



RIHA MISSION, VISION, GOALS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Mission:

RIHA is committed to pursuing new and creative ways to meet the changing housing needs of the diverse population of Rock Island, Illinois.

Vision:

RIHA is committed to building new communities based on transition and hope. The creation of affordable housing that is indistinguishable from market-rate housing in the surrounding area allows the Agency to improve the quality of affordable housing in Rock Island by providing more choices for current and future residents.

Strategic Goals:

- ▶ Achieve and Maintain Operational Excellence
- ▶ Ensure Long-Term Financial Viability
- ▶ Implement Asset Management Plan
- ▶ Maintain a Positive Public Image

Guiding Principles:

- ▶ Meet the housing needs of low- and very low-income families and individuals
- ▶ Provide residents with more choices and more control over where they live
- ▶ Expand the housing market to meet the needs of current and future Rock Island citizens
- ▶ Promote neighborhood revitalization throughout the City of Rock Island Transition RIHA residents and program participants to economic independence and housing self-sufficiency



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WHO WE ARE: COMMUNITY PARTNER

Rock Island Housing Authority (RIHA) was established in 1939. Since then, it has provided rental assistance to Rock Island citizens including seniors on a fixed-income, persons with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, military veterans and low-income wage workers and families. In more recent years, this population has expanded to include refugees and immigrants from more than 30 countries around the world. RIHA residents and program participants are male, female, married, single, and divorced — in other words, come from all sorts of backgrounds. Most families living in or seeking RIHA housing opportunities have at least one family member that works in some capacity and many work full-time. Others attend school or participate in job-training programs.

RIHA offers two types of housing to qualified households including conventional Public Housing and housing under the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV), formally known as the Section 8 program. Families participating in RIHA housing programs pay no more than 30 percent of their income toward rent and utilities. RIHA also offers resident services programs fostering economic self-sufficiency and personal growth. RIHA is an independent, not-for-profit agency that receives most of its funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Regardless of income, most families have the same concerns – security, employment, getting the best possible education for their kids, and wanting a safe, decent place to live. As an organization and as a member of the Rock Island, community, RIHA strives to make our neighborhoods better, healthier places for all people to live by providing more housing choices and more housing opportunities for current and future citizens.

WHAT WE DO: PROVIDE HOUSING

Public Housing Program: The U.S. Housing Act of 1937 established the national Public Housing Program to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. RIHA has provided housing through the Public Housing program to Rock Island citizens since 1940. Eligibility is based on annual gross income and U.S. citizenship or eligible immigration status. Program participation is denied to any applicant whose habits and practices may have a detrimental effect on other tenants or on the project's environment.

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program: The federal government's major program for assisting very low-income households afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market is the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. Housing assistance is provided on behalf of participants allowing them to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and/or apartments. Eligibility for the program is based on the family's total annual gross income and number of family members. The HCV program is limited to US citizens and specified categories of non-citizens who have eligible immigration status. In general, the family's income may not exceed 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).

WHAT WE DO: PROVIDE RESIDENT SERVICES PROGRAMS

Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program: The FSS program involves goal setting, mentoring and financial incentives to empower families in making positive life changes. The program is free and voluntary and is available to anyone participating in either the RIHA Public Housing or HCV programs. As a part of the program, participants work with an FSS Case Manager to develop a plan that outlines specific activities needed to achieve their individual economic self-sufficiency goals. FSS services are coordinated through community partner referrals. Some FSS goals might include:

- ▶ Job Training
- ▶ Obtaining and Maintaining Employment
- ▶ Moving Off Housing Assistance
- ▶ Completing a GED/High School Diploma
- ▶ Pursuing Higher Educational Opportunities
- ▶ Obtaining Home Ownership
- ▶ Personal Growth
- ▶ Financial Counseling and Budgeting

Program participants enter into a contract of participation which outlines their responsibilities towards completion of training and employment objectives over a five-year period or less. The contract also stipulates RIHA responsibilities towards helping residents achieve their goals. For each participating family that is a recipient of welfare assistance, RIHA establishes an interim goal that the family become independent from assistance and remain independent at least one year prior to the expiration of the contract. During the period of program participation, residents may earn an escrow credit, based on increased earned income which they may use in a variety of ways after they successfully graduate from the program.

Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) Program: The ROSS Program is available to all RIHA Public Housing Residents. The program is designed to promote the development of local strategies and coordinate assistance under the Public Housing program with public and private supportive services and resident empowerment activities. Acting as a bridge, Coordinators ensure that program participants are linked to the supportive services they need enabling families to increase earned income, reduce or eliminate the need for welfare assistance, make progress toward achieving economic independence and housing self-sufficiency, or, in the case of elderly or disabled residents, help improve their quality of life or age-in-place.

As part of the ROSS program, Coordinators organize educational and wellness events so that residents can receive information regarding services available in the community. While Service Coordinators do not provide direct services, such as acting as a homemaker or providing job training, they do act as a source of general assistance to residents facing crisis situations or lease violations. To participate in the program, residents need only make an appointment with a Service Coordinator to discuss their specific needs. Coordinators are bound by a code of ethics that requires all personal information to remain confidential unless the resident signs a consent form to release information.

WHO WE SERVE: ROCK ISLAND COMMUNITY

RIHA Asset Management Plan: The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (QHWRA) required Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to conduct a Physical Needs Assessment of each of their properties. The purpose of the assessment was to review the present and future use and value of all public housing properties nationwide.

In response to QHWRA, RIHA prepared an Asset Management Plan in 2003. As part of the Plan, the Agency evaluated each of its developments and made recommendations to keep and maintain, to keep and upgrade, or to demolish and replace each property. Some of the most important goals of the Asset Management Plan included:

1. Redefining public housing by replacing obsolete buildings with housing that more appropriately meets community needs and is indistinguishable from other housing in the area;
2. Providing current and future residents with more housing options and more housing choices;
3. Partnering with other agencies and organizations to provide the services required to overcome the barriers associated with living in subsidized housing developments breaking the welfare cycle; and
4. Working to eliminate the negative influences of public housing within the city of Rock Island and provide a meaningful "hand-up" to those living there.

By evaluating the long-term benefits of each of its properties, RIHA positioned itself to make the changes required to provide more housing choices and more affordable housing opportunities to more people than at any other time in its history. As a result, RIHA committed itself to building new communities based on transition and hope ushering in a new era of housing within the City. In doing so, the Agency has moved from the provider of public housing to an organization focused on providing affordable homes to a broad-based market. The Asset Management Plan has served as a key element in the agency's strategic plan since 2003 and remains the blueprint by which the organization pursues its goals today.

