

## **B.2 New Activities**

HRHA secured Moving to Work (MTW) plan approval in late November 2022. It implemented MTW activities on May 1, 2023, so has just completed its first full year of activities.

The Authority is expanding its project basing of vouchers for the following developments: Lineweaver Annex consisting of 60 one bedroom vouchers; Bluestone Town Center – 75 vouchers consisting of 25 one bedroom vouchers, 25 two bedroom vouchers, and 25 three bedroom vouchers; Commerce Village consisting of 15 one bedroom vouchers and Commerce Village II consisting of 16 one bedroom vouchers, with 8 of those being VASH. The project basing of these vouchers will be phased in over the next two years. Expansion of the Authority's project basing will secure necessary housing for voucher participants.

HRHA will develop and implement a down payment and closing costs homeownership program for residents in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. The program will target first time home buyers at 80 to 120% AMI.

HRHA will continue to expand its landlord incentive program implementing its MTW security deposit payment program.

HRHA fair housing activities will include staff and commissioner participation in fair housing training and at least one community event to support the community stakeholders targeting landlords to increase their understanding of fair housing.

HRHA will continue its participation with the Public Housing Consortium with the Eastern Virginia Medical School and participate with their new grant initiative to reduce and prevent cancer in income restricted housing.

HRHA will participate in a new grant initiative with the University of Virginia to identify construction building and property management strategies to reduce carbon emissions and improve health conditions in HRHA owned properties.

## **B.3 Progress Report**

From 2024-2025, the Authority successfully met or exceeded its annual goals. Accomplishments include the following:

### **A. Implement Moving to Work (MTW) flexibilities to expand housing choice, increase self-sufficiency and improve cost effectiveness**

1. Implement year 2 of MTW activities, the first full year.

Details on MTW activities can be found in the MTW Supplement. HRHA completed migration to a new software platform and trained staff; updated administrative plans and admissions and occupancy plans; and updated the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Action Plan to meet the new FSS Final Rule and incorporate MTW activities. MTW activities were implemented on May 1,

2023 and carried out through 2024. **Ongoing**

Expand engagement and input from residents and program participants. HRHA developed a community advisory board (CAB) with representatives from all housing locations to increase guidance and direction received from residents with lived experiences. Nominations and initial trainings were held, and residents received tablets to allow remote participation. The CAB met five times to organize and choose topics to focus on, and now meets bi-monthly. Residents identified goals of improving community mental health as well as safety and security. Training programs were held at each location in June 2024 on substance abuse. The training was REVIVE: Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Education Training. **Established in November 2023, Ongoing.**

- Establish an MTW program evaluation plan. Develop in partnership with HUD and other community stakeholders a program evaluation of MTW activities. Create a monthly and annual report on outcomes and impacts of MTW flexibilities. **December 2025**

HRHA has identified specific reports from its Yardi system to assist in the evaluation of the MTW activities success. HRHA has not finalized its comprehensive program evaluation plan. The authority did receive notice from HUD of meeting its MTW statutory requirements.

## **B. Increase Housing Opportunities**

1. Expand housing opportunities for very low and extremely low income families by increasing permanent supportive housing (PSH) options by project basing the maximum allowed/ available vouchers for chronically homeless, highly vulnerable individuals and families. **Fall 2024**

- In October 2021 HRHA reapplied for Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Affordable and Special Needs Housing funds to renovate 60 units at its Lineweaver Annex apartments. Notice of funding award was received in January 2022. Planned renovations to the 30-year-old structure include energy efficiency upgrades to the building and apartment units and project basing 60 vouchers with permanent supportive services in collaboration with the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board and Valley Associates for Independent Living. Planning, design, and renovations are expected to take roughly a year followed by implementation of supportive services. Delays have been due to lack of contractor availability and increasing construction costs. HRHA is currently applying for additional financing to address the increased contract costs. HRHA will be rebidding the project in the Fall once financing is secured. This project preserves affordable housing units in the city and increases the number of PSH units. **September 2024 – September 2025**
- After an RFP process, HRHA awarded PBV rental assistance for 8 units total consisting of three 2-bedroom units and five 3-bedroom units to the BJS Harrisonburg Family I development by the Searles Foundation in February 2024. Units will have supportive services.

The Authority actively seeks diversification of HRHA owned properties outside the Northeast neighborhood. HRHA continues to meet with City staff and outside developers to pursue housing development options within the City or County. Currently HRHA and

private developer EquityPlus have an operating agreement to build 897 units in a mixed-income, mixed-use town center-style development on the western edge of Harrisonburg. The development will include workforce for sale and rental housing as well as PSH units for the elderly/disabled and will be built over 10 years. HRHA moved through the rezoning, planning commission, and city council approval process during 2022, and the Bluestone Town Center development was approved in February 2023. Site plan approval is anticipated to be received in October 2024. Construction start **Fall 2024**

- HRHA is moving ahead with constructing 16 one-bedroom units of permanent supportive housing that will meet EarthCraft building standards. The Commerce Village Annex PSH development will house the elderly, veterans, and those with disabilities or serious mental illness with incomes at or below 60 percent of the median income. It will have rent and income restrictions, but no age restrictions. This development will provide onsite supportive services for residents in collaboration with the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board and the Martinsburg veterans administration medical Center. Funding is in place, and construction bids were received in May 2024. **June 2025 completion and lease up.**
- HRHA continues its collaboration with Pleasant View Inc., which offers residential support programs, to sublease two homes with three or four bedrooms each and two apartment units with two bedrooms each for its voucher holders to rent. HRHA is providing property management services, and local agencies Our Community Place and the Harrisonburg Rockingham Community Services Board are providing supportive services. **Ongoing**

2. Apply for additional Housing Choice Vouchers to expand VASH, Mainstream Non-Elderly Disabled, and Family Unification Program with the expansion goal of at least 120 additional vouchers within the next 5 years. When available, apply in partnership with community stakeholders (Community Services Board, Social Services, Valley Associates for Independent Living, Western Virginia Continuum of Care, etc.) to address the special needs population within the local jurisdiction. **Ongoing**

- In 2023 HRHA applied for additional mainstream, stability, and VASH vouchers.
- HRHA applied for and was awarded a HUD 2024 Multi-Family Service Coordinator grant award of \$78,321 for 1.5 positions at the Lineweaver Annex and J.R. Polly Lineweaver apartments. HRHA will continue its contract with Valley Associates for Independent Living for coordinator services.
- In 2023, HRHA applied for and received a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) grant of \$66,150 from HUD to support services to Franklin Heights project-based housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participants for calendar year 2024.
- HRHA continues improving the landlord portal on its website and keeping the information there up to date. A primary staff contact has been assigned to each landlord. The Authority's MTW activities include landlord incentives such as security deposits; additional damage coverage; payment to hold empty units; and bonuses for referring new landlords, new landlords signing, and a new contract bonus. MTW flexibilities will allow more landlord outreach, education, and recruiting as well as housing search help. In July 2023, HRHA hosted a landlord training event to go over required HUD updates for the

inspection of subsidized units. A landlord newsletter went out as well, the first of regularly planned communications with all landlords. Another landlord event, in collaboration with the City of Harrisonburg, Blue Ridge Legal Services, and Rockingham County was held in July 2024 and provided fair housing training to area landlords.

- Using HCV administrative fees, HRHA hired a full time Occupancy Specialist to improve the intake and admission process for program participants. This position will also assist in conducting outreach to improve utilization of mainstream nonelderly and family unification program vouchers.
- In 2024 HRHA received \$70,000.00 from the City of Harrisonburg's Community Development Block Grant for the debt servicing of Franklin Heights. This debt service repayment is ending in June 2024.
- In 2022 HRHA received \$24,000 from the City of Harrisonburg's Community Development Block Grant to assist first time home buyers at 120 percent or less of the median family income in providing down payment and closing cost assistance to purchase a home in the City of Harrisonburg. This program has been temporarily put on hold due to higher interest rates and lack of housing inventory in the allowable price range. HRHA anticipates collaborating with the City to restart the program when circumstances allow.
- FSS participants have continued to take classes for job and career training, such as GED, certifications/technical training, Commercial Drivers Licensing, and healthcare certifications through Blue Ridge Community College and Eastern Mennonite University. HRHA received a second Sentara Cares grant for \$27,139 for adult job skills and career training. Funds from both grant years have been used to purchase 21 laptops for student use in courses, job training, and job searches. Twenty-five students are enrolled or have completed courses or plan to enroll. All laptops are in use for courses, job searches, or performing jobs. In addition, students are using prepaid spots in the Shenandoah Community Capital Fund's business boot camp for the coming year. **Ongoing.**

3. Partner with the City of Harrisonburg and other community based organizations to expand and affirmatively further Fair Housing. **Ongoing annually.**

- From July 2022 to June 2023, 10 staff attended fair housing training, four earned a property management certificate, and one earned a fair housing certificate.
- From July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, a total of 14 staff members participated in fair housing trainings from the Virginia Apartment Management Association. These sessions collectively amounted to 108 hours of training and two of the staff earned regulatory/management certificates.

4. Continue dialogue and participation in training when available and in partnership with local community organizations such as the Northeast Neighborhood Association and Faith in Action to address social justice and racial reconciliation issues as they relate to housing and neighborhood revitalization. **Ongoing, annually**

- In June 2022, HRHA joined a coalition of eight other public housing agencies to promote mental health resiliency.. The program is in partnership with the Medical College of

Virginia Eastern Shore and Old Dominion University and focuses on education and training for residents and staff.

- In June 2023 six HRHA staff attended “Improving Health Outcomes in Income Assisted Housing” provided by Eastern Virginia Medical School and Old Dominion University. Information obtained will be used to help develop resident councils and a community advisory board. A small workgroup of HRHA staff are developing the initiative.
- Seven HRHA staff attended a Mental Health First Aid Training course facilitated by The Harrisonburg Rockingham Community Services Board.
- HRHA in partnership with James Madison University and community volunteers held its third annual community dinner celebrating the Kelley Street garden in July 2023. The event included a chef’s cooking demonstration and recognition of the master gardeners and volunteers who made the garden and the event possible.
- HRHA held a celebration banquet and awards dinner in September 2023 to recognize residents’ accomplishments as well as the contributions of community partners to its mission.
- In 2023 and 2024, multiple staff members attended NARCAN training provided by the Harrisonburg Rockingham Community Services Board. The training is REVIVE; Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Education Training.
- HRHA completed Mission Elevation training through Virginia Community Development Corporation. A guiding coalition of HRHA employees from throughout the agency identified Performance Challenge goals for increasing resident services and experiences through programming opportunities and community partnerships.
- HRHA’s Executive Director Michael Wong is a fellow in the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.

5. Implement a communication plan that promotes housing for very low and extremely low income families and facilitates community support to address the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. **Ongoing, annually**

- HRHA continues using its website, makes regular Facebook postings, and distributes bi-monthly newsletters about the Authority's programs and initiatives and also promotes the need for affordable housing in the community.
- HRHA has an online feedback form on its website and a customer satisfaction form to improve communication with residents and community members.
- In 2024 HRHA continued its partnership with the Medical Suitcase Clinic to make Commerce Village a mobile site for health care assistance.
- In 2020 HRHA received \$5,800 in donations and grants for development of a community garden for Harrison Heights residents. Raised beds were built and planting days held in each Spring since 2021 with donations and help from many local groups and businesses. A celebration dinner each July features a James Madison University Dining chef demonstration of recipes using garden produce. Work days are held to close and reopen

the garden. **Ongoing**

- In 2024 the FSS program continued referring dozens of participants to local transportation nonprofit Way to Go. The Way to Go team connected participants with gas vouchers, covered oil changes and repairs, provided shuttle service to work, and awarded a few participants with vehicles of their own. **Ongoing**
- For the past three years, HRHA has worked with community partners United Bank and law firm Litten & Sipe to raise scholarship funds for housing students going on to college or career training.
- In community outreach and collaboration this year, HRHA staff members have collaborated with James Madison University copyediting students in editing and proofreading policies and procedures for the Admissions and Continued Occupancy updates; taught JMU courses; hosted a work study student; and served on the Healthy Community Collaborative and its steering committee. **Ongoing**

**6. Address homelessness – In partnership, ensure that homelessness is brief, rare and nonrecurring. **Ongoing****

- In March 2024 HRHA received \$50,019 from HUD for Continuum of Care (CoC) Planning services and \$84,072 for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) service. HRHA uses these monies to fund a full-time CoC Coordinator and a full-time HMIS Coordinator, as well as support the cost of licensing, training, and equipment for operating the HMIS program for the Western Virginia CoC.
- In July 2022, HRHA received Special Fee funding to support an Occupancy Specialist. The specialist performs outreach, intake, processing and housing search help and coordinates the efforts of the CoC and collaborating agencies to increase use of FUP/FYI vouchers.
- HRHA continues to collaborate with the City of Harrisonburg and its new Housing Coordinator in implementing recommendations from the January 2021 Housing Needs Study. **Ongoing**
- HRHA continues to collaborate with Faith in Action, local elected officials, and community stakeholders to develop a coordinated response to the affordable housing crisis in our community. **Ongoing**
- In 2024 HRHA maintained its Homebuyer Center for residents to access important information for their progress to home ownership and find support for taking their next steps.
- HRHA is collaborating with Community Housing Partners (CHP) through their weatherization program. This initiative is designed to assist low-income individuals and families in lowering their energy expenses by enhancing the energy efficiency and overall health of their homes. The program utilizes the federal weatherization assistance program, along with other funding sources, to achieve these goals. HRHA aims to advocate for the weatherization program among landlords, with the objective of improving housing conditions for tenants at no expense to either the landlords or tenants.

