

# History of the Lincoln Housing Authority

The Housing Authority of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska, was created on June 3, 1946 by City Council resolution in response to a housing shortage in Lincoln following the end of World War II. During the first few years of its existence, Lincoln Housing Authority operated a housing referral desk, purchased its first housing units (10 surplus trailers placed in a city tourist park), and converted army barracks, located on the abandoned World War II Lincoln Army Air Field, to housing for returning veterans. During the 1950's the Housing Authority operated almost 800 units of housing on the site of the old air field in addition to providing facilities for religious services, a grocery store, drug store, barbershop, beauty shop, laundry, nursery and movie theater. Thus early in its history, Lincoln Housing Authority made a commitment not only to provide tenants with decent, safe and sanitary housing, but also support services and community facilities, a tradition which continues today.

In 1966 the focus of Lincoln Housing Authority's activities expanded beyond the old air field with city-wide voter approval of Lincoln Housing Authority's participation in the federal Section 23 Leasing Housing Program (now defunct), the forerunner of today's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, which was established later in the 1970's. Both programs enabled low income families to lease privately-owned housing at rents they could afford. Currently the Lincoln Housing Authority administers over 3,000 vouchers under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

The most significant event in the history of the Lincoln Housing Authority resulted from the deactivation of the Lincoln "Cold War" Air Force Base in 1966. In 1970 Lincoln Housing Authority purchased 1,000 units of former air force base housing (Arnold Heights) for \$5.5 million. Approximately one-half of the 1,000 units were resold to private owners to pay off the mortgage. The income from the remaining units provide a solid financial base for the Housing Authority independent of federal funding. Most Arnold Heights units are rented at what is referred to as conventional or affordable market rents, that is, rents which are set at rates lower than what could be obtained on the open market. Two apartment complexes near the University of Nebraska, Northwood Terrace and Heritage Square, acquired by Lincoln Housing Authority in the 1970's, are also rented at conventional rents.

In 1973, Lincoln Housing Authority built a high rise for senior citizens, Mahoney Manor, under the federal public housing program. The project was Lincoln's first housing for low-income households built with federal funds, and satisfied a long-pursued goal of providing housing especially built for the elderly. A second high-rise

for the elderly, Burke Plaza, was built in 1979 with funding from the Section 8 New Construction Program. The Housing Authority also manages a third high rise for senior citizens, Crossroads House. Once a downtown hotel, the upper stories of Crossroads House were renovated under the provisions of the federal low-income housing tax credit program. The first floor of Crossroads House is leased office space. Through a partnership with the City of Lincoln Aging Services Department, individual support services and a meal program are offered to elderly residents of Mahoney Manor, Burke Plaza and Crossroads House to ensure they retain their independence as long as possible.

During the 1970's and 80's the Lincoln Housing Authority established a strong commitment to the construction and acquisition of scattered site single- family or duplex housing for families using the federal public housing program and the Section 8 New Construction Program. Lincoln Housing Authority owned-units are scattered throughout the City of Lincoln rather than concentrated in one area; the casual passerby is unable to identify them as subsidized housing units.

During the 1990's the Housing Authority greatly expanded its support services and collaborative relationships with other community organizations. The Family Self-Sufficiency Program was created in September of 1993 to give support to families as they further their education and find jobs on the road to independence from welfare. Lincoln Housing Authority built the Carol M. Yoakum Family Resource Center in Arnold Heights in 1995. The roughly 6,600 square foot facility houses a state-of-the art child care facility, police substation, health clinics, a computer center, and meeting room space available for family support and educational programs. Adjacent to the Yoakum Family Resource Center, the Housing Authority-owned Lincoln Army Air Field Regimental Chapel is available for use by the general public. Lincoln Housing Authority also provides a building that houses the Arnold Heights Public Branch Library.

In 1999 Lincoln Housing Authority converted an apartment and a no-longer-used community space at Northwood Terrace to an early child care facility operated by Cedars Youth Services. Partnerships with Friendship Home, Catholic Social Services, Fresh Start and Lincoln Action Program also provide transitional housing and homeless programs.

Lincoln Housing Authority offers two home ownership programs: the Forgivable Down Payment Program and the Lease and Purchase Program. Homes sold through the Lease and Purchase Program is built by students from Northeast High School through a cooperative relationship with Lincoln Public Schools.

Lincoln Housing Authority strongly believes that affordable housing should be available in all parts of the city. During the past decade, Lincoln Housing Authority has undertaken the development of three mixed-income communities on sites in south Lincoln, a rapidly growing area of the city with little or no affordable housing.

The first of these projects, Wood Bridge was completed in 1998; the second Summer Hill was completed in 2004. Construction is scheduled to start of the third site, Prairie Crossing in the spring of 2007. Half of all units in each development will be rented at market rate rents; the other half are rented at affordable rents. A portion of both the Wood Bridge and Summer Hill project was financed using the federal low-income housing tax credit program. Lincoln Housing Authority also assumed management of two other tax credit financed projects, Crossroads House (1998) and Affordable Housing II, a 17 unit scattered site rehabilitation project (1997). All four tax credit projects are owned by limited partnerships set up for that purpose with one of Lincoln Housing Authority's two "sister" non-profit organizations, Lincoln Civic Housing, Inc. and Capital City Housing Corporation, serving as general partner. A third sister non-profit organization, Lincoln Housing Charities Inc, was created in 2002 to access grant opportunities available only to 501 (c) (3) corporations.

The Lincoln Housing Authority has been consistently designated a high performing housing authority in recent years by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and was recently selected as one of 21 housing authorities nationwide to participate in a HUD demonstration project called "Moving to Work."