

## **CHA JOBS PLUS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

With 27 years of offering successful family self-sufficiency (FSS) programs and a dynamic leadership team at the helm, the Charlotte Housing Authority is ready to expand its proven FSS program to the residents at Southside Homes. With Jobs Plus funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a strong staff presence and in-kind services from 25 community partners we will positively change both the culture of that community and the lives of the individuals at Southside. We are ready and have the proven capacity to put our innovative Jobs Plus program in to action.

CHA provides FSS services to 1,225 public housing units and Housing Choice Voucher participants every month. We know we have been successful in helping residents become employed because we carefully track outcomes and provide monthly updates to the CEO and bi-annual reports to our Board of Commissioners. Across all programs, since FY10 we have seen 60 families exit our FSS programs to home ownership and another 384 families exit to a private rental apartment. As of October 31, 2014, a stunning 91% of the heads of household enrolled in our FSS programs were employed and 74% of those employed had a job retention rate of 12 months or more, with an overall average income of \$15,415.<sup>1</sup> Looking at just those conventional sites where the work requirement was added in after the lease was signed, the average site employment has risen from 34.4% in 2012 to 41.6% in 2014.

**The community.** Built in 1952, Southside Homes offers much needed safe, decent and affordable housing to 381 families<sup>2</sup>. CHA spent more than \$23,600,000 between 2002-2009 to perform a substantial renovation to these highly sought-after affordable apartment homes to modernize them and keep them in service for another 40 years. Served by a team of three with a combined 55 years of property management experience, the residents at Southside Homes have not been able to maintain a cohesive Resident Organization and have rarely topped more than a 21% employment rate when looking across all units at the site (81/381).

Since 1993, the City of Charlotte has been gathering data every two years on neighborhoods across the City, known as Neighborhood Profile Areas (NPAs), for a Quality of Life study. Southside Homes units make up 81% of the housing units for its NPA. The most recent Quality of Life study was released in 2012 and was based on 2011 data. For the NPA that includes Southside Homes, there were 1,744 violent crimes per 100,000 persons as compared to a county average of 514.5 and a property crime rate of 8,472 as compared to the county rate of 4,435.6. Statistics on teenage pregnancy and adults without a high school diploma outpace the county average by 50%, and the median household income was almost six times less than the county average.<sup>3</sup>

While the City has altered the geography of the NPA areas slightly over the 21 years of their highly regarded Quality of Life study, the basic study area has remained the same and the basic data reported above has remained consistent. So, then, the conclusion remains constant: A culture of poverty exists at Southside Homes, fostered by a high percentage of low income, unemployed heads of household struggling to make ends meet on public assistance and federally subsidized housing, food, and utilities.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is from the October, 2014 our Project Analyst provided the CEO on November 15, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> 381 units for rent and 13 are off line for supportive services.

<sup>3</sup> City of Charlotte Quality of Life Study. See <http://maps.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/qoldashboard/>

**The Threshold.** At present only 81 households report any income from wages (a 73.35% unemployment rate among the non-elderly households (223/304)) and the earned income range is \$1,200 to \$36,202. There are 304 units occupied by family (e.g non-elderly heads of household) and all 381 units are within ¼ mile of the center of the development. There are **331** employable adults on site. CHA has entered into a Jobs Plus-specific MOU with the local Workforce Development Board (locally branded as Charlotte Works) and will continue its long-standing partnership with that key agency on this Jobs Plus effort. The Earned Income Disregard is 14.32% of the Jobs Plus Budget and the CHA match/leverage percentage is 1.35%. CHA is willing to share all Jobs Plus data gathered with HUD or HUD designees upon HUD's request.

**The Plan.** Our Jobs Plus plan incorporates three key elements: Employment Services, the Earned Income Disregard and Community Supports for Work. With grant funding and existing CHA staff repurposed for grant activities, CHA will deploy a team of eight people and 25 community partners for an intensive four-year effort to transform the Southside Homes community at a cost of \$6,721 per employable adult served.

**Employment Services.** The employment-focused case coordinators will work closely with the Community Job Coaches to assess the wants and needs of both the un- and under-employed non-elderly residents of Southside Homes and work with a dynamic set of community partners to remove existing barriers to employment to help move these adults into the workforce at a living wage. Five key services providers will lead our team of employment-centered agencies. Our nationally-recognized **Central Piedmont Community College** is on board to help with literacy and GED credentials and job training, our progressive **Workforce Development Board** will help with soft skills, workshops and WIA-funded job training, **Goodwill Industries** will help with soft skills, computer literacy and the most hard-to-place individuals, and a highly successful non-profit who has made a name for itself as a staffing agency for low income adults, **Grace-Mar Services, Inc.**, will bring its highly regarded Intensive Job Placement program on site to Southside Homes. The **Department of Social Services** will redouble its efforts with the existing and new TANF recipients, providing child care and workforce development services to eligible parents who have not taken advantage of the programs they have in place to help them enter the workforce. Other community partners will help with financial literacy, computer skills, job readiness/ employment soft skills and other services that may be needed to remove barriers to employment, such as substance abuse, mental health issues, a criminal background, and/or a disability.

We have set an ambitious goal for the employment aspect of our Jobs Plus Initiative. By the end of the four year grant term want to see 202 of the 381 households at Southside Homes have at least one adult with earned income: a **53%** employment rate, up from the 21% that exists today.

**Earned Income Disregard.** The Catch-22 that often ensnares a low-income person seeking to return to work will be, in large part, removed by this Jobs Plus program by freezing the rent of all Jobs Plus participants for the four years of program participation. CHA's Director of Property and Asset Management began working on the administration of the EID as soon as the Jobs Plus NOFA was posted. As an MTW agency, CHA has been using a modified rent calculation since December 2010. Working with Yardi, our on-line data management system, CHA will be able to modify the way rent is calculated at Southside Homes to reflect a standard rent calculation with a modified earned income disregard (Jobs Plus EID) for all registered Jobs

Plus participants for the entire four year grant term. We have devised a manual system to track lost rent and property management staff is on board with the additional manpower this will entail, understanding the enormous benefits this program will bring to the residents they serve.

**Community Support for Work.** Nowhere will Jobs Plus at Southside Homes have more of an impact than on the Southside Homes community at large. As adults return to work, increase their hours or their job status, or enter the workforce for the first time, they may begin to notice the larger world around them and see the possibilities that it holds, and begin to see that they can take charge of their lives, and its outcomes, in a way they never thought possible before.

Famed urban sociologist William Julius William, in his book *When Work Disappears*, noted that the “consequences of high neighborhood joblessness are more devastating than those of high neighborhood poverty.” Many of the social ills we see at Southside, such as crime and low levels of social organization, can be linked to high unemployment (or a disappearance of work).<sup>4</sup>

CHA will recruit, hire and train four Southside Homes residents as Community Job Coaches for the four-year grant term, using their expertise and local knowledge to lead the marketing and recruitment for the Jobs Plus Initiative. Much that will be done to support work: celebrating milestones, launching support groups, increasing financial literacy, launching a Resident Organization, will not only have an impact on the individual and her immediate family, but will act like yeast – **helping the entire community rise**. These various activities will not only help some individuals get jobs, but will serve as a catalyst for the formation of social networks and a sense of interconnectedness that is currently lacking, as noted by the inability of our staff and our Resident Advisory Council to launch a Resident Organization, despite repeated attempts.

While political and social commentators as far back as Alexis de Tocqueville in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or James Madison in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century talked about the importance of social networks on American life, the notion of social capital was popularized and placed fully in the main stream in the 1990s with the publication of Robert D. Putnam’s book *Bowling Alone*<sup>5</sup>. While there are many definitions of social capital, the basic underpinning is that social networks have value to the individual and the group (e.g. neighborhood) as a whole. At its core, the proposed work of the Community Job Coaches and Jobs Plus staff will be to effectively cultivate social networks. This is where our Jobs Plus program will ensure **sustainability** at Southside Homes: tearing down walls and building bridges as new functional patterns of neighborhood interaction take hold and newcomers will be absorbed into a new type of community. They will build social capital. They will help launch a community where work is the norm. Where involvement in a vibrant Resident Organization is viewed as important and FUN! Hence, our goals for our Community Support for Work are ambitious.

- A 50% decrease in the number of minimum renters
- The presence of an active and vibrant Resident Organization at Southside Homes, with a budget for the Resident Activity Funds and plans for the upcoming year,
- A 5% decrease in crime at Southside Homes.

**Southside Homes is ready for Jobs Plus.**

---

<sup>4</sup> Wilson, W.J. 1996. *When Work Disappears*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, p. xii.

<sup>5</sup> Putnam, R.D. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. NY: Simon & Schuster.