

Strengthening **OUR**  
COMMUNITY  
2010

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY

**IN MEMORIAM OF  
DEBORAH J. BARTON**  
SEPTEMBER 27, 1952, THROUGH APRIL 4, 2009

For many years, Deb Barton brought her dedication, knowledge, and indefatigable work ethic to the management of complex finances of the Springfield Housing Authority. She left us much too soon, but both the SHA and we as individuals are better for our association with her. Thankfully, Deb was able to enjoy the honor of having our new Neighborhood Network Center named after her. It is a fitting honor, because the Center embodies the best hopes of this organization for a better future for our residents, a cause to which Deb gave her all every day.

**– William Abrashkin, Executive Director, Springfield Housing Authority**



Attending the dedication of the Deborah J. Barton Neighborhood Network Center were Deb's grandson Drew Hansen, daughter Jennifer Hansen, grandson Quentin Hansen, and son-in-law David Hansen.



# A NEW VISION YIELDS TANGIBLE RESULTS

“Internally, it has been a year of step-by-step strengthening of our operations. Externally, it has been a year of forging connections within and beyond the greater Springfield community. Both are needed to do the best possible job of serving our residents.”

**William Abrashkin, Report of the Executive Director for 2009**

It really is a simple premise: if we improve the management of our properties and services, and increase the self-sufficiency of our residents, the city of Springfield as a whole will benefit. Changing that premise into a reality is much more complicated, of course, but we are already seeing the positive results of doing just that.

Over the past several years, the Springfield Housing Authority (SHA) has focused on increasing its core organizational strengths so that we might be a better neighbor to our fellow citizens in Springfield. To that end, we are improving administrative operations and enhancing our properties throughout the city. The SHA has been successful in attracting additional funding through

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## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY



**L to R: Willie Thomas, Commissioner, Melinda Pellerin-Duck, Treasurer, William Abrashkin, Executive Director, Raymond Warren, Vice Chairman, Eugenia Choiniere, Assistant Secretary, Timothy Babcock, Chairman**

ROSS Grants to increase the health, educational, and vocational support for our residents so that they, too, can participate in our community in new and meaningful ways, and has recently won over \$15 million in state grants to improve our properties and leverage greater federal funding in the future.

Our economic impact is felt within Springfield. With over 2,300 federal and state units spread over 27 developments in the city, we are Springfield's largest residential property owner. Studies

show that our annual budget, which exceeds \$30 million, has an economic spinoff effect of more than twice that amount. The SHA provides jobs, hires contractors, buys supplies, and pumps approximately \$17 million into the local economy through its rental assistance programs.


We are working with a number of private and public sector organizations to address the community's most pressing needs. Through the Housing First program, the SHA has helped get

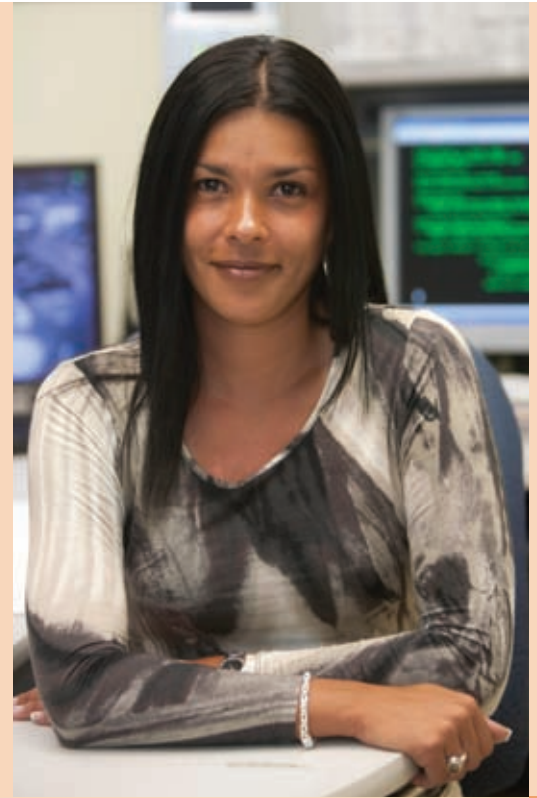
homeless individuals off the streets and into safe housing. Once their living situation is stabilized, these individuals can receive critical services to address the issues that led to their homelessness. We are also working to promote homeownership and to provide employment training, job search services, education from pre-school to adult, and numerous senior services. Our nonprofit subsidiary steps in as a court-appointed receiver where properties and residents have been abandoned by owners.

Our staff members participate in many projects in the city—from mentoring public school students to providing training and supervision to vocational students—and in many organizations, including the Regional Employment Board and the South End revitalization coalition.

The SHA has been bestowed with an honor by the residents of Springfield—the opportunity to provide key services and assistance to many of the most vulnerable in our community. These include families in need of safe housing, elderly who need care, individuals looking for a new start, and children who will be part of our future. It is a role that we take very seriously and work hard to fulfill every day. The staff and Board of Commissioners of the Springfield Housing Authority are committed to making SHA an exemplary leader within the community and a partner with the city as we continue to increase our contribution to a better quality of life for its residents.

Board of Commissioners  
Springfield Housing Authority

  
Timothy Babcock  
Board Chair



MEET THE  
SHA STAFF

### ROSA LEBRON

Public Safety Manager

I work in collaboration with the Springfield Police Department and the Springfield Housing Authority District Managers to help identify and solve problems to ensure a safe and secure environment for Springfield's residents. Together, we make our residents aware of the services that are available for their specific needs, applying conflict resolution and demystifying the criminal justice process.

# STRENGTHENING ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

Full Staff, Springfield Housing Authority



## **ENHANCING** the SHA's operations

started at the top. The objectives of this operational improvement effort included creating a higher degree of professionalism and accountability within the organization, as well as restructuring it to become more efficient. The assistant executive directors' responsibilities have been upgraded to those of chief operating officers and now include authority over every part of the SHA's operations under the overall supervision of the executive director. Intermediate levels of reporting have been eliminated where possible in favor of direct reports to the Executive Department.

Throughout the SHA, new training programs, procedures, certifications, and program models abound. Specific examples of reorganization and improvement include the following:

- Reorganization of the Finance Department following the recommendations of the SHA's CPA/management consulting firm
- Stabilization and upgrades to the SHA's information technology systems
- A new Legal Department to enforce fair and uniform standards of conduct for residents and employees alike
- A new Human Resources Department to assist our employees and help ensure compliance with governing laws and regulations
- A new annual inspections system that has already resulted in \$50,000 in savings
- Technical assistance from the Cambridge Housing Authority, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on improving the SHA's operations
- Extensive training of property managers and foremen in unit inspections and lease enforcement, provided by DHCD and the SHA's Legal Department



## Reed Village

One of the most exciting projects undertaken by the SHA in recent years was recently approved by HUD: "federalization" of the 482 state family housing units at Duggan Park, Reed Village, and Robinson Gardens. This shift, funded in part by federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act "stimulus funds," is a very important development for the SHA and the city of Springfield. Federalization increases the amount of money available to improve these developments which has a positive impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. It also helps the local economy. When the SHA spends money on improvements, contractors, and supplies, local businesses benefit. Successful federalization of these developments including a state grant of \$15 million to bring them up to the HUD's Housing Quality Standards, is projected to create approximately \$75 million in economic activity in the area over the next five years.



## ANICIA ROMAN-TEXIDOR

Employment Specialist

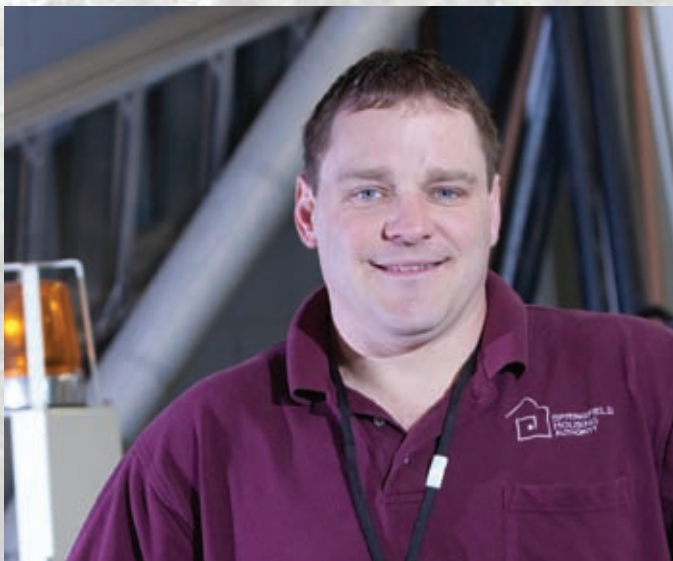
I support and guide disadvantaged individuals and low-income families through the job search process, as well as provide counseling and intensive training to help them know where they want to be. Our families have found improvement and success in their lives by acquiring the skills and experience they need to obtain jobs that pay a living wage while avoiding detours along the way and transitioning back into the workforce.



## KEITH BARLOW

Maintenance Mechanic I

First and foremost, I take pride in my work. I make sure that when I do a job for a tenant, I do it neatly and to the best of my ability. I keep the unit area clean and safe for all.



# RESIDENT SERVICES





## THE GOAL

of the SHA Resident Services Department is to improve the quality of life for all residents. The job that our community has entrusted us with is indeed a critical one: assist the most vulnerable people in the community. The specific objectives of the department go much further, however. Where appropriate, the Resident Services Department seeks to promote economic growth and self-sufficiency. The SHA is continuously seeking ways to help its residents lead more fulfilling, productive, and independent lives.

Construction of the Deborah J. Barton Neighborhood Network Center, located at 160 Nursery Street, was completed in 2009. Deborah J. Barton was a 23-year employee of the SHA who served as the organization's chief financial officer. Ms. Barton passed away on April 4, 2009, just days after her retirement from the SHA. Built with a federal grant of approximately \$900,000, the center is a 1,700-square-foot addition to the Community Room at the John J. Sullivan Apartments. It was designed and built by local companies, and was dedicated in Deb's name on March 19, 2009. The Barton Neighborhood Network Center serves as a one-stop self-sufficiency resource to help residents increase their work-related skills and enhance their opportunities for employment. It provides GED classes—which have attracted over 40 students to date—computer training, and literacy programs for children. The SHA is currently working towards adding an English as a Second Language program.

Residents of the SHA are a vital resource to area employers. Despite the high proportion of elderly and disabled residents at the SHA, approximately one quarter of the SHA households have



MEET THE  
SHA STAFF

### STEPHEN ETHIER

Director of Information Technology

**I am part of a department that is constantly working towards giving SHA employees the exact tools they need to do their jobs effectively. This involves coming up with well-thought-out and planned solutions that work flawlessly. These solutions enable agency employees to spend more time focusing on our residents and mission.**

at least one person employed in the local economy, and we are working to increase that number. Through a Regional Employment Board grant, the SHA was able to hire an employment specialist to work out of the Barton Neighborhood Network Center. During the Center's first six months of operation, 20 residents were placed into full- or part-time employment. The employment specialist also provides business and professional training, as well as assistance with resume writing and job-interview preparation.

The SHA has also increased its programs that support children. Approximately \$35,000 in restitution funds were used to renovate and open the Farris Mitchell Education and Development Center at the Riverview Apartments. The Center now houses the second Head Start program on SHA property, serving both resident and other neighborhood children. These programs run at capacity, providing two half-day sessions each day. The SHA continues to contract with various community

organizations to operate after-school programs at seven different developments around the city. These programs offer homework assistance, life skills classes, and reading programs, as well as healthy recreation opportunities. Efforts to bridge the gap between parents and teachers are also under way, with the SHA enhancing communication between the Boland and Dorman elementary schools and the families they serve who are also residents of the SHA.

A significant portion of the SHA's residents are elderly, and a variety of programs have been developed to serve their unique needs. Working with the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, the SHA developed a Brown Bag program that currently provides close to 200 residents with weekly groceries. The SHA offers case management services to ensure that these residents have access to the health care and support services they need.

Through an Elder Services Grant awarded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, a health clinic was constructed and opened in April 2010 at our Forest Park Manor development. The clinic provides such services as blood pressure screenings and diabetes care for elderly residents of the SHA, as well as other elders in the community. The SHA also provides English classes for immigrant elders, computer classes, and other educational opportunities to decrease the isolation that elderly residents often experience.

The SHA offers two programs aimed at assisting families in making successful housing transitions. The Transitional Housing Program (THP) assists families in moving out of emergency shelters and into more stable housing situations by addressing the root



causes of their homelessness. The program provides them with on-site counseling and support services to gain confidence and learn new life skills. Each THP participant works with SHA staff to develop an action plan with goals and objectives that he or she must meet. State aided public housing apartments are used as temporary transitional housing sites that participants occupy for a period of up to one year. Once the families successfully complete the transitional phase of the program, they are offered the opportunity to enter into a lease with the SHA. A variety of support services are provided to the participants in order to help eliminate some of the causes of homelessness.

Each family participant receives credit, tenancy, and family counseling, and is connected to community vocational and mental health resources. The program also collects and distributes household goods and furniture for program participants. The THP is funded by a joint initiative between the DHCD and the Department of Transitional Assistance.

In order to foster a transition from subsidized housing into homeownership, the SHA sponsors a program as part of its federally funded Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP). This allows families who are receiving rental assistance through this program to use that assistance to help pay the mortgage on a home they purchase. In order to qualify, families must be first-time homebuyers and find a house for sale that meets the program standards.

As is required for rental assistance, the participants must provide 30 percent of their adjusted household income as payment toward the mortgage, with the program paying the balance of the payment. At least one adult in the family must be working full time (a minimum of 30 hours per week), and at least one adult in the family must have been employed continuously during the year prior to receiving homeownership assistance.

The SHA inspects the property prior to its purchase and also requires an independent inspection. Participants receive homeownership counseling and advice prior to and after the purchase. The program is funded by HUD as part of its HCVP.

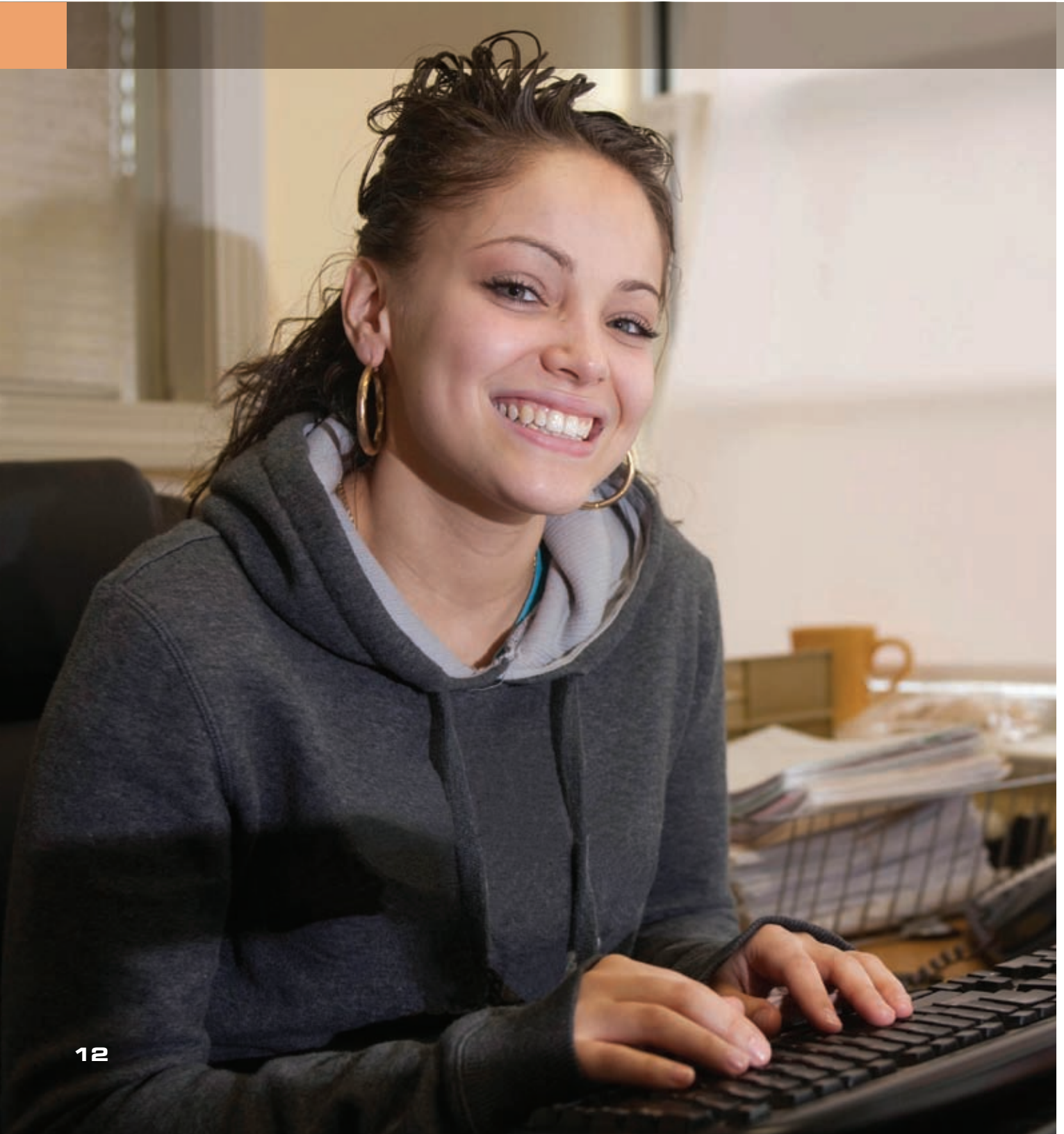


## ISABEL SERRAZINA

Executive Department Manager

**I work very closely with the policymakers of the organization and assist in bringing improvements to the agency. My work includes involvement in policy and regulations, management operations, facilities improvements, and opportunities for resident self-sufficiency.**

# COMMUNITY



**WITH** over 2,300 federal and state units spread over 27 developments in the city, the SHA is Springfield's largest residential property owner. That status creates many opportunities for the SHA to assist in the revitalization of the Springfield community. To that end, the SHA has recently extended its reach beyond its properties and is actively working with a number of private- and public-sector organizations to address the city's most pressing needs.

Through the city of Springfield's Housing First Program, the SHA has assisted homeless individuals and families in getting off the street and into safe housing. The effort was created and implemented through the Federal Chronically Homeless Program, which allowed the SHA to award project-based funding for 52 units. Individuals living in these apartments also receive support services to help them confront the issues that contributed to their prior homelessness. The SHA also participated in Project Homeless Connect Link and Veterans Stand Down, separate efforts aimed at connecting homeless individuals with housing and other supportive services.

Through Springfield Housing Authority, Inc. (SHAI), a nonprofit entity of the SHA, the organization was able to help residents of an apartment block in Springfield who were left without heat and hot water the day before Christmas in 2009. SHAI was appointed as the temporary receiver for this 16-unit apartment complex, which had been abandoned by the landlord. According to the January 7, 2010 *Republican*, Housing Court Judge Robert G. Fields "praised the city and SHAI for quickly acting in the landlord's absence, allowing tenants to stay in their apartments."

Community and private-sector organizations that the SHA has recently developed working relationships with are: the Davis Foundation, Friends of the Homeless, Head Start, Mason-Wright Foundation, MassMutual Financial Group, Peter Pan Bus Company, Regional Employment Board, Springfield School Department, Square One, Western New England Law School, and YMCA.



**MICHAEL BAILEY**

**Purchasing Manager**

**One of my major responsibilities is to procure goods and services for use throughout the SHA, both by staff members and in resident apartments. As such, I make every effort to ensure that goods and services are obtained at reasonable prices and are of acceptable quality and workmanship. This, in turn, creates cost savings and ensures that we don't have to order replacement items, such as major appliances, on a more frequent basis.**



INTERNS from Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical High School perform various roles at the SHA including exterior maintenance and office administration which provides them with valuable work experience. Currently, there are ten full-time employees at the SHA who were hired after completing the internship program. Below, Paul Spedero, project coordinator for the SHA, works with one of the students.



MASSMUTUAL FINANCIAL GROUP became the first "Friend of SHA" with a \$15,000 donation towards the Robinson Gardens Improvement Project. The donation allowed the SHA to purchase new signage, hire a landscape architect, and landscape the grounds. Celebrating the project completion at the Robinson Gardens site were the following people: Nick Fyntrilakis, assistant vice president, Community Responsibility and State Government Relations, MassMutual; Dominic Sarno, mayor of Springfield; Mary MacInnis, administrator, PVTA; William Abrashkin, executive director, SHA; Timothy Babcock, chairman of the Board of Commissioners, SHA.



# A PRIMER ON PUBLIC HOUSING

The Springfield Housing Authority owns, operates, manages, and maintains each of its 27 separate public housing developments. The portfolio consists of both state and federally aided public housing, comprising over 2,300 units in total. There is currently a waiting list for public housing.

## STATE AND FEDERALLY AIDED PUBLIC HOUSING

DHCD is the funding source for state-aided public housing managed by the SHA. Under this program, there are 631 units designated for families, ranging in size from one- to four-bedroom units. An additional 429 units are designated for elderly and disabled residents. These units range in size from studios to two-bedroom apartments.

HUD is the funding source for federally-aided public housing managed by the SHA. HUD funds 419 units designated for families, ranging in size from two- to five-bedroom units. An additional 908 HUD-funded units are designated for elderly and disabled residents. These units range in size from studios to two-bedroom apartments.

The rent for public housing residents is based on household income. Generally, a resident in a state-funded housing unit will pay 25 percent to 30 percent of the household's adjusted gross income, depending on the housing and whether utilities are provided. Residents in federally aided units pay 30 percent of the household's adjusted gross income. The average monthly rent payment for families residing in public housing is \$253 for state-aided housing units and \$225 for federally-aided units. The average monthly rent payment for elderly/disabled households is \$248 for state-aided units and \$222 for federally-aided units.

## STATE AND FEDERALLY AIDED RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

DHCD and HUD also fund rental assistance programs. The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), funded by DHCD, supports 249 families in the private rental market in Springfield. The Housing Choice Voucher Program, funded by HUD and formerly known as the Section 8 Program, supports over 2,400 families in the private rental market in Springfield. Together, these programs provide over \$14 million annually in payment to private landlords in Springfield.

For both programs, the SHA approves the rent for a particular unit based on the bedroom size, location, and other amenities. Like the public housing program, the participant's portion of the rent is based on the household's adjusted gross income. For both programs, a participant pays 30 percent of the adjusted household income directly to the landlord. The SHA pays the remaining portion of the rent to the private landlord. Most of the vouchers are "mobile," which means that a participant may choose a rental unit anywhere in the community. When the participant leaves a unit, the subsidy remains with the participant, who is then free to move to another unit. Some vouchers are "project-based," which means that the subsidy is tied to the unit. When a participant vacates a project-based unit, the subsidy remains with the unit.

# THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY DIRECTORY AND PROPERTIES UNDER MANAGEMENT

## SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY OFFICES

<b>Executive Office</b>	
25 Saab Court. . . . .	785-4500
<b>Human Resources Office</b>	
25 Saab Court. . . . .	785-4508
<b>Purchasing Department</b>	
117 Sanderson Street . . . . .	785-4540
<b>Applications Office</b>	
35A Saab Court . . . . .	785-4517
<b>Public Safety Office</b>	
18 Saab Court. . . . .	785-4541
<b>Rental Assistance Office</b>	
67 Sanderson Street . . . . .	785-4521
<b>Resident Services</b>	
<b>Resident Services Coordinator</b>	
103 Division Street . . . . .	785-5019
<b>Deborah J. Barton Neighborhood Network Center</b>	
160 Nursery Street . . . . .	785-1563
<b>Transitional Housing Program</b>	
27 Robert Dyer Circle . . . . .	785-4591
<b>Housing First Program</b>	
113 Marble Street. . . . .	737-9845

## PUBLIC HOUSING MANAGEMENT OFFICES UNITS

<b>District A Office</b>	
49 Lionel Benoit Road. . . . .	785-4566
<b>Reed Village</b>	
Lionel Benoit Road, Bay Street, Aster Street, Edmund Wynne Circle . . . . .	200
<b>Forest Park Manor</b>	
Barney, Dickinson, Trafton . . . . .	116
<b>Joseph P. Gentile Apartments</b>	
William Street. . . . .	102
<b>Carpe Diem Apartments</b>	
Carew Street, Shaine Circle . . . . .	75
<b>Harry P. Hogan Apartments</b>	
Florida Street, St. James Avenue. . . . .	32
<b>Handicapped Accessible Units</b>	
Chapter 689 Scattered Sites . . . . .	10

<b>District B Office</b>	
51 Robert Dyer Circle . . . . .	785-4535
<b>John J. Duggan Park</b>	
Goodwin Street., Arthur Picard Circle, Rodney Smith Circle, Layzon Bros Road . . . . .	196
<b>John I. Robinson Gardens</b>	
William Sands Jr. Road, Bay Street., Robert Dyer Circle . . . . .	136
<b>Morris School Apartments/Morris School II</b>	
Dewey Street, Berkshire Avenue. . . . .	64
<b>Indian Orchard Manor</b>	
Milton Court. . . . .	40
<b>Chapter 705</b>	
Scattered Sites . . . . .	48
<b>District C Office</b>	
82 Division Street . . . . .	737-7696
<b>Riverview Apartments/Riverview Towers</b>	
Division Street, Clyde Street, Sanderson Street . . . . .	344
<b>Morgan Manor</b>	
Morgan Street. . . . .	52
<b>John L. Sullivan Apartments</b>	
Nursery Street, Stafford Street . . . . .	96
<b>District D Office</b>	
35 Saab Court. . . . .	785-4501
<b>Stephen J. Collins Tri Towers/Twin Towers</b>	
Saab Court . . . . .	288
<b>Johnny Appleseed Apartments</b>	
Hancock Street . . . . .	60
<b>Central Apartments</b>	
Central Street . . . . .	44
<b>Patrick W. Harrigan Apartments</b>	
Belmont Avenue, Woodside Terrace . . . . .	32
<b>District E Office</b>	
178 Pendleton Avenue F . . . . .	785-4771
<b>Pine James Apartments</b>	
Pine Street . . . . .	42
<b>Manilla Apartments</b>	
Manilla Avenue, Ralph Street. . . . .	34
<b>Moxon Apartments</b>	
Healy Street, Moxon Street . . . . .	52
<b>Pine-Renee Apartments</b>	
Pine Street, Renee Circle . . . . .	48
<b>Pendleton Apartments</b>	
Pendleton Avenue . . . . .	9
<b>Marble Apartments</b>	
Marble Street . . . . .	48
<b>Kathryne Jones Apartments</b>	
Pendleton Avenue . . . . .	2
<b>Christopher Court</b>	
St. James Avenue . . . . .	96
<b>Turnkey Apartments</b>	
Central Street, Ashley Street, Bay Street, Gerrish Court, Sherman Street . . . . .	32





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