HOUSING WORKS!
An Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority Publication

From the Desk of Anthony W. O’Leary

Housing Crisis: Relief in Sight or will Washington Continue to Ignore it?

Is America facing a housing crisis? This question was recently discussed in a report released by Harvard’s Joint Center on Housing Studies, generating articles and editorials in several newspapers. Among several interesting findings, two topics standout because they indicate problems at both ends of the socio-economic ladder and are what we all can see in our community.

According to Harvard’s research data, more than one-half of the nation’s renters face a rent burden, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income for housing. This number has steadily grown from about 25% in the 1960s to about 33% in the 1980s to where it is today.

Traditionally, many renters eventually become homeowners, and the demand for housing, both new units and rehabilitation of older homes, creates demand for many goods and services contributing to economic growth and community revitalization. The homeownership rate has declined to a 20-year low of about 64%. As a result, home sales are improving, given the short supply, and rents are increasing because more people are now renting.

As the private rental market strengthens, low income renters and those who utilize federal housing assistance have a more difficult time finding suitable housing at an affordable price. In many communities, the term “housing crisis” is not an overstatement. In Summit County, similar to the national average, just over 50% of those renting pay over 30% of their income for rent.

AMHA presently has more than 17,000 households on a wait list, which is about the same number as San Antonio, Texas that has a much larger population and a more robust economy than northeast Ohio.

What to do? Like the need to upgrade the nation’s infrastructure, a long term commitment of government in partnership with the private sector is needed. This requires effective leadership at the federal, state and local levels.

Pay attention to the upcoming debates of both political parties and see if housing is discussed. Thus far, Washington has been tone deaf to the housing crisis and future investment in infrastructure. You do hear discussion about jobs, but it seldom connects that building more affordable housing and renewing crumbling infrastructure will create jobs and opportunities for growth. Stay tuned!

Anthony W. O’Leary
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After 30 years of dedicated service, Andra Marshall, the friendly face of AMHA, is retiring.

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Summit Lake Children and Parents Enjoy Community Party

A fun time was had by all May 15 when AMHA’s Security Department partnered with the Summit Lake Resident Organization, Summit Lake Apartments property management, AMHA Resident Services Department and the Akron Police Department for a pizza party/family fun night event for Summit Lake residents at the Reach Center.

Pizza, crafts and coloring were among the highlights as about 100 residents shared the evening with their favorite officers.

The children and their parents enjoyed posing for photos and getting to know their neighbors, AMHA staff and APD officers that patrol their neighborhood. Also in attendance were representatives from Boys and Girls Club, AMHA FSS, Goodwill, Head Start and the Akron Public Library that provided residents with information on some of the valuable resources and programs available to them.

Resident organization members did an outstanding job and worked very hard getting all the pizzas, craft supplies and raffle items donated from various local businesses. One lucky girl even went home with a new bike! Thank you to everyone involved for making this event so successful and for continuing to make a positive impact in our community and in the lives of the children and families.