



2640 Fountain View Drive ■ Houston, Texas 77057 ■ 713.260.0600 P ■ www.housingforhouston.com

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Media Contact:

Hannah Vergult | Etched Communication
713-829-3705 | hannah.vergult@ten35.com

Houston Housing Authority Plans Milestone Year for Affordable Housing

HHA announces new leadership, sets plans to tackle affordable housing crisis

HOUSTON — (March 4, 2020) — Houston has historically been considered as an affordable place to live, but the city’s affordable housing shortage tells another story. Houston ranks fifth in the nation and first in the state for having severe affordable housing shortages. There are only 19 affordable housing units for every 100 households in need, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

“Houston is built on innovation and opportunity, but the severe lack of affordable housing threatens the promise of the future for thousands of residents in need of a safe, quality place to call home,” Houston Housing Authority (HHA) Board of Commissioners Chair LaRence Snowden said.

HHA aims to tackle Houston’s affordable housing crisis by identifying ways to improve the quantity and quality of housing options, including providing opportunities to increase self-sufficiency among residents and bolstering positive community engagement.

“With the advancement of our city in mind, and fresh perspective from the recent appointment of Mark Thiele as Interim President and CEO, we are motivated and determined to put forth effective, sustainable solutions, such as mixed-income developments, to help address the affordable housing shortages that impact quality of life for many residents,” Snowden said.

Mark Thiele was appointed Interim President and CEO at HHA Board of Commissioners meeting Jan. 28. Thiele, who most recently served as Senior Vice President, is an experienced housing leader with a sincere commitment to community. He joined HHA in 2010 and previously served as Vice President of the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP).

“From the thousands of residents on the HCVP waiting list to the growing number of workforce professionals who spend more than 30 percent of their annual income on rent, the negative effects of the lack of affordable housing are evident,” Thiele said. “I look forward to working with city leaders, HHA residents and the community to put forth effective and sustainable community-centered housing solutions.”

The affordable housing shortage affects more than 60,000 HHA residents who rely on public housing and HCVP and the thousands more who sit on waitlists for affordable housing. The “golden rule” of determining affordability is that no household should exceed paying 30% of gross monthly income in rent. Those who find themselves paying above this threshold are considered “cost-burdened.”



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In Houston, many workforce professionals (e.g., teachers, police officers, firefighters and nurses) spend upwards of 40% of their monthly income on housing. Kinder Institute at Rice University estimates approximately 215,000 Houstonians spend more than half of their income on housing.

“As the greater Houston area continues to grow, the severity of the crisis is likely to intensify,” Thiele said. “We must be proactive and collaborative in solving the housing crisis. The future of our city and the well-being of residents depends on it.”

HHA recognizes that addressing Houston’s affordable housing crisis will require immediate and long-term efforts. HHA currently has developments underway that will play an integral role in accomplishing objectives. Most recently, HHA welcomed four new commissioners, appointed to the board by Mayor Turner, during the Feb. 18 meeting.

HHA plans to develop mixed-income communities throughout the city that will assist in filling the gap of high-quality market-rate and affordable housing. Mixed-income developments are known for reducing economic segregation. The communities also provide opportunities for existing residents to avoid displacement caused by rising home prices in many area neighborhoods.

The revitalization of existing HHA communities is also part of 2020 plans. The senior living community at 2100 Memorial, which received irreparable damage during Hurricane Harvey, will be reconstructed into a state-of-the-art, five-story, 197-unit development. Work will begin in March at the senior-living community at 6000 Telephone Road. The community will undergo rehabilitation to upgrade and modernize facilities thanks to a low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) allocation of \$1.94 million per year for a 10-year span from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

“Housing is the backbone of stable, healthy communities and the lack of affordability has had a ripple throughout Houston’s diverse communities,” Snowden said. “We are committed to identifying, organizing and mobilizing initiatives that will help provide quality affordable housing options in safe communities where all residents can thrive.”

ABOUT HHA

Houston Housing Authority (HHA) provides affordable homes and services to more than 60,000 low-income Houstonians, including more than 17,000 families housed through the Housing Choice Voucher Program as well as another 5,500 living in 25 public housing and tax credit developments around the city. HHA also administers one of the nation's largest voucher programs exclusively serving homeless veterans. More information about the Houston Housing Authority can be found at www.housingforhouston.com.

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