



Fresno Housing Authority

Looking to the Future



FRESNO VIBRANT
COMMUNITIES
QUALITY HOUSING
HOUSING **HOUSING**
AUTHORITY ENGAGED
RESIDENTS

“To be a great housing authority these days requires the ability and drive to be entrepreneurial, innovative, and collaborative. Fresno Housing Authority has the potential to be all those things.”

T HIS IS A CRITICAL TIME FOR ORGANIZATIONS

working on behalf of low-income people and underserved communities. With a population of more than 500,000, Fresno is the fifth-largest city in California, the largest inland city in the state, and among the fifty largest cities in the nation. It sits within Fresno County, where the number of residents closely matches the city’s population – although the geographic area of the county is more than fifty times that of the city.

Understanding Fresno’s demographics – its strengths and challenges, its history, its people, its promise, what propels the community and what holds it back – sets the stage for Fresno Housing Authority’s work. As the agency looks to the future, it has considered ways to grow programs strategically; to increase its effectiveness and expand its capacity; and to respond appropriately to the specific issues facing the ever-changing communities of Fresno County.

In 2010, the Fresno Housing Authority embarked on a process to think creatively (and long term) about its role and potential. That process included comprehensive research, analysis, and extensive discussions among the agency's leadership. It considered the many ways in which the agency could play an increasing role in securing a better future for families and for the under-served communities of Fresno. It led to the development of "*Mapping the Way Toward a Strategic Future for the 'New' Fresno Housing Authority*" – a strategic plan adopted by the Board of Commissioners in 2011. The plan focuses on strategies that develop and maintain quality affordable housing – by identifying ways to engage residents in their communities; by highlighting how to energize the broader community to engender public will; and by creating policies and programs that can strengthen a strategic array of partnerships and alliances.

Armed with an understanding of the inter-relationships between the *places* it creates, the *people* it supports, the *public* will it generates, and the *partnerships* it fosters, Fresno Housing Authority seeks to address the housing needs of Fresno residents –

*to create and sustain vibrant communities
throughout Fresno County.*



Vision

Fresno – an engaged county – where all residents have access to quality housing that contributes to vibrant communities, and where all residents are empowered to achieve their educational and economic goals.

Mission

Create and sustain vibrant communities throughout Fresno County.



Values

Fresno Housing Authority is committed to innovation and excellence in housing and services for low-income households throughout the city and county.

The Housing Authority:

- promotes and supports quality housing and services that are accessible to low- and very-low-income residents and that help to build strong communities
- emphasizes the value of good design in its developments and the importance of creating places that support vibrant and engaged communities
- increases and improves the supply of quality affordable housing
- strives to create a common voice and to build leadership that can articulate the housing needs of Fresno’s communities and finds ways to ensure that these needs are understood and met
- develops materials about housing issues and options that can be understood by a broad cross-section of the population and assures that its information is sensitive to the economic, cultural, and ethnic diversity of Fresno County

Fresno Housing Authority works to maintain a responsive agency that meets the needs of its many different constituents as well as the broader Fresno community.

The Housing Authority:

- provides a vital link between residents and service providers
- supports a diverse housing portfolio, with a range of opportunities for low-income people in Fresno to access quality housing
- assists community organizations and public agencies to develop and deliver quality affordable housing and support services in communities throughout the city and county of Fresno
- captures information and data about the housing needs of Fresno County



- stays current on all federal, state, and local housing policies, and actively pursues available resources to support its mission and influences housing policy locally and nationally
- strives to be inclusive of Fresno’s ethnic and racial diversity, as well as those individuals with special needs, homeless individuals and families, the elderly, veterans, and the “hard to house”
- recognizes, reflects, and supports diversity in programs, selection of Commissioners, and recruitment and hiring of staff
- cultivates knowledgeable staff and encourages educational and experiential advancement
- encourages staff to be accountable in accomplishing their job tasks, to express their opinions in constructive ways, and to embrace intentional, ethical decisionmaking
- believes that housing and related services are essential components of a strong and vibrant community – impacting the education, health, and well-being of all people
- values the unique contributions and perspectives brought by residents, staff, Commissioners, and the broad Fresno community

Fresno Housing Authority recognizes that quality affordable housing requires stable, adequate, and equitable funds derived from multiple sources.

The Housing Authority:

- develops projects that support the organization’s core mission
- pursues contracts and grant funding to maximize affordable housing for the Fresno community
- works effectively and efficiently as a steward of critical resources





The Goals: 4 “P”s

PLACE

Develop and expand the availability of quality affordable housing options throughout the city and county of Fresno by growing and preserving appropriate residential assets and increasing housing opportunities for low-income residents.

PEOPLE

Respect community needs and knowledge – by listening, learning, and researching – and respond to issues compassionately, intelligently, and intentionally – by developing exceptional programs based on shared expectations.

PUBLIC

Build support for housing as a key component of vibrant, sustainable communities through public information, engagement, and advocacy that promotes affordable housing and supports the advancement of Fresno’s low-income residents.

PARTNERSHIP

Collaborate to strengthen the Housing Authority’s ability to address the challenges facing Fresno communities.



Goal One: Place

Develop and expand the availability of quality affordable housing options throughout the city and county of Fresno by growing and preserving appropriate residential assets and increasing housing opportunities for low-income residents.

- Grow a portfolio of assets that responds to the needs of the low- and very-low-income residents of the city and county of Fresno.
- Promote safe, healthy, vibrant communities.
- Develop a conservation and sustainability plan that supports energy conservation, water and waste management, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions at all Housing Authority sites.
- Manage, maintain, and improve existing Housing Authority properties to meet agency-defined standards.
- Assess the Housing Authority’s capacity to address the unique needs of particularly fragile sub-populations (including, but not limited to, people with disabilities, substance abuse issues, mental illness; the elderly; veterans; migrants; homeless; and emancipated youth).
- Maintain a broad range of housing options affordable to low- and very-low-income individuals and families in diverse neighborhoods throughout the city and county of Fresno, at densities appropriate for the site and compatible with local community standards.
- Seek opportunities to develop mixed-use projects that include housing only if they meet the needs of the Housing Authority’s core constituencies – low- and extremely-low-income residents.
- Develop baseline physical and social service programs for all new Fresno Housing Authority sites (e.g., community gardens, child care, exercise rooms, mini-libraries, nutrition programs, education centers) and set timelines to upgrade existing sites to include these programs (where appropriate).
- Expand opportunities for voucher holders to obtain quality housing throughout the city and county, in neighborhoods that meet the needs of voucher holders.



Goal Two: People

Respect community needs and knowledge – by listening, learning, and researching – and respond to issues compassionately, intelligently, and intentionally – by developing exceptional programs based on shared expectations.

- Assess service needs of tenants and refine and develop programs and services to ensure quality support for all Housing Authority participants in Fresno County.
- Engage residents and program participants in pro-active communication and problem solving related to housing, programming, and civic issues.
- Develop, sustain, and manage programs that support self-sufficiency through education and employment training – for families in public housing and those with vouchers.
- Establish meaningful partnerships with key educational institutions, including Cal State University Fresno, Fresno Unified School District, and other school districts throughout the county.
- Encourage residents to define goals, to pursue self-sufficiency, and to decrease (to a minimum, based on individual situations) their level of support/services in housing through a well-defined housing/ support continuum.
- Continue to collaborate with FSS Corps to ensure consistency with the Housing Authority’s goals, and to maximize participant success.
- Revisit ROSS and FSS programming to ensure consistency with the Housing Authority’s goals, and to maximize participant success.
- Respect the needs of residents and neighbors.
- Strengthen mutual understanding of Housing Authority challenges and opportunities; resident/program participant needs and goals; as well as mutual responsibilities and expectations.
- Exhibit flexibility in ability to respond to changing community needs.



Goal Three: Public

Build support for housing as a key component of vibrant, sustainable communities through public information, engagement, and advocacy that promotes affordable housing and supports the advancement of Fresno’s low-income residents.

- Become the Central Valley “go to” resource for information and advocacy efforts, and the leader of a broad coalition of regional partners.
- Advocate on behalf of the Central Valley for quality, affordable housing to meet the needs of its diverse communities.
- Engage the Fresno community in discussions on housing issues and solutions – increase community interest, participation, and education in affordable housing by expanding the visibility of affordable housing and concern about housing as a key component of a strong, sustainable region.
- Encourage Housing Authority program participants to advocate for the needs of low-income residents.
- Cultivate leadership to ensure the effective representation of new voices for quality affordable housing in communities throughout Fresno County.
- Educate local, regional, and national audiences about housing needs in the Valley – and how those needs are both unique and typical of communities across California and the nation.
- Understand volunteerism as a way to expand understanding and to build support for the importance of the Housing Authority and its programs.



Goal Four: Partnership

Collaborate to strengthen the Housing Authority's ability to address the challenges facing Fresno communities.

- Collaborate with other local organizations to develop a “data bank” of information about issues impacting the community (including “stories,” data, survey results, migration trends, etc.)
- Build alliances with appropriate community partners to increase access to education (early learning/pre-school through college), job training, social services, mental health, financial security, and economic opportunities – with the goal of empowering residents and program participants through increased financial stability and self-sufficiency.
- Create unique pilot programs that build and strengthen partnerships locally and regionally, in order to catapult Fresno Housing Authority to prominence in the field.
- Identify and cultivate partnerships (both in the private and public sectors) that create additional opportunities for the expansion of quality affordable housing.
- Increase opportunities for homeless individuals and families to secure housing and to build stability by working in partnership with city, county, and other public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations to build public will and support for the creation of sustainable, multi-faceted programs to decrease homelessness.
- Be consistent, intentional, and collaborative in the development of relationships with organizations and programs.



Management Goals (The 3 “S”s)

Stabilize, focus, and extend activities to meet the mandate of Fresno Housing Authority’s mission through good decisionmaking related to Sustainability (staffing, finances, effectiveness, evaluation, technology, facilities); Structure (governance); and Strategic Outreach (communications, image, visibility, public affairs, policy).

Sustainability

Build and maintain an innovative, engaged, visible, and sustainable organization, committed to its mission of providing housing for low-income populations.

Structure

Maintain a committed, active, community-based Board of Commissioners.

Strategic Outreach

Heighten agency visibility; facilitate community dialogue about housing solutions; and build support for the agency and quality affordable housing.



Core Strategies

To accomplish its mission, over the coming five years, Fresno Housing Authority plans to focus on four primary strategies, as it works toward its broad, community-building mission:

- Develop and maintain **quality affordable housing** for low-income residents throughout the city and county.
- Design, implement, and sustain **exceptional programs** that invest in residents (and other program participants) to become self-sufficient (through an array of educational, employment, and economic platforms).
- Lead, encourage, and build **partnerships** with local, regional, and national organizations to promote policies that build community; that increase and enhance affordable housing options; and that provide programs that reflect and support the needs of housing participants.
- Generate **public will** to address the housing needs of low-income households in Fresno (and throughout California) by contributing to effective national and statewide efforts and by leading local and regional programs that educate and encourage residents of Fresno County to have a voice in housing and civic issues.



Fresno Housing Authority Facts

About the Fresno Housing Authority

- Fresno Housing Authority is a public agency that helps more than 16,000 low-income families – including seniors and the disabled – afford safe and decent housing. It administers many affordable housing and homeless programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the State of California.
- In addition to rental assistance, the Housing Authority operates programs that help qualified Fresno residents purchase a first home or repair existing homes. The agency works with nonprofit and for-profit developers to expand the supply of affordable housing and also purchases and manages numerous affordable multi-family housing developments throughout the city and county. Additionally, the Housing Authority trains residents to improve their employability and economic self-sufficiency.

Staff and Governance

- Approximately 240 employees are involved in carrying out the Fresno Housing Authority’s mandates and programs.
- The agency is led by two Boards of Commissioners – a City and County Board – each with seven members. The Executive Director of the Housing Authority reports to both boards and oversees the day-to-day operations of the agency.
- Commissioners on the City Board are appointed by the Mayor of Fresno; Commissioners on the County Board are appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. Five of the seven members on each Board are appointed to four-year terms. The remaining two members on each Board are participants in the Housing Authority’s programs, and are appointed to two-year terms. Commissioners can serve multiple terms.

Participants and Housing Opportunities

- Fresno Housing Authority owns housing complexes in cities throughout Fresno County, and can provide rental assistance to residents anywhere in the county through the Housing Choice Voucher program (known also as Section 8).
- Apartments that are owned and managed by the Fresno Housing Authority are located in both the city of Fresno and Fresno County. For a complete list of all locations, please see the Housing Authority website (www.fresnohousing.org).
- Sixty-two percent (62%) of households receiving assistance (vouchers or apartments) from the Fresno Housing Authority fall in the extremely-low-income category. (Median income in Fresno County is approximately \$54,700; persons earning less than \$12,050 per year fall into the extremely-low-income category.)
- More than 16,000 families currently receive some type of assistance from the Fresno Housing Authority. As of January 1, 2010, approximately 12,500 families were receiving Housing Choice Vouchers through the agency and another 4,000 were residing in housing owned and operated by the Housing Authority.
- The Housing Choice Voucher Program is a federal rental assistance program for low-income families renting from private landlords. Fresno Housing Authority provides Housing Choice Vouchers which pay part of a family's rent and ensure that low- and moderate-income families don't pay an excessive percentage of their income for housing. The Fresno Housing Authority also has programs specifically designed to address the needs of farmworkers, the homeless, and residents with physical and/or mental challenges.



- The amount of subsidy a family receives from the Fresno Housing Authority depends largely on the size and income of the family. In the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8), participants pay approximately 30 - 40% of their adjusted gross income in rent, and the balance of the rent amount is paid by the Fresno Housing Authority.
- Fresno Housing Authority gives preference to families and individuals such as the elderly, the disabled, veterans, and local residents, as well as those with special situations.
- Fresno Housing Authority owns farm labor housing complexes in Orange Cove, Mendota, Parlier, and Fresno. Legal residents who derive a portion of their income from farm-related sources are eligible for housing assistance in these complexes. This program is supported by grants from the Rural Development division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Fresno Housing Authority manages two migrant farmworker complexes – one in Firebaugh and one in Parlier. These complexes are occupied from April through October and can be rented by farmworkers who are legal residents who have a permanent home at least 50 miles away from the complex. These complexes are supported by funding from the State of California’s Office of Migrant Services.
- “Shelter Plus Care” is a program that helps disabled homeless persons with severe mental illness, AIDS, or chronic substance abuse problems find permanent, supportive housing.
- By the end of 2012, in response to Fresno’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, Fresno Housing Authority will have developed 121 units of permanent supportive housing for Fresno’s homeless and those with mental health challenges. The three Renaissance housing communities (Trinity, Alta Monte, and Santa Clara) are landmark, service-oriented sites completed in partnership with the County Department of Behavioral Health and multiple partners from the Fresno Madera Continuum of Care.



Other Fresno Housing Authority Programs

In addition to owning and managing public housing complexes and administering the Housing Choice Voucher Program, the Fresno Housing Authority offers numerous programs (such as youth workshops and after-school activities; parenting classes; and self-esteem, stress management, job development, financial management, budgeting/credit, early home-buyer, predatory lending, and foreclosure prevention workshops) that assist families to improve their economic, educational, and housing status. Descriptions of four Fresno Housing Authority programs follow.

- The ROSS Program assists families living in public housing to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency through higher education, job training, and first-time home buying support.
- The “Family Self-Sufficiency” Program (FSS) assists Housing Authority families with accessing community resources to achieve economic independence, educational benefits, and self-sufficiency. Participants enter into agreements with the Housing Authority to define five-year economic goals and establish escrow accounts to be used to achieve those goals.
- The Karl Falk Scholarship provides financial assistance to help Housing Choice Voucher recipients and Housing Authority residents pay for college tuition. The scholarships are presented in honor of Karl Falk, a professor at California State University Fresno, who specialized in housing and urban revitalization and served as Chair of the Housing Authority of Fresno County.



Funding

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the federal agency tasked with creating “strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all.” HUD regulates and provides funding for most of the programs administered by the Fresno Housing Authority, including public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers (commonly known as Section 8), and Shelter Plus Care.
- The majority of the Fresno Housing Authority’s funds come from the federal government through HUD, but the agency also generates income from its properties and can apply for a variety of grants as well as federal, state, and local funds to supplement its core funding. Funding for development includes county and city administered HOME dollars, Low-Income Housing Tax Credit financing, and Affordable Housing Program (AHP) dollars, among others. The Boards of Commissioners approves budget plans and oversees fiscal plans and expenditures.
- Fresno Housing Authority has received funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), which are being used to modernize the agency’s public housing units, to develop additional public housing units, and to assist homeless families through the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing programs.



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