



Eau Claire County Housing Authority

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY AG & RESOURCE CENTER
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To the Honorable Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors
Annual Liaison Report for the Year 2021

Background

The EC County Housing Authority (HA) was established by action of the County Board on March 20, 1973 according to State Statute. While the HA is its own entity, it is still connected to the County through the County Board; two County Board members are required to be commissioners on the Housing Authority Board.

The HA was initially established to administer EC County HUD funds for home rehabilitation loans. Our jurisdiction is primarily Eau Claire County, outside the City limits of Eau Claire. Since initial conception, the HA has applied for and received a variety of State and Federal grants bringing many dollars into Eau Claire County to help low-income residents pay rent, buy and repair homes.

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program (first Federal HUD grant received in 1987) provides 1.6 million dollars annually making rent assistance payments directly to landlords on behalf of very-low-income tenants.

The HA received Federal HUD Public Housing development grants starting in 1994 to purchase and rehab existing housing stock (13 homes) into rental units, and to build 15 single family homes and duplexes in the City of Altoona and Town of Washington. These homes are rented to very-low-income residents. The tenants may also participate in our Family Self-Sufficiency and Homeownership Programs. Once self-sufficient, the tenants can purchase these homes. This is a revolving program where funds are taken from the sales of the homes and recycled to purchase replacement units. This program annually brings in about \$100,000 in HUD revenues, to assist in program operations and maintenance. The subsidies help keep housing costs lower for tenants while they are working toward becoming self-sufficient.

In 2004 the HA was able to acquire the Fairchild Nursing Home. The HA applied for and received grant dollars from several sources bringing about \$1,140,100 into the community. The building was rehabbed and developed into 11 Senior (55+) independent rental units, plus a common area kitchen, living room and laundry area. Tenants living in this building receive Section 8 Vouchers, so their rents are kept at affordable levels. There is one vacant wing we hope to develop into three more units when we can secure funding.

We are always looking for opportunities to expand and provide housing assistance in our area. Since April 2016, the City of Altoona Housing Authority has contracted with our HA to manage their 36 units of Public Housing (24 one-bedroom units at Golden Acres One and 6 two- and three-bedroom duplex units).

In addition to these rental programs – the Housing Authority has continued to apply for and administer home rehabilitation loan programs. We have received several grant allocations over the years from various funding sources. Repaid loans are revolving, meaning as funds come in, we continue to loan these dollars out to homeowners and landlords to make necessary repairs to their homes. These loans are 0% interest, and payments are generally not required, while the recipients remain in the homes.

In addition to Eau Claire County HA funding, we also manage CDBG revolving fund programs for Eau Claire County, the City of Augusta, and Village of Fairchild. In 2013 the State of Wisconsin began to distribute its Small Cities CDBG funds to seven regional consortia rather than to individual municipalities. We are part of the West Central Regional Housing Consortia. Chippewa County is the lead agency in our region, administered by the Chippewa County Housing Authority (CHA). In 2015, CHA sub-contracted to Eau Claire County Housing Authority asking us to assist in the administration of Eau Claire, Buffalo and Pepin Counties.

Eau Claire County HA also has down payment/closing cost assistance and homeownership and financial counseling programs to assist low-income residents wanting to purchase homes in Eau Claire County.

2021 Activity

SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

The total monthly payments to landlords in 2021 averaged \$102,618. The monthly voucher payment per family in 2021 averaged \$411. The length of time that a family participates in the program averages about five-years. Total rent expenditures for the program to date equals about \$22,500,000.

Since 2018, we have been able to increase the number of households we are able to assist because we have applied for and received special allocations of voucher funding from HUD. We have Memorandums of Understanding with area supportive service agencies to coordinate rent assistance along with other needed services to better assist our clients. We currently have standard vouchers for 211 income eligible households, 10 VASH (Veterans) vouchers, 43 Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers which are for families needing adequate housing to regain custody of their children or to keep their children from being removed from their household. FUP can also be used for Foster Youth leaving the system. In addition to these, we also have 79 Mainstream (MS) vouchers for non-elderly disabled adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The agency also has committed 10 vouchers for Movin-Up to be used in conjunction with the Local Housing Coalition to provide vouchers to clients leaving the Coalition's Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program and are ready to "move-up" and leave the PSH.

We are very happy to report our total voucher program size increased from 221 in 2018 to our current 353 vouchers. This is a 60% increase.

PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAM

The Eau Claire County Housing Authority currently owns 15-Public Housing units. Under this program, tenants pay a reduced rent based on 30% of their monthly income. HUD subsidies are received to assist in the maintenance and management costs of the program.

Net rents received from public housing tenants averaged \$196 per month during 2021, reflecting monthly household incomes of about \$1,332 each. \$19,300 is currently on deposit into the FSS escrow accounts of public housing families.

Under the Housing Authority's Homeownership Plan, thirteen families have purchased their housing units. At least ten other families have purchased homes other than their public housing unit. We currently have one family who is self-sufficient and hopes to purchase her home in 2022.

FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY (FSS) PROGRAM

This program is operated in conjunction with the Voucher and Public Housing programs. Under these programs, rental assistance and low-rent housing occupancy are coordinated with public and private resources to enable eligible families to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency. A total of 369 families have participated in the FSS program; three families are currently under contract and participating fully in the program. So far, 72 families have achieved self-sufficiency under the program, and \$282,714 in escrow account funds has been disbursed to 64 families since 1995. We continue to conduct outreach to increase participants in this program.

HOUSING REHABILITATION

The Housing Authority continues to administer reused revolving funds from past CDBG and HOME, Augusta, and Village of Fairchild CDBG programs. These programs, plus with our contracts with the Regional Program, our agency has assisted in 10 projects in 2021 totaling \$350,000. As of 12/31/21, we are responsible for ongoing maintenance of around 200 mortgages totaling \$2,324,226. Our goal is to issue at least 10 loans each year averaging \$40,000 each.

HOUSING COST REDUCTION INITIATIVE (HCRI) PROGRAM

Repaid State HCRI and HODAP security deposit loan funds from a prior grant are re-used to assist additional families who are leasing up under our Housing Choice Voucher or Public Housing Programs. Only three security deposit loans (\$1,500) were made during 2021 using revolving funds. These loans are at 0% interest; however, the recipients are required to make minimum monthly payments of \$25.

We still have an open grant from the State of Wisconsin from HCRI/HOME for down payment/closing cost and home rehab totaling \$30,400. These funds must be spent by 12/31/2022.

The HA currently has two full-time staff positions: Executive Director, and an Eligibility Specialist, plus two 3/4-time Housing Assistant/Eligibility Specialists. We contract out for inspection and rental unit maintenance services.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Eau Claire County Housing Authority:

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Supervisor, Eau Claire County Board

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