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People Housing People
1939 - 1989

PEOPLE HOUSING PEOPLE

The United States Housing Act of 1937 stated that public housing could only be constructed through local, not private or federal, initiative. In order to establish a local housing authority in the Canton area, a petition, supported by labor and the building trades, was circulated among Meyers Lake and Canton residents. In April of 1939, the Ohio State Board of Housing established the Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority under Ohio Code, Section 1078-29. However, although funding was available for public housing in Canton by the federal government, the Canton City Council failed to approve the necessary resolution of cooperation, and a loan of \$3,000 to the Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority. As a result, the Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority became dormant for nearly eight years.

Due to an acute post-war housing shortage and the need to dispose of all Lanham Act war housing, Councilwoman Vera Elliott submitted a resolution to the Canton City Council to revive the dormant Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority on November 25, 1946. The resolution was approved and the first organization meeting was held on January 31, 1947, at the Jackson-Sherrick Court Homes war housing project. The first members of the reorganized housing authority were Ed Witmer, Lillian Goodman, Clay Hunter, Ed Loughran, and Elden Shortridge. Witmer served as the Board's first Chairman and Haines Reichel was appointed by the Mayor of Canton, Loughran was appointed by the Probate Judge, Hunter was appointed by the Common Pleas Judge and Witmer was appointed by the Stark County Commissioners. Appointments to the current SMHA Board are made by the same public officials.



The first projects that were under the supervision of the Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority were the Don Mellett Homes and the Jackson-Sherrick Court Homes. Since the projects were still owned by the federal government, the housing authority was only permitted to lease units to veterans, according to legislation that passed after World War II. Nevertheless, there was a very low vacancy rate.

Faced with the same problem of disposing of its war housing projects (Walnut Hills and Lawndale Heights), and housing shortages, the Massillon City Council reversed a previous resolution, and voted to be included in the

Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority's request to extend its territory to include Massillon, and parts of Perry, and Tuscarawas Townships, and change its name to the Canton Massillon Metropolitan Housing Authority.

The Lanham Act required that the federal government dispose of all war housing within two years after all hostilities had ceased. Congress extended the deadline for disposition of federal war housing several times. Due to local political opposition to low-rent housing, the Canton Massillon Metropolitan Housing Authority requested an extension of the time allotted for the filing of a request for disposition of the temporary projects, Lawndale Heights and Jackson-Sherrick Court Homes. As the deadline for the disposition of war housing drew closer, the Authority verbally agreed not to make a request for the transfer of permanent war housing. Instead, the Authority petitioned the cities of Canton and Massillon to adopt resolutions that would require each city to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Canton Massillon Housing Authority for the erection of low-rent housing units. The Canton Massillon Housing Authority also requested approval from both cities for the transfer of title of the Canton and Massillon temporary war projects from the federal government to the Authority. On February 16, 1953, the Canton City Council voted unanimously that Jackson Park-Sherrick Court Homes should not be demolished. The units had been scheduled for a June 30, 1955 demolition date. The Authority purchased the seventy acres of leased land from its private owners on which the Jackson-Sherrick project stood, and the federal government donated the seventy-three hollow tile buildings. Jackson Park - Sherrick Court Homes was the only war housing project that eventually remained under Authority control.



Under the Lanham Act, all temporary buildings were to be demolished or transferred to a housing authority so that it could be managed for the benefit of the community. While Jackson-Sherrick was transferred to the local Authority, Lawndale Heights was not. The Massillon City Council did not adopt a resolution of cooperation with the Authority that was required for the transfer of the project. As a result, the federal government ordered the Canton Massillon Metropolitan Housing Authority to notify all tenants at Lawndale Heights to vacate their dwellings by February 28, 1954. In January of 1955, all buildings at Lawndale Heights were demolished. The permanent war housing projects, on Mellett Homes and Walnut Hill Homes were, as required, sold. The Canton Massillon Authority had already elected not to purchase these projects in 1951. Individual investors bought all of the buildings at Walnut Hills by October 1, 1954, except for the community building. The disposition department of the Public Housing Administration commenced the sale of the Don Mellett Homes by offering it to the tenants of the project on February 1, 1955. Then tenants had ninety days to form a cooperative and conclude the purchase. On June 30, 1955, the title of Don Mellett Homes was transferred to Mellett Homes, Inc. By August 1, 1955, the Authority was managing only the Jackson Park Sherrick Court Homes project.



STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

Since its reorganization in 1947, the Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority had sought to expand its operations by applying for funds for the construction of the new low-rent housing units. With federal funds available for public housing after the United States Housing Act of 1949 enactment, the Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority adopted a resolution requesting the reservation of 1,200 low-rent units of housing to be erected in Canton. The Public Housing Administration approved the reservation of 700 units in 1949. This figure was later trimmed to 350 units in 1952. Yet the 350 public housing units were not constructed until 1962. Although local labor unions and the building trades endorsed the construction of public housing in Canton, opponents of public housing, namely "The Tax-Saving Committee Against Public Housing," collectively organized and secured the necessary number of signatures during the summer to put the public housing issue on the November ballot.

The foes of public housing were the final victors on November 5, 1957. The vote demonstrated the controversial nature of the public housing issue. Those opposed to public housing in Canton were victorious by only a 55.3% margin. As a result, Jackson Park-Sherrick Court Homes remained the only public housing project in the city and county until 1971. Federal legislation enacted in 1956 authorized local authorities to house qualifying single persons or married couples who were sixty-five years old and over. After the 1957 referendum, the Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority Board voted to proceed with the construction of housing for senior citizens without delay. The ten-unit Sunset Homes was dedicated on July 26, 1959. Located adjacent to Jackson Park, four units were subsequently added to the development in 1960.

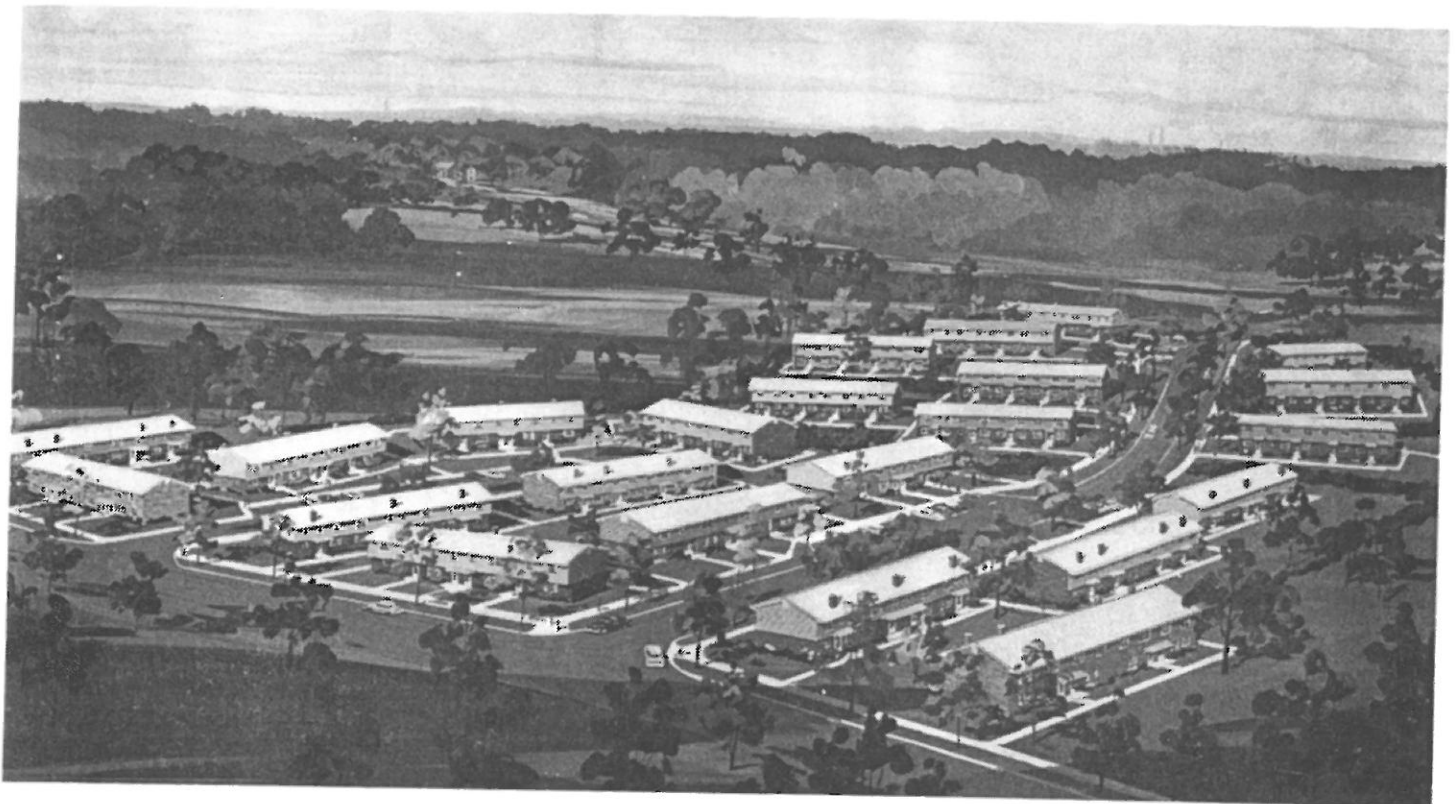


STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

On January 22, 1960, a special Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority Board meeting was held with Canton Mayor Charles Babcock, called as a result of a visit by the Mayor and Planning Director Eugene Bray to the Housing and Home Finance Agency and the Public Housing Administration District Office in Chicago. The purpose of the trip had been to acquire approval for the "Urban Workable Plan" for Canton, Ohio. However, they were advised that low-income housing was a necessity before urban renewal plans could be completed in Canton. A 1961 survey of the city's housing stock strengthened the H.H.F.A.'s position when it showed that Canton had the highest percentage (21%) of substandard housing among Ohio's eight major cities.

Because of past opposition, P.H.A. officials recommended that the Canton Massillon Metropolitan Housing Authority be directly responsible for the construction of low-income housing in Canton and suggested that the Board members reconsider converting Jackson Park - Sherrick Court Homes from war housing to low-income housing. Although Board members were initially hesitant because of the 1957 defeat, they voted to take necessary steps to replace 100 of the war housing units in January 1961, but the Board emphasized that it was only interested in the actual replacement of units at the present time.

Jackson-Sherrick was completed in three steps. The construction of the first 96 units (18-1) commenced in the summer of 1962. In December 1962, the Board voted to apply for the replacement of 100 more units (18-2) and in January 1965, a cooperation agreement between the City of Canton and the C.M.M.H.A. for 130 low-income dwelling units (18-4) to complete the Jackson-Sherrick replacement program was approved. The three Jackson-Sherrick replacement program phases were completed in 1963, 1965, and 1969.



STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

With only fourteen units of elderly low-income housing, the Canton Massillon Metropolitan Housing Authority Board voted to study the possibility of constructing more elderly housing in December 1962. Eugene Bray, City Planning Director and John Pulley, C.M.M.H.A. Director, Canton City Housing Commission, met in January 1964 to discuss the need for 300 units of low-income elderly residents in Canton. At that point in time, 16,000 elderly Canton residents' annual incomes were under \$1,000. A senior citizens committee also met with Director Pulley to endorse the construction of senior housing. In August 1964, the Board voted to apply for the Preliminary Reservation of 150 units of elderly housing.

In 1965, the Public Housing Administration approved the reservation of 80 units of elderly housing units for C.M.M.H.A. Although three sites were considered, the city block adjacent to McKinley Park was approved as the site for the housing authority's first high-rise. Clayton Horne of the Canton Repository was credited with suggesting the name McKinley Park Homes to pinpoint the location of the building. In spite of construction delays, McKinley Park Homes (18-3) was ready for occupancy on August 18, 1969, and leased to the new residents in September 1969.



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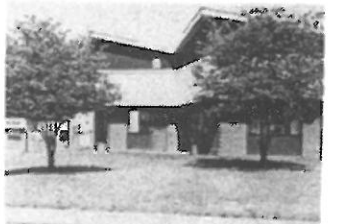
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STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HOUSING

Earlier recommendations made by the City of Canton and the Senior Citizens Committee prompted board members to continue applying for low income housing for the elderly. As a result, the Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority began an intensive building program of senior units in Canton. The second elderly highrise, Girard Gardens (18-6), was proposed in 1968, and two low-rise elderly buildings Roselane Gardens, and Kimberle Gardens (18-7), in 1969. Because the Canton City Mayor and other officials had long favored a downtown elderly site, the housing authority Board began to investigate the feasibility of a highrise on McKinley Avenue N.W., and subsequently accepted a bid in January 1970 for Metropolitan Arms (18-9). In addition, because of a longer applicant waiting list for elderly housing compared to family housing, the number of Department of Housing and Urban Development reserved units of low-income housing was changed from 400 family units and 200 elderly units to 200 family units and 400 elderly units in March 1971.

Nevertheless, the need for family housing in Canton was acute and by March 1971, the Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority was currently leasing 326 units of family housing, constructing almost 400 family units and had made reservations for 200 more family units. In April 1967, the Canton Human Relations Council met with the C.M.M.H.A. board members to discuss the placement of 130 additional units (18-4) in Jackson-Sherrick. Council members were opposed to the high level of public housing units in the southeast section of the city. Because the units were necessary for the completion of an Urban Renewal Plan in that part of the city, a meeting was held with Mayor Stanley Cmich and officials from the City of Canton, Canton Massillon Metropolitan Housing Authority, Urban League, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and Human Relations Council. Participants agreed that the 18-4 units must be constructed in the southeast Canton to complete the Urban Renewal Plan, but that the housing authority would construct no more units of public housing in the southeast section of Canton. The C.M.M.H.A., as a result, began to concentrate on a plant to construct low-rent housing in other sections of Canton. With the assistance of NIKA Corporation, a private consulting firm that preceded the present SMHA Development Department, the housing authority began negotiating for the construction of 18-8 (Linwood acres and Mahoning Manor) and 18-10 (Ellisdale Homes and Gage Gardens) in late 1969. All four developments, the first low-income units for families not located in southeast Canton, were completed by 1972.



Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority — History

Since the death of the housing authority's third Director, Walter C. Crenshaw, Jr. in September 1969, long time employee Loren Decker had been serving as Acting Director. On March 12, 1970, original board member Ed Witmer was named Executive Director as a replacement for Mr. Crenshaw and Albert McIlwain was named Deputy Director. During that same period of time, territorial and name changes were enacted. In May of 1969, the name of the Canton Massillon Metropolitan Housing Authority was reverted back to "Canton Metropolitan Housing Authority" and its area of jurisdiction was increased to include the City of Alliance. In June 1970, the name was again changed to "Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority" to reflect the extended jurisdiction of the housing authority.

A change in the political climate in Massillon brought about renewed interest for low-income housing in that city. In October 1970, Director Witmer met with the Mayor and several ministers from Massillon to discuss future SMHA housing plans. Similarly in Alliance, both the Director and Deputy Director met with the community leaders because of the Alliance leaders' desire for low-income housing in their city. Although the housing authority originally requested from the Department of Housing and Urban Development that 600 units of housing be reserved in both Alliance and Massillon, 200 units of family and elderly housing were eventually reversed for each city. The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority began accepting bids for the first 100 units, Massillon family (18-11) in March 1971. Subsequent bids for Alliance family (18-14) and elderly (18-15) and Massillon elderly (18-16) were accepted. The Massillon family developments, Underhill Gardens, Franklin Homes and Willow Homes, were completed in August 1973 and the elderly highrise, Lincoln Apartments, after changing the original site from the downtown area to Lincoln Way East, was completed in the spring of 1974. The Alliance mayor sponsored a contest to name the new Alliance highrise and the winning name was "W.L. Hart Homes." With the completion of the elderly highrise, forty of the family units were constructed adjacent to Maple Beach Park in Alliance and the other family units were scattered throughout Alliance. By the fall of 1974, all 400 units of elderly and family housing were available for low-income Massillon and Alliance residents.



STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority continued in its commitment to construct additional units of housing in Canton. A 100 unit elderly highrise (18-12) was constructed in 1973 and named "Plaza Terrace." On January 27, 1972, the SMHA Board requested that H.U.D. reserve 140 units of non-elderly housing for Canton. Eventually trimmed to 90 units, (18-13) consisted of Leshdale, Neal Court, and several scattered sites. On April 20, 1972, representatives for the Canton Welfare Federation C.H.A.T. program requested that the housing authority buy four dwellings after they were built by C.H.A.T. participants. Named Guy Mack Homes, after the slain Canton policeman, (18-18) was constructed by low-income or minority youths aged 16-18 who were in the C.H.A.T. program. For a brief period of time, the Housing Authority leased Onesto Hotel units (18-17) to elderly residents. In addition, in the spring of 1973, the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority introduced a new type of public housing in Canton. Whereas public housing units had previously been constructed in segregated groups of 50 to 325 units, the new development program proposed "scattering" public housing sites across the city to integrate low-income families with other city residents and decrease the stigma of living in public housing. An extremely successful program, 108 units (18-19) of new and existing housing were acquired by the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority in 1974.

The first social service program was initiated in the Housing Authority in March 1969. Director Crenshaw contacted various social service agencies and requested that Jackson-Sherrick be targeted for the distribution of services. The first tenant newsletter was published and distributed by the authority and the Urban League in 1969. A summer youth program was established in the summer of 1971 at Jackson-Sherrick by Operation Positive and a clinic was set-up at McKinley Park by United Fund in the winter of 1972. A scout Pack #201, still in existence, was established at Jackson-Sherrick.

Finally, in late 1972, the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority petitioned for and was granted another increase in its territory to include all of Stark County except the Village of Hills and Dales.

In 1975, a banner year for the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority, the housing authority's Finance Department became automated and they entered into a new period of Stark housing history. The SMHA central office was moved to its new home at 1800 West Tuscarawas Street in Canton. A new day care center was constructed and opened at 1318 Gonder Avenue S.E. in Canton. In addition, the housing authority began bank rent collections and payroll by computer, centralized bookkeeping, computerized tenant accounting and bookkeeping and adopted a new personnel policy.

On January 12, 1975, Director Witmer announced that H.U.D. had advertised for 110 elderly housing rehabilitation units that could be considered for the Onesto Hotel or the Downtowner Motor Inn. That September, money was granted to remodel the Downtowner Motor Inn with a tentative spring completion date. A new concept - congregate housing for low-income senior citizens - was introduced in 1977 at the Downtowner. The 118 motel-sized rooms include a small refrigerator, bath, carpeting, on-site health clinic staffed by a registered nurse, free housekeeping provided and a security guard on duty at night. Special facilities were designed to accommodate the handicapped. The Downtowner enables those persons who might otherwise need to live with family or in a nursing home to live independently.

The Downtowner units were leased under the Section 8 program. This program allowed eligible private landlords through the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority, to lease their units to low-income residents at a rent based on their incomes because the government subsidized the difference between the fair market rent and the amount of rent that residents were able to pay. The first Section 8 office was established at Plaza Terrace in 1976.



STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

Earlier, H.U.D. had recommended that the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority hire a Coordinator for Modernization to replace private development consultants. With the increase in the number of reserved units available for acquisition by H.U.D. for the housing authority, it became increasingly imperative that the housing authority establish its own Development Department. Established in April 1978, the Development Department soon grew to a staff of nine to include an Architect, Inspectors, an Energy Coordinator and a Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Coordinator. H.U.D. also recommended that the new department consider the construction of a centralized maintenance department building. A former Post Office garage located at 718 Cleveland Avenue S.W. in Canton was purchased and remodeled in 1980 and eventually housed the Development and Maintenance Departments.

In 1978, Mrs. Lillie Dowdy, a resident of SMHA was the first woman to obtain a position in the Maintenance Department.

Also, in 1978, the Department of Housing and Urban Development offered over 300 units of elderly housing in Alliance, Massillon and Jackson Township to three developers from Akron and Cleveland. The units were to be constructed with tax-exempt financing under the 11 (b) provisions of the United States Housing Act of 1937. The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority made a 20-year agreement to enter into a Housing Assistance Payments (H.A.P.) contract to be run by and between the housing authority and the owners of Village Tower (Jackson Township), River-view Tower (Massillon), Mayflower Apartments (Massillon) and Alliance Towers. Residents of Section 8 elderly housing began to move into their apartments in 1979 and are the recipients of SMHA social services.



STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority experienced unprecedented growth in the Seventies that continued into the Eighties. This growth was characterized by a drastic increase in the number of units, and expanded jurisdiction in Stark County. The Eighties, however, became a period of adjustment, re-organization, stabilization and goal-setting for Housing.

SMHA staff had to grow into its new responsibilities with respect to the sheer numbers increase in units. More personnel were needed in order to continue to provide decent sanitary housing. Better training was necessary for existing staff if they were to possess the skills needed to carry the Authority forward as an effective public service agency.

New areas of responsibility were created to handle new programs and concepts such as Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Programs and Voucher Programs. Appropriate new personnel had to be incorporated into the existing housing authority structure in a productive fashion.

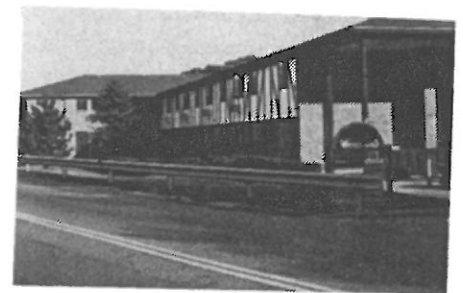
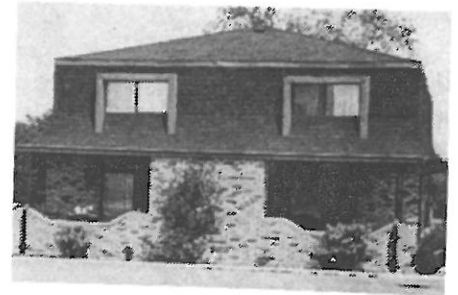
Old areas of responsibility were expanded in the face of changing programs such as Scattered Site Housing, and Modernization of Existing Housing. Such responsibilities necessitated major adjustments and reorganization, particularly in the departments of Operations, Maintenance, and Development.

The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority applied itself to these tasks, while laboring under the shadow of massive budget cuts by the Reagan Administration with respect to Housing. There were major policy and managerial changes implemented by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. There were rising expenses, fueled primarily by inflation and rising energy costs. The Eighties were and are a challenging time for SMHA and housing in general. Yet the challenges have been, and continue to be, met.

In 1980, the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority continued to construct and acquire scattered family sites, remodeled the first elderly public housing units in Stark County - Sunset Homes, purchased Springhill Apartments in Massillon (now called Ledgewood Apts.) eight units of elderly housing and had a ground-breaking ceremony for the housing authority's newest elderly building. Located in Massillon, the new elderly lowrise was named Witmer Arms in honor of the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority's Director who served as Board member or Executive Director since 1947. An Open House for the completed Witmer Arms was held on November 1, 1981.

During the years of 1980-83, SMHA acquired sixty-three certificates for its Section 8 Certificate Program. Once enrolled in this program, the resident receives a certificate entitling him/her to government subsidizing for the unit of choice. The certificate remains with the tenants as long as they choose to remain in the program.

During the same period, SMHA acquired 268 units under the Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Program. Under the "Mod Rehab" program, qualifying landlords receive low-interest government loans to upgrade housing stock. The landlord, in turn agrees, under contract with SMHA, to house screened applicants in the rehabilitated unit, exclusively, for a period of fifteen years. SMHA then provides subsidy for the screened applicant who chooses that particular unit.



STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

There were five major benefits which were to be realized through the Section 8 programs. These programs provided housing authorities with a wider range of living conditions to offer to their residents. The programs were more cost effective, in that maintenance and daily management costs were non-existent. The new programs also were perceived as an excellent means by which misconceptions about low-income government subsidized families could be eliminated, via direct contact with "middle class America." The fourth benefit realized was that by creating these Section 8 programs, housing money went directly to the private sector in the form of subsidized rental payments. In the case of the Rental Rehabilitation program, neighborhoods in the inner city were re-vitalized by the modernization of properties that might not have been improved through any other financial sources. The last two benefits also served to stimulate the local economy, due to the increased demands for goods and services.

The addition of the Certificate and Rehabilitation programs brought the total number of units under the Section 8 "umbrella" to 331. The Section 8 concept had begun on a small scale at SMHA, but it was to grow at a rapid rate, in scope, as well as size.

Sweeping organizational changes were made within Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority on January 22, 1981, when the Board approved a new organizational chart developed by staff members. The changes divided the housing authority into seven departments — Executive, Finance, Community Services, Maintenance, Personnel, Development, and Operations. It was at this time that the Section 8 Programs and the Management and Leasing Departments were combined under the Operations Department.

In addition, all SMHA employees attended a three-day employment and training seminar held at Sawmill Creek in Huron, Ohio. SMHA employees learned about the history of housing, how public housing is managed and financed, United States and Ohio laws, how Board members are selected and the responsibilities of the Executive Director. Approximately thirty employees were taken on a tour of all SMHA sites to acquaint them with all available public housing in Stark county.

STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

In 1981, the housing authority was able to build fifteen attractive duplexes in the Lowery-Price area in Massillon, Ohio. It was in the late 1960's when the city targeted the area for burial and rebirth. The area now is oblivious to its history of prohibition-era gambling, prostitution, bootlegging and recent poverty and economic hopelessness. Now the area boasts a new health care facility, fire station, post office, senior citizen highrise apartment building, two churches, offices, new family housing and a grocery carry-out.

1982 was, without question, the pivotal point in the growth, and maturation of SMHA as a strong, viable housing authority. Never before had so many changes affected the Authority from so many directions. The housing authority would be tested as never before with respect to its capacity to adapt to change.

In an effort to promote an holistic approach to service its residents, Community Services breathed new life into its care clinics. Established in 1973, the medical clinic, and podiatry clinic were serving 40 and 65 patients per month, respectively. At this point, satellite podiatry clinics were established in Massillon and Alliance. Blood pressure clinics were established at 10 sites throughout Stark County. Concerted efforts were made to involve residents in the health clinics, summer trips, Arts and Crafts functions, and Volunteerism programs. Transportation for errands and Adopt-A-Friend programs were implemented. As a result of the tireless efforts of responsible staff and volunteer medical professionals who gave unselfishly of their time and resources, 443 patients were seen in the satellite clinics in the first year, with a total of 3,481 clients attending all clinics.



STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

In 1982, regulations changed for tenants. They were required to pay thirty percent (30%) of their income for rent instead of twenty-five percent (25%). However, tenants who were in housing prior to 1982 were permitted to have their rent increase a percentage of the ceiling rent in effect at the time of the change in the HUD regulations. Therefore, some tenants with the same income and deductions would be paying substantially lower rent than tenants moving in after 1982.

Four new developments were constructed and opened in 1982. Shortridge Villa (a 40 unit development named after Elden Shortridge in honor of his 35 years of service on the SMHA Board) in Jackson Township, Reynolds Manor (40 units) the first federally subsidized complex in the Navarre area, Constitution Hall (30 units) in Louisville, and Indian Run Homes (25 units) in Waynesburg. All afore-mentioned developments were constructed for the elderly residents. Indian Run Manor (25 units) was constructed for family residents in Waynesburg. In addition, 143 units were added under the Scattered Site developments in 1982. In 1982 alone, 203 units were added to housing stock throughout Stark County. Almost two years would pass before SMHA would see possible assistance in the form of new units.



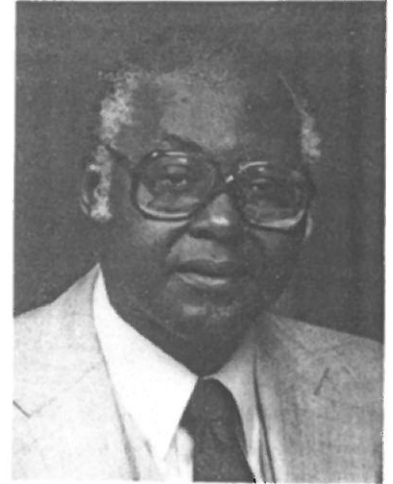
STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

Edwin Witmer, Executive Director of the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority for twelve years, retired October 29, 1982. Albert H. McIlwain was named the Executive Director of the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority on November 1, 1982. Prior to being elected Director, Mr. McIlwain served as Deputy Director for twelve and one half years.

1982 was the year Housing and Urban Development (HUD) turned its attention to the problem of rehabilitation and modernization of existing PHA housing. SMHA, along with other housing authorities, was to undertake the massive job of analyzing, assessing, cataloging and ranking the needs of its entire housing stock. The Development department led the way, and the task was accomplished.

In 1982, Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority made application for one million dollars to rehab 100 units in the Jackson-Park Sherrick Court Homes area (18-1) in southeast Canton. The monies were allocated under the Comprehensive Improvement Assistance Program (CIAP). SMHA undertook its first major renovation program.

SMHA was a housing authority riding the wave of change. After having recently undergone a massive reorganization, a new approach to tenant service, unprecedented growth with respect to size, regulation changes with respect to tenant rental payments, the installation of a new Executive Director, the construction of four separate developments at once, and the preparation and implementation of a new federal modernization program, one might say the housing authority's "hands" were full. Further changes were about to arrive.



STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

The crisis came in 1983. The problems of inflation, rising energy costs, and diminishing funds due to federal policy changes overtook SMHA. After a HUD audit, SMHA was declared a troubled housing authority. Basically, this meant that the financial reserves that a housing authority was required to maintain for itself were below acceptable levels. HUD assisted SMHA in realigning its budgets and monitored SMHA for approximately one year, until it was confident that the problem had been corrected.

The Executive Director knew what to do. He mapped out a ten point plan that addressed several primary areas of concern. He explained the problem to his employees, then he asked for their help. He then explained how his solution would solve the problem. He oversaw the fine tuning of the finance system designed to tighten controls on spending that were already in place. He set specific goals to maximize revenue collection at SMHA along such lines as minimum delinquency rates, maximum occupancy rates, increased speed with respect to empty unit renovation, and above all, a controlled, streamlined spending system.

He then addressed spending problems by eliminating any and all unnecessary services that were not intrinsic to the primary operation of the housing authority. When funding ran out for development, he bit the bullet and laid off staff until they could be reincorporated into the housing structure. An already struggling security staff was cut by half, down to three, but continued to give its very best. Maintenance staff were needed but could not be replaced despite the tremendous growth spurts the housing authority had experienced.

Mr. McIlwain requested that all departments be prudent in all areas. He then called for a detailed plan to cut maintenance and energy costs, and urged the entire housing authority to respond. Maintenance, Energy, and the entire housing authority—employees, Board, and residents alike, rose to the challenge. Maintenance worked to reduce all waste, and to keep materials usage to a minimum without compromising standards. Energy designed and implemented a comprehensive energy program with the assistance of all staff. A Tenant Paid Utility Program was designed and implemented in accordance with HUD guidelines. Seminars were implemented to inform residents about how to conserve energy, and why it is necessary. Additional assistance was sought from outside agencies for literature and services to help conserve energy. Monitoring programs were set in place to enforce conservation efforts at the developments. Special Purpose funds under the CIAP modernization program totalling 785,000 were used to buy low-cost energy materials to retrofit existing water and heating systems. Cooperation was solicited and received from the Department of Maintenance in purchasing energy-efficient materials whenever possible, instead of less energy efficient items.



In less than a year the housing authority was out of its troubled state. In two years, every goal set by the Executive Director had been met and was being maintained by the housing authority. Overall spending had been effectively brought under control. Energy costs dropped from 2.4 million to little more than 1.3 million, and remain in that range at present, despite rising costs, and an increasing number of units. All programs remain in place. The housing authority had responded to adversity in commendable fashion.

The Executive Director was elected Secretary of the Ohio Housing Authority Conference in September, 1983. The conference represents more than fifty housing authorities in the state. Due to the large number of vacancies at the elderly buildings, the housing authority was granted permission by HUD to lease up to twelve efficiency apartments to people younger than sixty-two years of age at Girard Gardens and Metropolitan Arms.

The housing authority received \$30,000 in Community Development Block Grant Funds to renovate and modernize some of its existing units.

The multi-purpose center built by SMHA in 1975, which is currently housing the Canton Day Care Center was renamed the Sherwood Ake Center on November 12, 1983, in honor of Mr. Ake, who was our legal advisor for seventeen years. The building is located at 1318 Gonder Ave. S.E. Canton, Ohio. In 1983, a consortium was established consisting of eight other authorities, located in the northern and eastern regions of Ohio, to study plans for a computer system that would be jointly used by authorities. The authorities were Youngstown, Trumbull, Jefferson, Portage, Columbiana, Erie, Geauga and Sandusky.

In 1983, the housing authority received \$758,900 of the requested 1 million dollars (1982). \$21,900 of the funds were used to renovate the exterior of Hart Apartments, in Alliance. The remaining \$738,000 was used to rehabilitate the interior of development 18-1 Sherrick Court.

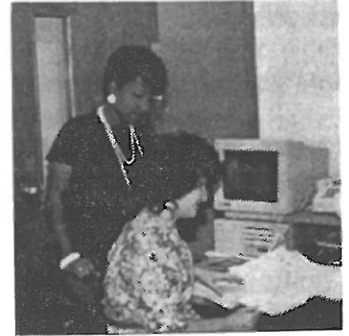


STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

In 1984, the housing authority became primarily concerned with three areas. The first area of concern was upgrading its existing housing stock through the CIAP program. The second concern dealt with streamlining the housing authority's overall operational capability by striving for excellence. The third concern was the full implementation and integration of a quality computer system to improve handling the workload.

The housing authority asked for, and received \$343,000 to do various repairs and renovations at developments 18-16 Lincoln Apartments, 18-4 Jackson Park, and 18-1 Sherrick Court.

In 1984, Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority placed its operations on its first in-house computer system at a cost of approximately \$90,537. The computer is used for tenant accounting, payroll, financial records, waiting lists for leasing, Section 8, along with many other functions. The system was purchased from Management Computer Services of LaCrosse, Wisconsin.



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STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

In 1985, SMHA became involved in a new program in connection with the Section 8 Program called the Rental Rehabilitation Program. This is a program whereby Section 8 Certificates can be targeted to eligible tenants residing in the buildings to be rehabilitated, in order to help them pay the after-rehab rents, and thus, prevent displacement. A family must be willing to occupy the unit being rehabilitated under this program for one year. The family must also be on the FHA's waiting list.

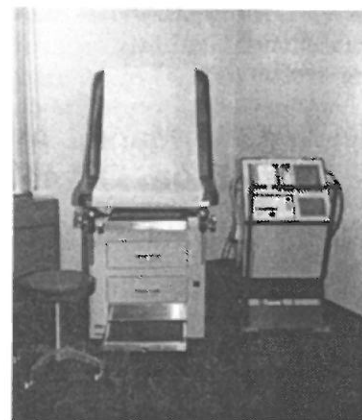
During that same year, the Reagan administration decided that the Voucher Program was to be used to compliment the Section 8 Existing Program. The Section 8 Voucher Program was seen to give tenants an even greater flexibility with respect to housing stock and location. A resident could, after the initial year of occupancy, take their voucher and move anywhere within the U.S.A. From 1983 through 1988, SMHA made application for and received 712 Section 8 certificates, 132 vouchers and 430 Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation units located throughout Stark County. The number of Section 8 units is approximately 50% of the total number of PHA units.

In 1985, the liability insurance crunch, which affected local cities and counties, spread to the housing authority. It was estimated that insurance premiums could rise by 400%. Meanwhile, the housing authority received \$782,600 to perform various repairs and renovations at 18-2 Sherrick Court, 18-4 Jackson Park, 18-14 Scattered Site Homes, Alliance, Central Office, 18-3 McKinley Park Homes, 18-23 Scattered Site Homes, 18-12 Plaza Terrace, 18-1 Sherrick Court, 18-16 Lincoln Apartments, and 18-15 W.L. Hart Apartments.

SMHA also established an award for the Employee of the Year. This award is given to the employee who, upon counting the closed ballots, is voted the one who most exemplifies the spirit of the housing authority. The qualities are explained prior to each annual voting. The designated employee's name is then placed on a plaque for permanent display at the Central Office.

In 1985, the first union contract was signed by SMHA and Communication Workers of America (CWA). This brought about an organizational change. Managers were given the responsibility of supervising the maintenance staff and the total management of the units was under their supervision.

In 1985, the Community Services Department was continuing their fine work in supplying services to the elderly. Although programs were badly cut in 1983 along with other departments, they continued to make use of all available resources by securing assistance from specialized public service agencies who could meet the needs of the patients in conjunction with their prescribed program. Competent care was, and continues to be, the primary goal for all clinics. Patient load was steadily on the increase. The number of volunteers rose to more than fifty. Healthcare continued to be given at no direct cost to the patient; only Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance companies were billed when appropriate. A new problem came to the surface. Space was needed badly if services were to continue at its customary level. The problem was solved in 1986.




By 1986, the volunteer staff had risen to 60 professionals and lay persons. Funds, raised solely from donations, were made available to remodel newly acquired space in McKinley Park for the main clinic for a total cost of \$13,140. In the spring, the clinic was moved from its previous location with two examination rooms and one office, to its newly remodeled facilities which include three examining rooms, a laboratory area, outer office area and waiting room, and an inner office. Physical examinations were now possible because of increased space. EKG's and blood work could now be done at the site. SMHA now had two full time nurses, and one part time nurse.

SMHA purchased nine stand alone I.B.M. compatible P.C. systems for its Management and Finance staff. The purpose was to enable the operators to perform needed tasks yet share information compiled for the benefit of the overall operation of SMHA.

During 1986, the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority received \$113,280 to replace the roofs on the DMD building and the Day Care Center. The funds were secured through the CIAP program.

In December of 1986, Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority had to deal with the issue of pets in buildings designated for the elderly. This was a mandatory regulation and it was thought that this rule would have a major impact on housing. However, it had a minimal effect.






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1987 was a most rewarding year for SMHA. The housing authority received \$103,000 to repair the window sills, sidewalks, and windows at 18-10 Ellisdale Homes. In addition, SMHA received \$3.8 million to rehabilitate 18-8L Linwood Acres, and 18-8M Mahoning Manor. The total number of units is 194. All monies were received under the CIAP program.

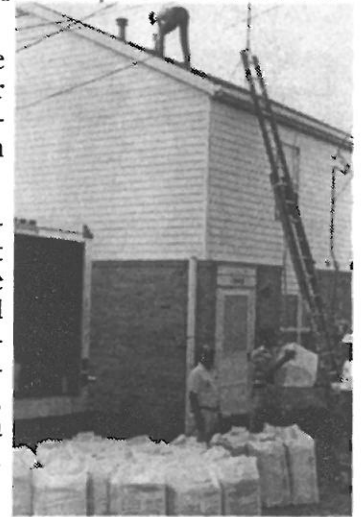
The Ohio Chapter of the National Association of Housing Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) had its annual conference in Canton, Ohio, at the New Market Hilton. The keynote speaker was Gertrude W. Jordan, Administrator of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Region V. SMHA took great pleasure in hosting the event.

The clinic established yet another podiatry clinic in 1987. This clinic was established in Navarre, making a total of five podiatry and fifteen blood pressure clinics in Stark County.

There were several new employee health programs created in 1987. The first program was the Employee Blood Donation Program. We have received a certificate for outstanding membership for participating in this program. SMHA has received a commendation for a Smoke-Free Environment in the workplace. A Wellness Program was put into effect in 1987, and SMHA added a very successful Employee Assistance Program to its roster of services.

In addition to the programs that were established in 1983 and 1984, which are all active at present, Energy secured the assistance of the Stark County Community Action Agency for the purposes of weatherizing SMHA units. This collaboration has proven to be most productive. Many units have been weatherized that would not normally have benefited from such money-saving measures.

In 1987, Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority was honored for doing the best job in a six-state region — Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Minnesota. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) presented the housing authority with a "Certificate of Special Achievement." HUD officials were joined by Mayors from Canton, Alliance and Massillon and also Stark County Commissioners. They each presented a proclamation congratulating SMHA on the excellent job it has done in its overall operations, including financial, management and maintenance. This event was most gratifying to the housing authority, in light of the clear recognition of progress made by SMHA in turning itself around with a lot of help from its friends. The housing authority had gone from being in a questionable state, to being one of the best in the country.



In an effort to control the work orders performed for public housing units, SMHA began using the computer work order system program. A centralized call-in system was put in place in the Accounting Department in May, 1987. All work order calls go through here to keep records of supplies used, time taken to complete work, number of work orders called in and the number of work orders completed.

1987 was a year for true heroes. Several maintenance employees of the housing authority — Larry Hodge, Mike Croston, Perry Martin, Tim Frutig, John Santelle, and William Blackshear risked their lives to save a mother and her four children from a burning house. They each received commendation plaques from Canton Mayor Sam Purses.



SMHA employees joined area companies to participate in the YMCA Corporate Cup. Employees volunteered to participate in activities such as basketball, volleyball, running, walking, etc. Much time is spent together practicing to compete in the yearly competition.



STARK METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY — HISTORY

The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority can look back with pride at its last fifty years. The housing authority has responded time and again in the face of adversity. It has been faithful to its purpose: to provide clean, decent and safe housing. SMHA has enjoyed the good along with the bad, and has continued to grow.

Yet it is with mixed feelings that we come to this point in the history of SMHA, because our success has cost us dearly. In the battle to uphold the standard set forth by those who preceded us, we have lost a leader. One who was clear eyed, clear-minded, and pure of heart, fair and honest. One who moved slowly and carefully, but was never slow to put his shoulder to the wheel on behalf of anyone who had a need. One who was steady, purposeful.

Some of us lost a friend. One who appreciated honor. Character. Truth. A few of us lost a brother. A man with deep convictions, and a genuine laugh. One with a caring, willing heart.

Albert H. McIlwain knew the formula. Identify your goal. Count the cost. Check yourself to be sure you are prepared. Then, march. Ready at every step. One foot in front of the other, one at a time. Let us who remain follow his example. It is to this man that we dedicate this Fiftieth Anniversary. He gave his all, he did his best, he did not quit. We will all miss him.

Let us all determine in our minds to give our very best. Then we can look to the next fifty years with pride, courage, and strength. Identifying the goal, counting the cost, and marching forward.

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