

GREENSBORO HOUSING AUTHORITY

Celebrating Excellence in Affordable Housing

75

YEARS



1941 - 2016

**A rich history of service to
the Greater Greensboro community.**

HAMPTON HOMES THEN - 275 HOMES WERE CONSTRUCTED OFF SOUTH EUGENE STREET AND COMPLETED IN 1968.



HAMPTON HOMES TODAY - THE COMMUNITY UNDERWENT MODERNIZATION IN 2008 INCLUDING THE COMPLETE REDESIGN OF THE BUILDINGS' EXTERIOR AND RECONFIGURATION OF THE INTERIORS.

GHA Mission Statement

Greensboro Housing Authority is Greensboro's largest provider of affordable housing. Together with its community partners, the GHA staff implements and maintains programs that promote education, homeownership, youth achievement and self-sufficiency.

The mission of the Greensboro Housing Authority is to provide safe, quality, affordable housing to low-income families, elderly and the disabled in the Greensboro Community; to maintain a secure community environment; and to encourage personal responsibility and upward mobility of residents while maintaining the fiscal integrity of the agency.

GHA History

In 1939 widespread interest in improving housing conditions for low-income families in Greensboro developed. The Greensboro City Council responded to the concerns of the citizenry, local civic clubs and newspapers by authorizing an application to the North Carolina State Planning Board for a Real Property Survey and a Low-Income Housing Survey within the City. The request was approved and the survey began in June 1939 and was completed in July 1940. The preliminary report, conducted by a staff of 40 people, cited 7,728 family groups occupying substandard housing units in the City of Greensboro. Of those family groups, consisting of 2 to 7 persons, 57.5% were receiving incomes of less than \$1,000 per year. The report also stated that the majority could not possibly be re-housed in standard housing due to their income levels. As a response to the report the Greensboro City Council responded with a statement that would change the City: "The establishment of a Housing Authority for the City of Greensboro is the first step towards the eventual elimination of some of the worst slum sections."

On the 17th of June, 1941, barely six months before the United States entered World War II and only four years following the creation of the United States Housing Act, a special meeting of the City Council was held and the Housing Authority for the City of Greensboro was formed. Mr. Ray Warren was named GHA's first Executive Director and would serve through May of 1956. GHA's first Board of Commissioners was appointed to serve in June 1941 and included Alonzo C. Hall, Chairman; Joseph M. Bryan; D. Edward Hudgins; Dr. Henry L. Smith and Charles G. Yates.

Despite the application by the Greensboro Housing Authority for a Certificate of Public Convenience to the North Carolina Utilities Commission in 1941, it would be ten years before the first low-rent public housing units would be completed in Greensboro. The entrance of the United States into WWII would necessitate a hiatus and a need to plan based upon a world far different from the world of the late 1930's and early 1940's. During this time, the Greensboro Housing Authority (GHA) did not lose sight of its goals and a program evolved to provide, decent, safe housing for the economically disadvantaged as GHA worked toward acquiring land for future building.

With the end of World War II and the ability to purchase the necessary materials, GHA set about completing its plans to provide housing for its citizens. In 1947, GHA petitioned the City to make a determination regarding the



number of substandard dwelling units currently occupied within the City. The planning board managed a quick review that showed there was definite need for concern in the housing of Greensboro's middle and low-income families. In response to these findings, GHA decided a more in-depth review was needed and, with the permission of the Housing and Home Finance Agency of the Public Housing Administration, GHA entered into a special contract with the US Department of Census. The report was submitted and the Department of Commerce cited a preliminary finding of 6,640 units of substandard housing.

It would take nearly 10 years from its establishment before GHA completed the first low-rent public housing units in Greensboro. World War II, the associated scarcity of goods, lack of manpower and lack of funding necessitated a delay in housing plans.

The Henry Louis Smith Homes (Smith Homes), built in 1951 as Greensboro's first public housing community, was constructed in the southwest section of the City and still operates at its location of Florida Street and Freeman Mill Road. The development, named for Commissioner Dr. Henry L. Smith (1941-1947), currently has 430 units and houses over 1,000 residents.

Morningside Homes, also built in 1951 in the eastern section of Greensboro, included 400 units. This community was demolished in 2002 to make way for Willow Oaks, a mixed-income community.

The construction of these first two public housing communities provided housing for the City's neediest residents along with local employment opportunities that added to the economy. Through the selling of bonds and through state, local, federal and private assistance, GHA successfully met its mission to offer safe, sanitary and affordable housing.

In GHA's 1952 Annual Report, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Alonzo C. Hall included a report of the eleven years that the Authority had been in operation. In an accompanying letter to Greensboro Mayor Robert H. Frazier, Mr. Hall wrote, "We are happy to be able to advise you that the facilities provided by the Housing Authority of the City of Greensboro are now being used to capacity, as completion and acceptance of the dwelling units are made available by the Contractors, by those who were entitled to such housing. We know that much distress has been alleviated and a tremendous improvement has been made in housing accommodations because of the operators of the Authority."



Ray Warren Homes - Construction depicted (left) in 1959, present day community (below) is located on Lee Street.



In 1959, GHA expanded its vision and added an additional community, Ray Warren Homes. The development, which contained 236 housing units for Greensboro's low-income families, was named for GHA's first Executive Director, Ray Warren (1941-1956). Located off Lee Street in Greensboro, the site currently houses 545 individuals.

GHA began the long process of finding the land and securing approval for its next public housing community in 1962. With funding assistance in the form of federal loans and an annual contribution from the Public Housing Administration, GHA set out to find the sites that would best serve the City of Greensboro and its perspective low-income public housing residents. Through virtue of various purchases, options and a special proceeding held on January 27, 1964, Hampton Homes was begun. It would take from 1962, when GHA was notified of financial assistance, to 1968 for the completion of the community. Hampton Homes, which is located off S. Eugene Street in Greensboro, has undergone modernization of its 275 units including the complete redesign of the buildings' exterior and reconfiguration of the interiors.

Claremont Courts would become GHA's last large public housing community. Completed in 1969, the community includes 250 units and is located in the northeast section of Greensboro.

A series of articles featured in the Greensboro Daily News in July of 1968 highlighted the changes in public housing policy during the latter part of the 1960's and the impact these changes made in the lives of GHA public housing residents and the City of Greensboro.

Robert Dickey, Executive Director of the Authority from 1956-1968, was quoted; "Public Housing is viewed on nearly all levels as being a means to an end rather than an end in itself. 'From slums to homeownership through public housing', is the housing authority's slogan...". Part of the change that Mr. Dickey referred to in the articles as "the greatest thing that has happened to us..." was the addition of a Community Service Coordinator on October 1, 1967. The Coordinator became the link between community residents, the services residents need and the Authority.



These changes made by GHA were exemplified in a July 31, 1968 Greensboro Daily News article entitled A good housing program. "The reformed program of the GHA not only assists tenants while they are in public housing, but also helps these families to stay together and to move up the economic ladder."

In addition to the changes in Public Housing, the Leased Housing Section 23 program was in-

troduced in 1967. Under the new program, the Housing Authority was authorized to lease privately-owned dwellings and sublease them to low-income citizens at reduced rents. The Section 23 program was the forerunner of the current Housing Choice Voucher Program that provides rent subsidies to eligible families.



Separate communities for Greensboro's elderly became a reality with the addition of Hall Towers, Gateway Plaza and Stoneridge. While there were existing units for elderly and disabled residents in some of GHA's larger communities, they were not designed specifically to meet the needs of this special population. Once again, GHA began a search to acquire land and begin construction.

Alonzo C. Hall Towers, named in honor of GHA's first chairman of the Board of Commissioners, was built on its current site on N. Church Street in 1970 and became the first of two high-rise communities for the elderly.

Gateway Plaza, the second high-rise elderly community, was built in 1975 and is located on Spring Garden Street in downtown Greensboro.

Stoneridge, an existing community that was acquired by GHA in 1978, gave the Greensboro elderly another choice in housing. Located in a secluded area close to the intersection of Holden and High Point Road, this small 51-unit community is a quiet, more rural neighborhood.

The 1980's brought public housing away from the large communities of the past as GHA began to build smaller scattered-site housing throughout Greensboro. This move did not come without controversy as many Greensboro residents were opposed to public housing being constructed in their neighborhoods.

Hickory Trails, the largest of the scattered sites, was built in 1980 with 107 units and an annex was added two years later with 20 additional units. The site on which the community was built was one of the most contested locations for public housing in the City.

Baylor Court, with 11 single-family units, and Woodberry Run, with 39 units, were also built in 1980. Other small communities were constructed in the 1980's including Applewood, Pear Leaf and Silverbriar, all containing 50 units, and Lakespring, a slightly larger community with 60 units.

Two additional public housing communities were built during the 1990's. Laurel Oaks and River Birch, both with 50 units, were added to GHA's scattered-site program.

Crime in GHA's largest public housing communities became an increasing problem for residents and the City. In 1990, in an effort to decrease the crime rate, GHA, its residents and the Greensboro Police Department began a joint effort to establish Police Neighborhood Resource

Centers (PNRCs) in the larger public housing communities. PNRCs now exist in five GHA communities and include a task force of officers assigned to specific neighborhoods and PNRC managers who provide information to residents about services available to them. This successful program has been given national attention and has decreased crime in the participating communities.

With an objective to revitalize and return the Morningside Homes community to its original position as a quality “work-force” neighborhood, GHA began the transformation of Morningside Homes. Demolition of the 1950s public housing community was completed in February 2002 and the construction of Willow Oaks began in March 2002. Willow Oaks is now a reality and features a large community center with meeting rooms, a childcare center and exercise



Grand Opening at Foxworth Condominiums in 2009

room; a senior village with 40 bungalow-style units; 170 town homes; and single-family homes for sale for low to moderate-income families. Senator Elizabeth Dole addressed those attending the grand opening in August 2006. “It’s a remarkable achievement,” the Senator said, “What a remarkable turnaround! Not only do residents have the keys to a new home, they have the keys to a better way of life.”

Woodland Village, purchased in 2007; Abby Court in 2008; and Foxworth Condominiums in 2009, are small public housing communities. Woodland Village is located on Overland Heights with 27 units. Abby Court, located on Rehobeth Church Road, has 14 units and Fox-

worth Condominiums, located on Thicket Lane, has 44 units. Our newest community North Pointe at Hicone is a mix of public housing and market-rate apartments with 11 condominiums located off Hicone Road.

In December 2013, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved GHA’s application to participate in the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). RAD is a HUD program that seeks to preserve aging public housing communities through the leverage of public and private debt and equity in order to reinvest in the public housing stock. RAD will allow GHA to convert its Public Housing units to Project-Based Section 8 and take full ownership of its public housing units.

Through both large and small public housing communities, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Homeownership Program and resident services, GHA continues to fulfill its mission to provide safe, quality, affordable housing to low-income families, elderly and the disabled in the Greensboro community; to maintain a secure community environment; and to encourage personal responsibility and upward mobility of residents while maintaining the fiscal integrity of the agency.



The Erwin Family circa 1950's at Morningside Homes.