

Mayor's Council on African American Elders

c/o Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County
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MCAAE Meeting Summary

November 17, 2023

MCAAE Members Present: Paula Williams, Chair; Omara Abe; Claudette Thomas; Rita Howard

Members Absent: Charlotte Antoine; Sheila Mary; Paul Mitchell; Pamela Williams

Guests: Erica Alexander, SHA; Dr. Aisha Stone, DNP, RN, CCM, Geriatric Specialist (joined from Texas!)

HSD/ADS Staff: Shukri Olow; Kamaria Hightower; Dinah Stephens; Karen Winston

I. Welcome and Introductions

Participants introduced themselves at the start of the meeting.

II. Seattle Housing Authority and Senior Housing - Erica Alexander, SHA Senior Property Manager

SHA Mission - To enhance the Seattle Community by creating and sustaining decent, safe, and affordable living environments that foster stability and self-sufficiency for people with low incomes.

History

1939: Established with \$3-Million; Began construction on Yesler Terrace. Yesler Terrace was the first public housing built in Washington state and the first racially integrated housing built in the country.

1939 – 1945: Focused on housing defense workers, military families, and veterans.

1950's: Focus resumed on providing low-income housing.

1960's: Began adding housing focused on elderly and disabled.

1970's: Began adding subsidized housing.

1980's: Seattle Voters approved financing for low-income housing; The Seattle Senior Housing Program (SSHP) was developed in 1981. Constructed 22-buildings (entire portfolio today).

1990's: HOPE IV Program developed. A HUD Initiative to replace institutional style housing and create home communities. This continues through HUD, leading to the current redevelopment of Yesler Terrace.

2000's – Present: Revitalizing and redevelopment of older housing to mixed-income; adding to current housing stock.

Housing Programs at SHA

- Where we are today: 38,319 Individuals Served (2023 alone); 8,527 SHA Owned/Managed. Units (brought back in house); 8,490 Tenant Based Vouchers; 3,297 Collaborative Housing. Units (and the number continues to grow).

SHA Owned/Managed

- Housing Owned and Managed by SHA.
- Low-income Public Housing.
- Senior Housing: 30% of income for rent and utilities.

Tenant Based Vouchers

Co-sponsored by:



City of Seattle



King County

- Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program: Used to be Section 8.
- Rent from any landlord who meets federally approved quality standards.

Collaborative Housing

- SHA subsidized affordable housing.
- Project-Based Voucher Program.
- Owned and Operated by Nonprofit Providers: Subsidized units and housing through agencies in communities.

Housing Portfolios

Public Housing

- Low-Income Public Housing: High Rises, HUD funded 30% overall income rent/utilities.
- Senior Housing: Unique rent structure.
- Scattered Sites: Scattered throughout the city, includes townhomes, apartments, single family homes owned and managed by SHA.
- Streamlined Low-Income Public Housing (SLIPH): HSA owned and managed units with Housing Choice Vouchers attached to them.

HOPE IV

- High Point, New Holly, and Rainier Vista; Lake City Court; Yesler Terrace; Leschi House (55+).
- The majority of senior age is 62-plus. Social Security is shifting the age of what it means to be classified as senior. Fifty-five is young and doesn't meet the standard of what we considered senior in the past.

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV Program)

- SHA Subsidized Affordable Housing: A set number of vouchers issued each year. Individuals take voucher to any landlord in the city of Seattle willing to accept and is able to meet federal standards of quality. The SHA must inspect the unit to make sure it's legitimate, good, safe, secure quality housing for renters.
- Project-Based Voucher Program: Distinguished from the voucher program as funding is tied to a specific unit, not to the resident. With Housing Choice, the resident can take the voucher to another state or use it with another housing authority they can apply to without losing the voucher.
- Owned and Operated by Nonprofit Providers: They oversee our collaborative housing where we subsidize units in other agencies (Leschi or DESC, Community Catholic Services or Plymouth Housing). We hold them to the same standards of annual inspections to ensure they meet federal standards of quality for housing.

General Discussion

- Our programs have a similar staff portfolio with a director who oversees the department, each has a program administrator, property managers, assistant property managers and property assistants as well as maintenance teams, community builder teams, analysts and other support roles that keep us going.
- HOPE IV communities are a mixed-income communities, having incomes ranging from 30-40 %, to market rate, to homeowners who started with us as residents and invested in equity accounts to build money to purchase their own homes. We now have homeowners in our HOPE IV program mixed in with our other housing at High Point, New Holly, and Rainier Vista.
- The SHA seeks out properties to purchase. Some acquired properties have come as a result of the Seattle Housing Levy.

ACTION: Erica will research if SHA has a specific goal for the number of senior housing units for the current levy (just passed), and report back to the group.

- SHA added two new senior specific properties (Golden Sunset and Market Terrace), mixed-income (combination of HCV, project-based subsidy - 30% and market rate) and just got approval for HUD funding on those properties earlier this year. We're getting through certification requirements and transitioning residents over now. We're looking into potentially changing how the Senior Portfolio looks and is managed with changes planned over the next 3-5 years.
- Erica was unsure if there is a process for individual homeowners to sell their homes to SHA to convert those to public housing, however, if they meet the requirements, they could rent out their home (and become landlord) to someone who has an HCV.

Senior Housing (62+)

- The SHA has housing that is designated for 62+ to meet eligibility requirements. There's a small additional requirement we've agreed upon with the City of Seattle to include a 10% non-elderly disabled resident if they meet the eligibility requirement they can qualify for senior housing if they're not 62 but they must have a documented qualifying disability. We limit that at 10%.

Senior Housing Program (SSHP)

- 22 Buildings and 960 Units: We have 2 studio apartments, and the majority of units are 1-br with a handful 2-br units. We have 2-br units in each building (minimum of 2, no more than 5). Waitlists are long (1-5 years+) for the majority of our buildings depending on the neighborhood people select. Two-bedroom units may be up to a 10-year wait (due to availability) depending on where you're at on the waitlist.
- Rent Tier System: Five-tiers based on income falling within a certain Median Income percent (Income capped at 80% of AMI and goes as low as less than 20% AMI.) The minimum income requirement is \$10,200.00 per year. The lowest rent is \$340.00 per unit (not based on 30-40% of income.) We worked with residents (Resident Advisory Committee) in the early 2000's to develop the program and residents voted the program in. We implemented a modification to the 5th Tier in 2018 to help disperse compression of income between the 3rd and 4th Tiers and distribute rent burden across the board more equitably.
- The highest rent burden people experience is within our first two tiers (lowest income residents). Our first two tiers also consist of our most racial diverse residents who are not part of the dominant race culture. There's an inequity in the distribution of that and the system is no longer working in the way it was intended to work. We're hoping we can make progress on this, so we have a more equitable distribution of our rent tier system for our residents.
- We see substance abuse and mental health disabilities being challenging in a community of older adults. Mixed use was implemented based on regulations from the City of Seattle when they moved away from the Olmstead Act, institutionalizing programs, and projects where people facing substance abuse and mental illnesses have the same rights as everyone else and the city requested entities accommodate that at 10%, and that agreement continues today.

Low Income Public Housing (LIPH) and Scattered Sites (Special Portfolio)

- Designated Housing for 62+. A pathway to seniors over-rent burdened which charges 30% of income and rent.
- Ballard House and Westwood Heights.
- Leschi House: Part of HOPE IV program, 55+ and 30% of income. (Beacon Hill area).
- Golden Sunset and Market Terrace: Newest mixed-income properties. Working out funding and setting up programs.

Where Seniors (62+) Live and Demographics (Resident Profiles)

- Overall Demographics by Race: White 18%, Black 49%, Asian 9%, Other 24%.
- Age of Residents: Adults (24-61) 37%, Children (under 18) 35%, Seniors (62+) 22%, Young Adults (18-23) 6%.

- The SHA serves residents with incomes that are below 50% of AMI. Half identify as black. 82% are at-or-below 30% AMI, classified as extremely low-income. We are successfully reaching those of the lowest income in our community based on the above demographics.

Owned/Managed Units (62+)

- HOPE IV (Garden Communities) 21%, LIPH 46%, Scattered Sites 10%, SSHP 23%.
- There are 8,500 units represented (62+). High-rise refers to 14-stories+ with up to 1000 units.

Household Size and Race (62a+)

Racial Demographics

- Overall, the SSHP mirrors the population of the Seattle Area and where community is found within the city (cultural pockets of community based on culture, interests, ideas, and beliefs).
- The city doesn't have diverse cultures throughout the communities, and we need to spread-out pockets of concentration so housing doesn't look the same and people will be attracted in different ways.

Single Household versus Multi-Person Households

- The concentration of multi-person households in HOPE IV and HCV and single households make up the majority of SHA portfolios.
- The majority of housing are senior households with only 1-individual.
- In LIPH and SSHP we see more isolation happening and challenges stemming from that and case of aging that challenge the ability to enjoy living safely, with quality. Not everyone has a community or family connections, and it can be isolating and easy to get lost in the mix.
- The HCV is portable. You select where you want to live as long as your landlord accepts the voucher. The majority of black people in SHA are outside of the city with those vouchers. There are pathways to transfer the voucher outside of the city (porting out voucher) which has an application process.
- The Housing Choices Voucher Program is revamping how they do the waitlist for vouchers. It's gone through Board presentation for 2024 budget, and they will be using an open waitlist doing random selection, so everyone has equal opportunity to apply for and obtain a voucher.
- Erica doesn't know if SHA accepts people with RSOs (Registered Sex Offenders), however, federally, HUD can be strict about that. They may have relaxed this based on the level; some people are able to drop the level as being homeless increases your level.

ACTION: Erica will research the exact answer about RSOs and let the group know.

General Discussion

- The MCAAE has always taken the position that more extremely low-income housing is needed throughout the city. Perhaps this is an opportunity to partnership with the SHA on the issue of extremely low-income housing.

Services and Community Building

Community Services Division (CSD)

- Plans, develops, seeks partnerships for and oversees the provision of referrals, service coordination and direct service to SHAs low-income residents and voucher participants.
- Manages the Community Builder Team whose goal is to involve residents in the life and betterment of their community and in decision and policy making on SHA activities and programs that affect them.
- Service focus on education, employment and self-sufficiency/stability, health and mental case health management, and advocacy services.
 - **Digital Equity:** Digital Navigators; iPad and Laptop Distribution; Digital Literacy Classes; Technology Training; Mobile Labs.

- **Community Builders:** Resident Action Council (RAC); Joint Policy Advisory Committee; Event Coordination; Resident Councils; Assorted Activities; Resource Referrals.
- **Job Link:** Job Coach; Education Options; Resume Building; Interview Skill Building; Financial Training; Homeownership Education.

Service Partnerships

- Aging and Disability Services (ADS): For Case Management, Referrals, trauma work, help to connect to resources in the community, Long-Term Care and creating pathways to get involved with LTC services (home services for caregiving support) or someone needing to move to more supportive environment to meet their needs.
- CISC and Sound (BHOP).
- Full Life Care: Addressing Clutter and Hoarding Program (ACHP) and the Wellness Program. The pilot (helping declutter homes and lives) this last year is going great and we're beefing up Wellness programming.
- Dispute Resolution Center (DRC): We have Listening circles in buildings with community conflicts between individuals. There's a higher need for wellness (and mental health) support with people coming out of the Pandemic. The Pandemic isolated people and they have a lower threshold for things these days.
- Neighbor Care and the Metro ORCA Program.

General Discussion

- There was not enough time to complete the entire presentation. It may be possible for Erica to come back to the committee in 2024 to present again.

III. Age Friendly Updates (Dinah Stephens)

- Age Friendly has been exploring a partnership with SHA. There are more older adults at this point living in non-senior SHA housing than there are in SHA senior housing buildings. We are all living longer and want to age in place, but it often means people are aging in homes and units not designed for accessibility and various disabilities people live with as they age.
- The NW Universal Design Council conducted an audit of 1 SHA building and unit (a high-rise in Greenlake area) with a designer specialized in accessibility doing a walk through of the living space and communal spaces. Ideas were shared with the SHA Asset Management Team on elements that make for a more age-friendly environment, and we're waiting to hear next steps.
- We helped convene a meeting on November 16, in Redmond to talk about how we might imbed elements to promote accessibility in our comprehensive city plans, in our city policies, in code regulations and other policies. About 60 people convened in the kick-off conversation on how the city can use our tools to drive accessibility in our homes and other built environments.
- We wrapped up a series of four Seattle City Council Candidate Forums, hearing from candidates on issues related to aging and allowing space for older adults to ask questions and get answers.
- We are rolling out the Anti-Ageism Trainings created over the summer and are working on arranging a presentation to the MCAAE in the coming months to get feedback. Thank you to all who provided input during the development process; your input made it better training and we're grateful for that.

IV. Aging and Disability Updates

- The African American Caregiver Forum was held on November 4, 2023, at the NW African American Museum. About 80 people registered and 65 attended the event. It was a good forum and we received good feedback from the evaluations. The keynote speaker was Dr. Ethlyn McQueen-Gibson, who has done a lot of research on Alzheimer's and African Americans.

- Highlights from Dr. Gibson’s presentation included an overview of the activities she’s involved in that promote good brain health and she ended with examples of how she uses her voice to advocate i.e., **“Make some noise!”** on behalf of loved ones and the community. People were inspired by her message.
 - It was a beautiful space to be in community and hear from others who are also on that journey we’re all going to be on some day, and to share resources and wisdom.
 - Sharon Sobers-Outlaw provided tips and strategies to caregivers so we’re able to better support our elders going through this. I hope there’s an informal convening for black caregivers so we can continue to learn from each other.
 - Dr. Gibson made the point that we need to participate in studies and clinical trials so that there is a Black profile for these studies. When she said, “Make some noise”, that’s one way to make some noise.
 - There are several studies at the University of Washington that people can participated in locally, and it was pointed out that somebody who is younger in the family, who feels competent, and able, needs to stand up and advocate for the elders in their families. If you’re not sure what to do to support your elders, go with them to doctor’s appointments and other places where you can ask the questions and listen, and be aware of what the implications are of the answers to the questions regarding the health and well being of elders.
 - I realize now I can ask my doctors questions and take questions to the doctors’ office. Next year we’ll prepare handouts on the kinds of questions to ask your doctor.
 - Another way of being able to advocate for our seniors is participating in the Ombudsman Program for the state. You would be trained by the state, in the volunteer program, and would be assigned or asked to go to different nursing facilities and be an advocate for our elders and their families.
- On Tuesday, November 21, 2023, at Roman Casino in Skyway, the MCAAE is collaborating with the University District Rotary, Women United, and Maverick Cares, to distribute turkeys and food bags to needy families. This is our second annual event. We need volunteer runners to carry turkeys to people in cars who can’t come get them and need organization to help keep cars moving. We need a lot of help. Volunteer time commitment is 3 to 7:00 p.m.
- The next meeting is Friday, December 15, 2023, in-person at the Douglas Truth Library, 2300 E. Yesler Way, Seattle. There will be food and we are planning to have some fun, too! Everyone is welcome, and more information is to come.

Meeting Adjourned