became vacant. These walk-in showers are easier for our residents to use and much safer. In November of 2023 the contract for the Congregate rehab was signed and Secondino & Sons were hired to be the construction managers. The work is set to begin in February of 2024.

### **Affordable Housing:**

In the fall of 2022, Tri-Con Construction, whose bid was accepted by HHA, started the \$346,780 rehabilitation on the Affordable duplexes (4 units) on Morse Street, in Hamden. The scope of work was extensive as it included new energy efficient windows, doors, new sliding glass doors, new energy efficient heating / cooling systems, new bathrooms, which include bathtub/shower combo, sink, toilet, new parking areas with driveway, new sidewalks, new insulation, vinyl siding and new decks. The rehab was completed in November of 2023, and we are so pleased with the results.

In September and October of 2023, the Hamden Housing Authority hired Eco-Solar to install solar panels on our 4 units of family housing at a cost of \$39,300.00. All four of our Affordable units have electric heating which make it difficult for our residents to afford the outrageous electric bills. In some cases, their electric bill was more than their monthly rent. Solar energy offers great potential for our residents to save money on their monthly utility bills, and with utility bills trending upward, solar is likely to remain a good money-saving decision for years to come.



## **Facilities Report:**

There was so much accomplished in 2023 for the Housing Authority's Facilities department. For instance, on June 12<sup>th</sup> the Section 8 department underwent an extensive renovation to expand the office and add approximately 400 square feet. HHA hired Stanley Construction to manage and complete the project at a cost of \$25,800. This additional square footage was a tremendous help in improving the department workflow by giving each staff member a designated area in which they could maneuver and continue the work they do for their clients. The Section 8 office is now more spacious, efficient, and conducive to a better work environment.

With the Section 8 office expansion there was an opportunity to create a bigger office space for the maintenance staff as well as to give them a substantial storage garage to store all the equipment and supplies located at Centerville Village. A new Garage was purchased for the Centerville Property measuring 24ft x 24ft and cost \$34,626.00. Prior to the new garage, there were 2 sheds on the property that were relocated to Hamden Village and Mount Carmel. Providing these additional sheds on those properties will assist our maintenance staff, saving them time and money, by having the equipment and supplies right on site. In July of 2023, HHA purchased a brand-new truck in the amount of \$46,344. This vehicle, which was on back-order for about 1 year, is a great addition for our Maintenance department. Our Facilities also added high-tech cameras and exterior lighting for added security to all the properties. Also, there were 17 vacant units that had extensive renovations done in 2023.



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

HHA's Section 8 department manages 305 Voucher holders in Hamden, as well as a large portfolio of Section 8 Vouchers and RAP Program Certificates for the State of Connecticut Department of Housing through John D'Amelia & Associates for an additional 1,600 participants. Our mission to build strong communities begins with the understanding of and the huge responsibility we hold in helping families improve their lives through affordable housing.

Our Section 8 and RAP team works hard to process annual program activities such as recertifications, interim reexaminations, and tenant moves accurately and on time. HHA continues to require full annual Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections to ensure that the subsidized properties are being properly maintained. To fully meet the needs of our participants the Section 8 department installed a drop box in the main office at 51 Worth Avenue allowing participants more flexibility in submitting required documents to their caseworker at their convenience.

The Hamden Section 8 Program continues to be a HUD High Performer in the Section 8 Management Assessment Protocol (SEMAP) performed annually. The SEMAP assessment measures the performance of the HA through quality control inspections and file reviews performed by outside vendors who review and verify correct tenant rent calculations, verifications, and procedures in accordance with HUD regulations and the administrative plan.

In August of 2023, the Section 8 managers attended training regarding major changes to the section 8 program. In October the staff attended HUD's Housing Opportunity through Training & Modernization Act (HOTMA) training in preparation for the updated section 8 administrative plan and roll-out of the program on 1/1/2025. The training explained how the new plan is to be administered and the changes in the rental calculations, verifications of income and assets as well as upcoming changes to the inspection process.

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

The HHA Residents remain on the top of our priority list, and from the Resident Services Coordinator perspective, in 2023, HHA continued to assist in keeping our residents living independently by identifying potential problems before they become serious issues.

In 2023, we maintained contact with each resident by calling them once a week to check in on them. This approach was initiated in March of 2020, when the pandemic started. Residents still look forward to our weekly calls and have expressed how much they appreciate HHA taking the time to check on them.

Hazelann Cook, the Executive Director, continued to keep the focus on our Resident's wellbeing by emphasizing the importance of demonstrating to our community that they must not feel forgotten. Our organization works so hard to make sure they are well taken care of.

Weekly staff meetings have taken place 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. The Hamden Housing Authority under the leadership of Hazelann Cook continues to succeed.

## **Safety Committee:**

The safety Committee meets quarterly. Security precautions for staff and residents are discussed.

Security guards continue to patrol, by marked car and on foot, Centerville Village, Hamden Village, Mount Carmel and Congregate in the evenings. Everyone feels safer with their presence at our locations.

Windows at the main office were tinted with privacy tint to add extra safety and security for the staff. Also, new panic buttons were installed throughout the office.

Maintenance continues to sanitize the office. Air purifiers are in good working order. Filters are changed as required. A supply of COVID tests are kept on hand and available to staff as needed.

## **Website:**

In an increasingly connected world where many people are familiar with today's technology the Hamden Housing Authority's website operates around the clock, offering convenience and accessibility to our users right at their fingertips. The website is user friendly, informative and has proven to be a valuable resource for our communities. It is maintained daily to reflect any changes to our information to ensure the on-line user has the most accurate data.

Our website, which is [hamdenhousing.com](http://hamdenhousing.com), is a continuous work in progress and has evolved over the last 4 years. In 2023 there was a continual uploading of new resources and information such as waitlist status, portability instructions, how to report an income change, apartment listing, and Section 8 Payment standards. We continued to include the Annual Reports, Board Meeting minutes, the HUD Annual plan, including the Legal Notice for the Section 8 Department and the Monthly Newsletter.

The website plays a crucial role in today's digital landscape and has proven to be a very useful resource for our residents, program participants and on-line visitors.

## Closing Remarks:

When I think back on 2023 the one word that comes to mind is [Astonishing!](#) I am astonished how much we were able to accomplish last year. There were many improvements made to our Affordable housing on Morse Street with the Rehab, and the installation of the solar panels. The expansion of the Section 8 office, the maintenance staff's new office space, new truck, and the new garage at Centerville Village. There were improvements made to our security systems like the addition of high-tech cameras throughout all the villages. New exterior lights were installed on our buildings, as well as the continuation to have Investigative Consultants monitor our properties to provide a safe environment for our staff and Residents.

It would be remiss of me if I did not acknowledge and thank our Governing Board of Commissioners, for their leadership, knowledge, and endless support. The Hamden Housing Authority has benefited tremendously, and we are truly grateful for all that you do for the people we serve.

I'm thankful for my incredible staff who dedicate 100 percent of themselves every day while demonstrating what excellence looks like. Their hard work is deeply appreciated and does not go unnoticed. They say, "teamwork makes the dream work", well I can add that having this team makes coming to work a dream come true. It is an honor to work alongside those who are passionate about helping people and who take our commitment very seriously. We have the know-how and team in place to continue to build on HHA's mission to provide quality affordable housing.

I am pleased to report that the Hamden Housing Authority, once again, succeeded in achieving our Mission Statement in 2023, of providing safe, decent, and affordable housing to low-and moderate-income families.

Respectfully submitted,

*Hazelann B. Cook*

Hazelann B. Cook  
Executive Director

