



McHenry County Housing Authority

Waukegan Housing Authority



The Preservation Compact
A Rental Housing Strategy for Cook County



Metropolitan Planning Council



A Home for Everyone



May 16, 2011

Mr. Shaun Donovan, Secretary
U.S. Dept of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Donovan:

Thank you for your continued leadership on rental assistance program innovation, your commitment to enhancing housing choice for residents, and your understanding of how these priorities suggest the need for local housing authorities and civic partners to pursue regional solutions.

By promoting access to opportunity, both in terms of geographic amenities and related services, we are also promoting greater self-sufficiency among the households served and ultimately less costs for the participating Public Housing Authorities.

[As stressed in our September 9, 2010 correspondence to you](#), the undersigned housing authorities and civic partners in metropolitan Chicago would like to work with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to implement the Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative, a regional “access to opportunity” housing pilot. This effort builds on a number of past programs and pilots, in Metropolitan Chicago, including the current [Regional Housing Initiative \(RHI\)](#) – which is a unique collaboration among seven housing authorities that have been pooling project-based vouchers to support regional development and preservation priorities. Our current goal is to coordinate with HUD to inform your efforts to promote regional coordination and improved opportunities for households using various forms of federal rental assistance, As we scale up our local efforts and build upon our past successes to increase the quality housing options – near good jobs, good transit, good schools and key amenities -- available to households eligible for Housing Choice Vouchers and other HUD rental assistance programs within the Chicago metropolitan region, we hope to serve as a model and provide lessons learned.

We have been encouraged by the principal objectives of the Preservation Enhancement and Transformation of Rental Assistance Act the Rental Housing Revitalization Act and the Section Eight Voucher Reform Act. We propose to inform the operational questions that have surfaced as a result of these legislative proposals, as well as the broader Transforming Rental Assistance (TRA) Initiative, by piloting a model regional strategy with HUD support.

After fruitful discussions with your Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and TRA leadership team, [we were invited to submit a pilot proposal in November of 2010](#) .

In January, we enjoyed a two-day visit with Danielle Bastarache and Michael Dennis, Director and Deputy Director of the HCV Program. During that visit, Ms. Bastarache and Mr. Dennis had a chance to tour three very different sites that local pilot partners involved in the [Regional Housing Initiative \(RHI\)](#) have supported (one in a north suburban opportunity area of the region, another in a south suburban revitalization area, and the third in an up and coming northside Chicago neighborhood). At the Chicago site, your staff engaged in an in depth discussion on our pilot proposal with the seven housing authorities engaged, in addition to key regional partners. They offered valuable advice and guidance while asking dozens of questions about lessons learned through our local collaborations about portability, mobility and other key objectives.

Since submitting our proposal to you, several other key milestones have fueled our efforts:

- a) **Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning** has developed a consortia agreement for RHI partners, which outlines the way our project-based vouchers can advance CMAP's GoTo2040 Plan and its recent Sustainable Communities Regional Planning (Implementation) Grant, while ensuring that low-income households benefit from the priority developments this Plan encourages near jobs and transit.
- b) **Metropolitan Mayors Caucus** updated its own Housing and Community Development Action Plan, underscoring its continued commitment to regional voucher coordination that supports its own Housing Endorsement Criteria.
- c) **The Preservation Compact** confirmed its commitment to leverage in-kind assistance (energy-efficiency resources, property management training, tenant education, etc.) to eligible properties engaged in our pilot.
- d) **The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago**, a regional consortium of the region's nine Workforce Boards, are supportive of aligning workforce development opportunities with families engaged in our regional pilot.
- e) **The region's Continua of Care leaders** have similarly begun outlining a MOA to align our efforts to increase supportive housing opportunities throughout the region.
- f) The two largest housing authorities involved in this partnership, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the Housing Authority of Cook County, have both expanded their own commitment to project-based programs linked to opportunity, through the [CHA's PRA program](#) and HACC's [Suburban Cook County Multifamily Preservation Initiative](#) respectively.
- g) The Illinois Housing Assistance Research Project (IHARP) released a statewide study entitled "[Moving or Moving Up? Understanding Residential Mobility for Housing Choice Voucher Families in Illinois](#)," which underscores the need for regional solutions to promote access to opportunities for voucher holders.

Perhaps more significant than all the above milestones is the outcomes of the 2011 federal budget negotiations. We are thrilled that the tenant-based voucher budget was not decreased but are gravely concerned about the administrative fee cuts.

As you determine how to allocate that Administrative fee, we implore you to set aside \$2 million for the key elements of the pilot proposal as amended during and after the visit with Ms. Bastarache and Mr. Dennis. While we also encourage you to support housing authorities nationwide

with the limited administrative budget available, we are confident that all parties have much to gain from the outcomes of the pilot proposed. Again, the more we can promote family self-sufficiency through these kind of regional collaborations and other networks that align housing and job-related plans and investments, the more we all experience the bottom-line benefits.

The key elements of the pilot that warrant your assistance are described below.

Looking forward, the undersigned housing authorities and partners are committed to advancing our local efforts in a manner which inform the Transforming Rental Assistance Initiative and relevant legislative proposal, by expanding existing Intergovernmental and Management and Operating Agreements to accomplish the following:

- Streamline outreach and administrative strategies for participating housing authorities to create and manage two regionwide waiting lists (one for households interested in project-based opportunities and the other for tenant-based), for those interested in opportunity and/or revitalization areas with improved access to good schools, jobs and transit;
- Provide mobility counseling, workforce development and links to Continuum of Care programs and services for participating families in both opportunity areas and revitalizing neighborhoods;
- Leverage the Preservation Compact's Energy Savers program, Metropolitan Planning Council's Employer-Assisted Housing initiative and other resources to support housing opportunities created through this effort;
- Provide an orientation to participating property managers, and assist with service connections;
- Demonstrate and evaluate the incentives and counseling dollars necessary to encourage PHA participation and collaboration;
- Evaluate short and long-term program benefits for participating families, by tracking variables such as job creation, and changes in household incomes, commutes, school improvement and access to opportunity;
- Offer recommendations to HUD on policy and programmatic changes necessary to bring lessons learned to scale.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss these ideas further, please contact the Metropolitan Planning Council's Vice President of Community Development Robin Snyderman at (312) 863-6007, or rsnyderman@metroplanning.org

Thank you for your leadership, innovation and commitment to quality rental housing.

Cc: Members of the Chicago Region's Congressional Leadership
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Carol Galante, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Multifamily Housing Programs, HUD
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Michael Dennis, Deputy Director, Housing Choice Voucher Programs, HUD
Erika Poethig, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research, HUD
Shelley Poticha, Director for Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities, HUD
Antonio Riley, Region V Administrator, HUD
Dan Lurie, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Secretary, HUD

Sincerely,



Lewis Jordan, Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Housing Authority



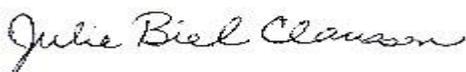
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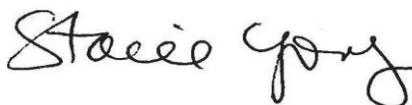
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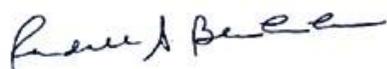
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