MESSAGE FROM THE CEO:

Dear Friends,

2017 has been a year of progress, innovation and growth for CHA, and I am eager to share our most recent accomplishments with you. From achieving historic milestones at one of CHA’s first public housing developments last month to the college send-off of more CHA students than ever before, our efforts are paying off - and the results speak for themselves.

In just the last month we’ve joined our neighbors, residents and partners to break ground on the long awaited mixed-income site at Lathrop that, in its first phase, will bring 414 mixed-income apartments to Chicago’s North Side. We’ve also cut the ribbon on 58 newly-constructed rental apartments and townhomes at the grand opening of St. Edmund’s Oasis in Washington Park. And there is more to come before the year’s end as we work to renew and build stronger communities for all Chicago residents.

I am pleased to report that our investment in educational opportunities is paying great dividends: Last spring CHA received more scholarship applications than ever before and this fall awarded CHA students with the largest number of scholarships in the Authority’s history. This demand for education is the driving force behind a renewed CHA partnership with City Colleges of Chicago that will expand access to higher education for our residents.

Our seniors also play a critical role in our communities and at CHA. They comprise 25 percent of CHA’s public housing residents, and this year, CHA in its year-long “Year of the Senior” celebration, has hosted more than 70 special initiatives and programs to engage seniors and promote healthy living and aging.

I look forward to celebrating all the accomplishments of 2017 as the year comes to a close, and I am eager to continue the collaboration and dialogue that has allowed CHA to work collaboratively toward a strong and more accessible city.

As always, I welcome your feedback, and I look forward to your continued support.

Sincerely,
Eugene Jones, Jr.
Chief Executive Officer
Recently Lathrop Homes was the site of an historic event as neighbors, residents and development partners gathered to celebrate the long anticipated ground breaking for the redevelopment of one of the Chicago Housing Authority’s oldest developments. One of the first three public housing developments created at the dawn of the CHA in 1938, Lathrop’s redevelopment 80 years later as a mixed-income community harkens back to the intent of the original builders – affordable housing in an amenity rich neighborhood.

Situated along the North Branch of the Chicago River, when complete, the new Lathrop will provide both 1,116 apartments, open space and complementary retail options.

The groundbreaking marked the start of construction for the first phase of the development which includes the building or rehabilitation of an initial 414 public housing, affordable and market-rate apartments in 16 separate buildings north of Diversey Parkway.

Speaking at the groundbreaking, Lathrop resident and Local Advisory Council President Juanita Stevenson expressed the sentiments felt by many at the conclusion of a decade-long planning process. “There’s no place like home,” said Stevenson. “All I had to do was look in my own backyard. I want to thank you all for coming to our backyard and helping us to find that dream. Thank you.”

This first phase of work will begin north of Diversey Parkway and involve the complete renovation and modernization of the 16 historic buildings. Each location will be remodeled featuring contemporary floor plans and finishes, and they will all contain identical features and finishes reflecting modern designs.

This phase of work also includes the addition of a scenic state-of-the-art landscaped river walk property, creating new and expanded access to the Chicago River with amenities such as a dog park, children’s playground and kayak launch.

“This embodies our longstanding commitment to Lathrop residents and our work to bring more mixed-income housing to the North Side,” said CHA CEO Eugene Jones, Jr. “CHA is grateful for the partnership with residents, the City of Chicago and Lathrop Community Partners for making the vision for Lathrop a reality.”

As part of the Lathrop redevelopment, CHA remains committed to the construction or acquisition of another 625 apartments across the North Side of Chicago, 411 of which have already been identified.

“We are celebrating a new beginning for the Lathrop community as we renew our commitment to bringing more affordable housing, economic development opportunities, green space and newly expanded access to our beautiful Chicago River.”

- Mayor Emanuel
Affordable housing opportunities are expanding for Washington Park residents through the transformation of 14 vacant city lots into attractive new apartments and townhomes.

In an effort to deliver much-needed affordable housing stock to neighborhoods across Chicago, CHA recently joined St. Edmund’s Redevelopment Corporation (SERC) and dozens of community members to cut the ribbon on St. Edmund’s Oasis, 58 newly-constructed rental apartments and townhouses built on three scattered sites along 61st Street between Indiana and Prairie avenues, 19 of which are reserved for those on the Authority’s housing waiting list.

A mix of one, two, three and four-bedroom apartments, all offer spacious floor plans, Energy Star® appliances, central air conditioning, dishwashers, washing machines/dryers, ceiling fans and mini-blind window treatments. Landscaping around the buildings includes gardens and an outdoor play lot.

Rev. Richard L. Tolliver, President and CEO of SERC, expressed the excitement evident in the crowd. “With the completion of St. Edmund’s Oasis we celebrate and continue the momentum that has brought new residents and renewal to this historic and important Chicago community. Together we celebrate the past as we build our future.”

Oasis is St. Edmund’s twelfth housing development and adds to the almost 700 units SERC has built in the last 27 years making it the largest developer in Washington Park. Since 1990, the non-profit has developed 690 mixed-income multi-family housing units in the community, stimulating over $104 million in neighborhood investments.

The $20.5 million development was supported by a number of partners. The CHA provided a $5.7 million loan to the project. Department of Planning and Development (DPD) assistance included $6 million in tax-exempt bonds to help bridge financing during construction, Low Income Housing Tax Credits that generated $7.1 million in equity, a $5.5 million loan, $156,000 in donations tax credit equities, and the sale of 14 vacant, City-owned lots for $1. BMO Harris purchased the privately placed bonds and Hunt Capital Partners syndicated the low-income housing tax credits. Pre-development financing was provided by the Chicago Community Loan Fund.

“This beautiful development is another example of how CHA is investing in a way that creates needed housing and contributes to neighborhood renewal,” said CHA CEO Eugene Jones, Jr. “I am pleased to join our other partners who helped make this latest effort by St. Edmund’s a reality.”

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Clergy Driving Washington Park Development As Interest Moves To Woodlawn
DAN INFO | Sam Cholke
LEARNING AND FUN ARE THE FOCUS FOR 900 SENIORS AT INAUGURAL SENIOR SYMPOSIUM

Seniors comprise 25 percent of CHA’s public housing residents with nearly 8,000 seniors residing in 56 CHA senior buildings across the city. This year marked the CHA’s year-long celebration of the “Year of the Senior” with more than 70 special initiatives and programs to engage seniors and promote healthy living and aging. These included two days of dancing and fun at Senior Music Fest; A Day of Service with seniors attended by CHA staff; Older Americans Month featuring more than 50 special, themed senior celebrations; an intergenerational On the Table Event in conjunction with the Chicago Community Trust; and Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s citywide Senior Fest at Millennium Park celebrating thousands of Chicago seniors.

In September, the Authority held an inaugural Senior Symposium which drew more than 900 residents to McCormick Place South for the event.

It was a day filled with workshops including, “Budgeting on a Fixed-Income,” “How to Peacefully Resolve Conflict and Stop Bullying,” “Safeguarding Yourself from Frauds & Scams,” and “Healthy Living for Brain & Body.” Broadcasting legend Merri Dee regaled the crowd with a speech on her efforts to parlay a legendary career and personal history into social advocacy, and over a dozen exhibitors provided the seniors with information and more than a few memorable ‘take—home’ items.

“It is the Year of the Senior at CHA, and interacting with seniors is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job,” said CHA CEO Eugene Jones, Jr. “From day one, I have made it a point to embrace and cherish our seniors, and I’m encouraged that so many of our seniors came out to mingle, learn and have some fun with us.”

Including the Symposium, CHA has been able to facilitate events with a total attendance of more than 6,000 seniors, and there’s more to come. Later this year more than 1,700 seniors will gather for the annual Senior Holiday Gala, “It’s all the way Live! In a Winter Wonderland,” featuring comedian George Wallace.

DEMAND FOR EDUCATION DRIVES NEW CHA PARTNERSHIP WITH CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO

Those wishing to start their college experience in Chicago now have greater resources available to them. In August, the CHA and City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) announced the expansion of Partners in Education – a program that pays for all tuition costs, books and fees for CHA residents and HCV participants who attend one of the colleges in pursuit of a degree or certificate. Cyntisha Taylor, a CHA resident who earned an Associate’s Degree in general education from Kennedy King College, is one of the recent students to take advantage of this opportunity. She had enrolled at National Louis University, but was forced to quit in 2015 when she became ineligible for Pell Grants.

“Once I found out that I exceeded the Pell Grant, I had the mind-set that I would just get a job and put my career goals aside so I could pay my loans and go back to school one day,” Taylor said.

Her college plans were on hold until a professor encouraged her to look into applying for the Partners in Education program. With her tuition paid for by CHA, she was able to complete her associate’s degree and now plans to go back to National Louis University to complete her bachelor’s degree and become a juvenile corrections officer. “Growing up in the projects, and always seeing family members in and out of the system, I always had a passion for helping people,” said Taylor.

CHA will add $400,000 to the Partners in Education program for the 2017/2018 academic year, bringing the total to $1.2 million. Over the past six years, the program has enrolled over 2,200 students. With more CHA students than ever before pursuing higher education, CHA’s Board recently approved a $1.2 million intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with CCC to expand these opportunities. In the program, many students are the head of their household and key breadwinners. The average student is 35 years old and over 80 percent are women. This program is intended to support the needs of these students and helps address challenges like transportation to and from college, child care services, job placement and transfer assistance so they can earn their bachelor’s degrees.

CHA education partnership puts higher education in reach

SUNTIMES | Rachel Hinton
Before coming to the Chicago Housing Authority, Homer Gary taught at Chicago Public Schools and spent four years in the Army prior to that. He was employed at CTA when a friend at CHA encouraged him to apply for the position of Community and Internal Relations Aid in the Tenant Relations department.

Gary got the job and started work on October 10, 1966. Almost three weeks later, he married his wife, Yvette, on October 29, 1966. He has been with both ever since.

"If I could do another 50 [years] at CHA, I probably would," said Gary, who will retire on November 1 after 51 years of service. "But let me get out while the timing is good. I've enjoyed CHA. I really have. CHA has been very good to me. But there are a few things I want to do before I leave this world."

During his half-century at CHA, Gary saw the CHA during its most difficult times, and at its best. He saw it when crime ran rampant, and when buildings had no heat. But he's also seen improvements come at breakneck pace. He says that today, what he sees are mixed-income communities where public housing residents live side-by-side with market-rate homeowners. He sees beautiful buildings that blend in with neighborhoods that can't be identified as public housing. He sees residents graduating from college, obtaining good jobs, buying homes and becoming self-sufficient.

He says he admires CHA for the effort it has put into making public housing better.

While quality affordable housing is essential to assuring family well-being, housing alone is not enough to help families or individuals achieve their goals. It's because of this that the residents and staff at Altgeld Gardens, one of the CHA's oldest and largest family housing developments, have embraced JobsPlus.

JobsPlus is a place-based workforce development program created to help public housing residents gain employment, increase their incomes and save money from their increased earnings. Funded with a four-year grant of $3 million from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2015, JobsPlus offers residents a variety of programs on work readiness, training and financial literacy. It also connects residents to potential employers and builds community support for this work.

With great initial success - 106 residents have completed a training/certification program, 364 have sought and received job search assistance and 337 have begun new part-time or full-time employment since the inception of the grant - participants are being offered a new element. Introduced in 2017, Networking-in-the-Neighborhood events are informal gatherings where all members of the Altgeld Community - residents, security staff and property managers - convene to discuss issues, forge a common agenda and set priorities for action. To date, there have been five successful networking meetings with roughly 50 participants at each.

Entering the third year of the four-year grant last month, the program's new networking initiative looks to be a successful way to support community work and development now and into the future.
Close to 1,000 property owners, managers, investors and housing industry professionals gathered for the annual Housing Choice Voucher Owner Symposium – the eighth sponsored by CHA. Participants came to network, learn from industry experts and explore what the growing Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program at CHA is all about.

“This event allows landlords to learn anything and everything they need to know about property management,” said Katie Ludwig, Chief Housing Choice Voucher Officer at CHA. “From becoming a landlord, to how Housing Choice Vouchers work, to how we inspect properties and what we look for at these properties – this program is helping us collectively build stronger families, build stronger neighborhoods and ultimately build a stronger city.”

With dozens of vendors, educational seminars, panel discussions and a keynote address presented by City of Chicago Deputy Mayor Andrea Zopp, the event was a convening of hundreds of individuals who are working together to expand quality housing opportunities across Chicago.

“This event is amazing,” said HCV Property Owner Whitley Temple. “There’s a lot that I’m learning including everything you need in order to close on a property or maintain a property. Everything is here. I’ve taken five to six pages of notes and I’m going to review everything.”

Whether landlords are new to the program or have participated for over a decade, this symposium connects individuals with the relevant resources they need to improve and successfully manage homes for HCV families. Today, nearly 47,000 HCV holders are living in all of Chicago’s 77 community areas, and CHA is committed equally to supporting the needs of voucher holders and the HCV landlords that offer housing.

Watch the Recap: Click Here