

Attention: Owners/Landlords/Agents

On June 21, 2017, Rochester City Council adopted ordinance No. 2017-163. This amends Chapter 63 of the Municipal Code to include housing discrimination on the basis of source of income as unlawful.

More information can be found at CityOfRochester.gov/CouncilProceedings

Rochester Housing Authority is an essential housing resource for the greater Rochester area providing quality housing opportunities and related services for those in need.

Mission

675 W. Main Street
Rochester, NY 14611



Rochester Housing Authority times

Opening doors to brighter futures where we're headed



A message from the Executive Director

Rochester Housing Authority (RHA) provides exemplary Public Housing and Section 8 services for more than 12,000 families in the Greater Rochester community. Our Section Eight program is a HUD High Performer with a score of 100%, and Public Housing is a HUD Standard Performer with

a score of 89, just one point shy of being a HUD High Performer. With our Board's vision of Shared Leadership, we're working to continue improving our housing products and services in all areas, especially customer care for our residents.

Since joining the team, I have sponsored Resident Town Hall Meetings at every housing development to better understand the needs from their perspective, and the recently appointed Executive Team has made extensive developments in these areas.

Additionally, during my first 45 days, I held a listening session with all departments in the agency. The purpose of these meetings was to hear what support and resources the team need to complete tasks assigned to them. I also learned that we need a robust set of meaningful quality controls to ensure accountability at every level.

We are positioning the agency for greater opportunities by changing the way we do business. Some examples of that change include revamping organizational culture through continuous training, mutual accountability, and improved performance management. The agency has done well over

the years; however, we are also called upon to continue to improve our business practice by utilizing new resources and other successful best practices and innovations.

Rashondra Martin, Esq., Executive Personnel Administrator, oversees the Human Resources (HR) Department and Compliance Team, who is working to create a culture of accountability that will produce excellence in business operations. Development of new Associate recruiting, onboarding and retention processes; execution of more than 15 self-conducted or sponsored training for Associates in quality customer care, anti-harassment, recruitment and selection; and a revised Employee Handbook are just some of the ways we're working to redefine company culture.

Paul Foti, Director of Operations, oversees the Finance and Procurement Departments. He is utilizing his vast fiscal background to improve financial reporting and tracking with trend analysis and good fiscal assumptions for the agency. RHA has an \$80,000,000 annual operating budget and being good stewards of public funds is important to us all. In the face of potential federal budget cuts, we're approaching budget management more strategically, which will result in improved monitoring and sustainability.

Cynthia Herriott, Compliance, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer is leading this new office, created by the Board of Commissioners who will ensure RHA is following agency and HUD compliance procedures, and meeting stated requirements. This department enhances the Authority's overall ability to meet performance goals by implementing and tracking many quality control processes, and procedures.

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Executive Briefings

Administration Headquarters
675 W. Main Street
Rochester, NY 14611
585-697-3600

Application Processing Center
270 Lake Avenue
Rochester, NY 14608
585-697-7180

Resident Services Center
495 Upper Falls Boulevard
Rochester, NY 14605
585-232-1112



Continued from front cover

Shawn Burr, Deputy Executive Director, oversees Information Technology (IT) and Resident Services Departments. Under his guidance, the agency is compliant with HUD's Capital Fund requirements. The Information Technology Department is working on completing the largest

technology system revamp in the agency's history, including a website overhaul and infrastructure improvements. This new hardware and software will greatly reduce administrative burden and improve performance outcomes.

John Hill
Executive Director, Rochester Housing Authority



We are now on Facebook! Like our page to receive real-time updates and helpful information about upcoming events, activities, and opportunities available for you and your family. [Visit www.facebook.com/RochesterHousingAuthority](http://www.facebook.com/RochesterHousingAuthority)

Name the newsletter and win \$100!

Help us get a name for our newsletter and win! To make this YOUR newsletter, we need your help! Our newsletter needs a new name for its fresh look and content. We're asking residents and participants to submit ideas to us on our Facebook page for the chance to win a \$100 gift card in a random drawing. **Submit no later than June 30 to be entered to win.**



Creating new *community partnerships*

The Continuum of Care (CoC) and others conduct counts on the number of families residing in Monroe County shelters.

2015	2016	2017
762 Families	860 Families	817 Families

The counts from 2015 through 2017 above highlight the concerning fact that there are not enough affordable housing units available for many homeless families. RHA is stepping

up to the plate as a reliable community partner to help solve this challenge facing our community. RHA is currently working with other partners who provide shelter services to develop a new partnership where RHA will make 200 units of permanent Public Housing available for qualified families who currently reside in the shelter system. Once complete, this agreement allows other needy families to move into the already crowded shelter system as they await housing.

Resident spotlight

Judy Sophia is a resident at Blackwell Estates, one of our Public Housing locations in the Town of Henrietta. Blackwell is a senior designated site with mostly one bedroom units. Judy lives here with her trusted pet dog and friend, Milo.

Judy serves as President of the Blackwell Resident Council and is a Member of the Jurisdiction-Wide Resident Council commonly called "JWRC." She enjoys sponsoring events and socials for her residents, keeping them active and engaged.

"In 2011, I was asked to help prepare for an event, then I was asked to be Secretary, and shortly afterward, I became President," says Judy.

"During the recent wind storms, Judy being without power herself, unselfishly went around her site to check on other residents and brought them food and made sure they were okay," said Sandy Whitney, Director of Public Housing.

Judy is a true leader, hard worker and has one of the most active councils in the Rochester Housing Authority.



Important resident notice: Residents of Public Housing are not to allow companies who provide satellite services to install dishes or run wiring without first receiving written permission from your management office. Note: doing so is a lease violation.

Find Success with FSS

The Rochester Housing Authority's **Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS)** promotes and assists individuals and families in their goals of achieving greater self-sufficiency and independence by working closely with staff and community partners. RHA's FSS team helps families develop a plan and works closely with them for up to five years to achieve the goals set for themselves in their individualized plan.

This program also allows families to escrow, which means you can earn huge savings without being assessed a higher rent when your income increases while you are in the FSS

program. As income grows, so do the escrow savings with interest. You will receive 100% of your savings upon completion of your FSS goals. Currently, there are 109 families participating in the FSS program with a total combined escrow savings of more than \$324,525. **Get involved and move toward self-sufficiency today.**

Recent Success Story: Laquanda Simmons started her FSS family plan with RHA in 2015 with goals to restore her credit and own a home. Laquanda worked with her RHA case manager and the community partners. Her credit score increased by over 63 points, in just the first year alone. She was also accepted into the Flower City Habitat for Humanity's Homeownership program. She and her family completed over 300-hours of sweat equity and saved the \$2,300 needed to purchase her OWN home.

Because of her commitment to succeed, and the help of her RHA FSS case manager, she and her family are now living in their new home.

Open Slots Available – join the FSS program today to:

- Increase your credit score
- Increase your income
- Become more self-sufficient
- Purchase your very own home
- Earn your high school diploma or college degree
- Start your own business
- Earn matching savings in an escrow account

Complete the Family Self-Sufficiency Interest Form at RochesterHousing.org/forms/FSS-Interest-Form



Congratulations to our recent FSS grads

Our Resident Service Department recently held a graduation party to celebrate the success of recent FSS graduates. Together, these participants saved more than \$13,000. Congratulations to all our graduates on completing the program and becoming self-sufficient!



Job placement and training opportunities



Rochester Housing Authority wants you

RHA's Resident Services Department operates the Section 3 program and is looking for Public Housing residents and Section Eight participants who either already have "job ready" skills or would like to obtain job readiness skills through training. The department is in the process of rebuilding the Section 3 program, which will place residents and participants with vendors who have RHA contracts.

The Resident Services Department is also working to develop many additional training through community partnerships to help those who want to get on the path to a more prosperous future of higher income and independence for you and your family.

Complete your section 3 interest form online today at RochesterHousing.org/forms/Section-3-Training-and-Employment-Form. Once we receive your submission, we'll contact you for a follow-up. You can also visit or write the Resident Services Office located at 495 Upper Falls Blvd.

RHA residents and leaders go to Washington D.C.

In March, agency staff and four residents attended the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) conference in Washington, D.C.

Meetings were held with the staffers of four of our Congressional Delegates where RHA residents and staff discussed the challenges facing our agency. This was the first time residents had this experience. Meetings were held in the offices of Senator Charles E. Schumer, Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, Congressman Chris Collins and Congressman Brian Higgins.

(L to R), John Hill, Dot Tucker, President-JWRC, Shawn Burr, Cynthia Herriott, Dwight Moss, President-Danforth East, Merilyn Carter, President-Lexington Court, Annie Davis, Vice President-Hudson Ridge (not pictured).



Reorganizing Section 8

The Housing Choice Voucher program, commonly called Section Eight, is the largest RHA program with approximately 10,000 families and 2,000 landlords currently participating. In this program, families using a housing voucher, can rent a unit with a private owner in the community of their choice.

Over the years, the Section Eight program has grown to administer more than 9,500 vouchers. However, the system of quality delivery of the program lagged and was not relevant to the needs of the stakeholders. Strapped with a high administrative burden and a need of improving program services, Jacquetta Harris, the new Section Eight Director, and her staff, engaged in many hours of planning and analysis. They performed a **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)** analysis of the entire program and now, through this massive reorganization, have changed the way the program does business and service delivery.

Keeping the program relevant is a high priority for RHA. Our new operations model is a "small unit" approach with more manageable responsibilities rather than each staff being responsible for a wide range of responsibilities.

With the new reorganized department already operating, new landlords are invited to see the changes and join in by helping us expand housing choices by becoming a participating landlord. The planning and implementation of the new process has taken nearly six months, but we are now ready, willing, and able to serve you better. With a concentration on customer care and program efficiency, the reorganization is already paying off. Complaints are down, and staff morale is up!

The chart below shows the separate Units within the department.

Letters from Leasing



Eligibility and Portability Unit: Staff in this unit administer wait list management; Conduct voucher briefings; Eligibility calculations; Conduct background checks; And portability (out and in).

Recertification Unit: Staff in this unit manage income verification; Transfers; Respond to emails; Respond to phone calls; Audit files; and calculations for HCV, project based, VASH, and the Shelter Plus Care Program.

Lease and Payments Unit: Staff in this unit oversee leasing up participants; Enter landlord information, abatements/lifts; Reasonable accommodations; Change of ownership; Affordability; and process payment adjustments.

Compliance Unit: Staff in this unit handle compliance issues; Hearings; and fraud.

Audit and Training Unit: Staff in this unit manage new hire training and department file auditing to ensure adherence to department policy and procedures.



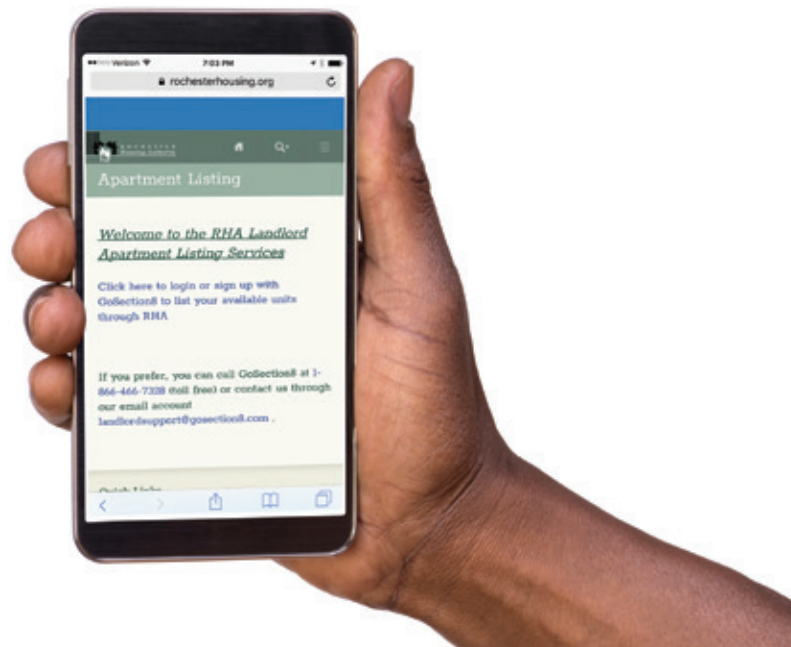
Section eight's new business hours

Effective May 18, 2017, the Section Eight office hours are Monday – Thursday: 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. and Fridays 8:30 A.M. to 12 noon.

Supporting your Journey

Apartment hunting made easier

We are now partnered with www.GoSection8.com, a website that provides an enhanced platform for listing rental properties online. Listings are available to potential HCV (Section 8) tenants seeking apartment units, duplexes, single-family homes or townhomes in the private market, all over the country. Landlords can also post their listings on our website at www.RochesterHousing.org/Apartment-Listing



Celebrating Completed projects—Garson Avenue

On January 17, 2017, we cut the ribbon at 54-66 Garson Avenue, a rehabilitated public housing property in the Marketview Heights neighborhood. The project included updates to both the interior and exterior of the 4-unit site using RHA's 2016 HUD Capital Fund Grant. City representation included Mayor Lovely Warren and City Council Members Elaine Spaul and Michael Patterson.

RHA plans to continue feeding the pipeline for change with four additional comprehensive modernization projects slated to begin this year. Interested in working with us?

[Visit us online at www.RochesterHousing.org/Procurement](http://www.RochesterHousing.org/Procurement)

RHA welcomes new advisory groups

As part of the reorganization process, one of the new initiatives we have implemented is RHA now has a Section Eight Landlord Advisory Group and Section Eight Participant Advisory Group who meet bi-monthly to help us continue to bring valuable improvements to the Section Eight program. The agency is currently engaged in activities that will “change the face of public housing” and improve the quality of life for residents.

Changing the face of public housing

Who says public housing needs to look like public housing to be public housing?

— John Hill
Executive Director

In our five-year Strategic Plan, we've committed to providing quality and affordable housing for the community. The “Changing the Face of Public Housing” initiative was started earlier this year as a launching pad for structural and functional changes across RHA properties over the next several years.

We want to literally change the face of public housing by providing our residents with quality, safe and desirable places to live, but also by positioning the agency as a developer of affordable housing. We plan to do this by growing

and building opportunities for modernization and community development that will stabilize neighborhoods and increase investments.



I want to thank the Rochester Housing Authority for launching its ‘Changing the Face of Public Housing’ initiative, which extends the right to safe, decent and affordable housing to all citizens regardless of their income. “People who live in a place they are proud to call home are in a better position to help us create more jobs, safer more vibrant neighborhoods and better educational opportunities for all of our citizens.”

— Lovely Warren, Mayor



Pardon Our Dust, Development in Progress



Moving forward with development

The Development Team is ramping up plans for development activities by engaging architectural and engineering firms to develop drawings that will continue to move our Changing the Face of Public Housing initiative forward.

The agency is now reviewing drawings for several projects including Federal Street, Waring, and Shirley Street. This is the beginning of the “development pipeline.”

Once activity funding is secured for each project and we begin construction, it will create economic growth opportunities across our county.

