

Section One: Introduction

1.1 Your Guide

The primary goal of the Resident Councils is to: **improve the quality of life and resident satisfaction to enable residents to create a positive living environment.**

- The primary purpose of your Resident Council Guide is to help residents accomplish that goal.
- Your Resident Council Guide is designed to be user friendly. The detailed Table of Contents will quickly help you find answers to your questions.
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- Every Council will have a Guide, and every Council will be given a Guide to be kept in the Human Services Coordinator's (HSC'S) office and available to residents to check out.

This Guide will be reviewed periodically and updated as needed. The current Resident Council Guide is available on the City Wide website at www.citywideresidentcouncil.org

The Resident Council Guide is the property of City Wide and Family Councils. It's expensive to print the Guide and provide notebooks to individuals each year. Therefore, please make sure the Resident Council Guide gets passed from the outgoing officers to the incoming officers.

1.2 What is Community?

A vital neighborhood (community) is full of people who are proud to call it their home. People living there support their neighbors and enjoy their friendship. The neighborhood thrives on respect for all its members. People of all ages and cultural backgrounds are involved in the life of the community – honoring its history, cherishing its traditions, celebrating its accomplishments, and leading the way to the future.

The neighborhood is filled with activities and services residents need and with opportunities for involvement. Residents of the neighborhood expect their elected officials, community leaders, and neighborhood organizations to be accountable and are rewarded with responsive public servants, strong leaders, and effective community organizations.

Effective communication practices in group and organizational settings are very important to the formation and maintenance of communities. The ways that ideas and values are communicated within communities are important to new members, the selection of leaders and many other aspects. Group members depend on a flow of regular and consistent communication to establish their own identity and learn to function in a group setting.

A community's well-being is dependent on the quality of relationships among the residents of that community. People working together with shared understanding and expectations are what provide a strong community.

There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community. Community is something we do together.

Smiling is something that is understood by everyone no matter the culture, race, or religion; it is internationally known. Cross-cultural studies have shown that smiling is a means of communicating emotions throughout the world: respect, patience, empathy, hospitality and compassion.

1.3 What is a Resident Council?

A. What is a Resident Council

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) promotes the right of public housing residents to organize and elect a resident council to represent their own interest in relationship to the Public Housing Agencies (Federal Regulations 24 CFR 964.11 see appendix A). The Resident Council is made up of all the residents living in each family development of the Public Housing Agency.

In the City of St. Paul, each family development has its own resident council. The Resident Council holds meetings to give all residents a voice in the decisions that may impact their community. The meetings are led by an elected Board of no more than five (5) residents.

HUD also encourages PHAs and residents to work together to determine the most appropriate ways to foster constructive relationships. To formalize this working relationship, the Public Housing Agency of the City of Saint Paul (PHA) and each Resident Council has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding, which must be renewed every three years.

In situations where the resident council has become in-operable after failed attempts to fix problem(s) it may be necessary to shut the Council down, or “suspend” (stop) it until the problem can be corrected (see appendix A). In addition, the PHA does not

recognize any group of people that claim to speak for the community who have not organized as a resident council (see appendix A).

Resident Council meetings are an opportunity to meet your neighbors, make new friends, and take care of business. At the meetings, concerns of the community and the neighborhood are brought up, activities are planned, and funding is authorized through the budget process. These issues are discussed and voted on according to proper procedure. And in accordance with Bylaws, residents often form **standing committees** or **ad hoc committees** to carry out the action of their decisions (see appendix A). Working together, the Resident Council provides an opportunity for individuals and families to improve their community.

B. Resident Council Suspension

If a suspension occurs, all Resident Council records and funds will be confiscated and held 'in trust' by the PHA management. If a family development does not have a Resident Council, residents would no longer receive any funds from PHA, including grants and recycling income, or any money from the City Wide Resident Council. Money in the existing account would be frozen, since there would not be a council to democratically decide how to spend it. Vending machines can still operate but any income they generate would be added to the frozen bank account. Any property owned by the Council will no longer be available during the suspension.

C. What Happens If We Don't Have A Resident Council

[As defined by HUD] A Resident Council shall consist of persons residing in public housing and must meet each of the following requirements in order to receive official recognition from the PHA/HUD, and be eligible to receive funds for resident council activities....

- 1) Represent residents residing in public housing [family-sites];
- 2) Adopt written procedures which provide for the election of residents to the governing board by the voting membership of residents residing in public housing [family sites] and,
- 3) It must have a democratically elected governing board that is elected by the voting membership [of the family-site]. At a minimum, the governing body should consist of four (4) elected board members. HUD 24 CFR 964 § 964.115

Not having a Resident Council means:

- HUD, the City Wide Resident Council and PHA, do not recognize an official organization representing the interests of the residents at your family site.
- No PHA, RPF, or other funding will be available to residents at your family site.
- No official organization in your family site will exist so any current and future funds, bank accounts, assets, etc. will be turned over to the City Wide Resident Council.
- Vending services, and any other service-type vendors not costing money, may continue in your family site but any income from those sources would be turned

over to the City Wide Resident Council since it would be the City Wide Resident Council managing the process.

- Since no organization exists to manage the process, PHA will not allow reservations of community space for the use of residents.
- All keys for community space must be returned to PHA, including kitchen, office, storage, etc.
- Community room computers, television, microwave, exercise equipment and any other items purchased by the Resident Council will not be available during suspension.

Approved by PHA, April 8, 2010

1.4 City-Wide and Family Resident Councils

A. What is City Wide Resident Council?

City Wide Resident Council (CWRC) is the umbrella organization for resident participation and engagement for the PHA. CWRC is made up of officers from the four family sites: Dunedin, Roosevelt, Mt. Airy and McDonough, and serve as the link to PHA staff and their community. All officers are volunteers and are elected by the residents in their communities, the four family sites. This includes PHA Scattered Sites. Once a resident is elected to their family council board, (chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary), s/he is automatically a member of CWRC.

CWRC members elect officers to serve as the CWRC Board: chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer. The Board works closely with PHA staff and supports Resident Initiatives programs as well as Resident Services activities. The councils are independent, 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organizations but receive guidance and support from the Human Services Coordinator at each site and the Resident Initiatives Program Coordinator.

Each council meets regularly to review council operations: financial reports, minutes, site activities, host guest speakers about upcoming programs and provide feedback to PHA staff on proposed programming. The Resident Initiatives Program Coordinator schedules training for the officers annually. Topics include: board roles and responsibilities, how to maintain financial records, how to run meetings and communication/conflict resolution.

B. City Wide Resident Mission

The principal purpose/mission of the City Wide Resident Council is to: Advocate for residents before PHA and other agencies; encourage program and activities designed to promote leadership, self-sufficiency, safety and education; and encourage good working relationships between residents and PHA staff.

C. Computer Administrator

The Computer Administrator is a resident with advanced technical skills who manages and maintains the City Wide Resident Council Computer Labs.

A Computer Administrator will:

- Perform backups.
- Apply operating system updates, patches, and configuration changes.
- Install and configure new hardware and software.
- Add, remove, or update user account information, reset passwords, etc.
- Answer technical queries
- Be responsible for internet safety and security.
- Be responsible for configuration of the system.
- Perform system performance maintenance.
- Ensure that the network is up and running.
- Attend Computer Team meetings.

1.5 The Board

The Board of the Resident Council consists of the elected officers. This group works together on behalf of the residents to plan and run the Resident Council meetings and carry out the business of the Resident Council. What the Board does needs to be both effective and transparent to the residents.

The Board has the responsibility for both establishing and protecting the overall purpose, fundamental values, and ethical principles which govern the activities of the Resident Council. These are often referred to as the vision, mission(or purpose), and values(or ethical principles) . Your vision, mission, and values form the foundation of the Resident Council and its planning for the future. It is best to have these formally written and adopted by the Resident Council. Having them formally defined helps to provide a common sense of purpose and identity, provide long-term direction, and communicate with all residents what the Resident Council is about. Establishing the vision, mission, and values is also an ongoing process of review to ensure that they are still relevant for the current challenges and environment; it could be beneficial to have a committee review the mission statement annually.

The Board must ensure that the Resident Council operates in a way that is consistent with its vision, mission, and values. This should be the basis for planning, monitoring and reviewing all activities, expenditures, polices and decision-making.

1.6 Public Housing Agency (PHA)

The St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) has been an independent governmental unit since 1977. Its historical roots are in the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of the City of Saint Paul (HRA), a unit of the City of Saint Paul established by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1947. The HRA's initial goal was to remove slums and construct low income housing in Saint Paul. It has city-wide jurisdiction, but is funded with federal money.

The PHA is governed by a Board of Commissioners (see appendix A). The seven commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. Its mission statement is to "help families and individuals with low incomes achieve greater stability and self-reliance by providing safe, affordable, quality housing and links to community services". Their 4,273 HUD-subsidized public housing rental units are well maintained and fully occupied (consistently over 99%), providing safe, affordable housing to about 10,000 low income residents. They also coordinate services for public housing residents, including "welfare to work" programs, homeownership programs, community policing, assisted living services for frail elderly and disabled residents, and others (see appendix A).

The PHA is committed to diversity (see appendix A).

A Community Outreach Program (ACOP). It is a partnership involving the City of Saint Paul, Saint Paul Police Department, PHA, and public housing residents. The goals of the program are to improve the social conditions which foster drug use and abuse at the public housing sites, improve the level of trust and general relations between the citizens living in public housing and the St. Paul Police Department, improve the delivery of police services to the community, and empower residents to be active in community safety issues.

A.C.O.P. (A Community Outreach Program)
1544 Timberlake Road
McDonough Community Center
Saint Paul, MN 55117
Phone: (651) 558-2305
Fax: (651) 488-3725

ACOP is managed by the Principal and Assistant Principal Resident Services Managers.

The PHA is an environmentally conscious organization that promotes recycling amongst its residents (see appendix A).

1.7 PHA Resident Advisory Board (RAB)

The Resident Advisory Board (RAB) of the St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) convenes each year to share information and assist PHA staff in the Agency Plan process. The RAB has a participatory relationship with the PHA in that its main role is to make recommendations in developing the annual Agency Plan from concept through submission to HUD. At the current time, the PHA pays a small stipend to RAB members who attend meetings to cover routine mileage, cab fare or bus fare.

The following resident leaders were designated by the PHA Board of Commissioners on July 28, 1999, as the PHA's Resident Advisory Board (RAB):

- All members of the Hi-Rise Presidents Council
- All members of the Family Residents' City-Wide Residents Council (16 members, including the four officers from each of the four family housing developments).
- The two PHA Commissioners who are residents of public housing, one representing the elderly, the other representing the family residents.
- Section 8 and Scattered Site representatives who volunteered for the RAB in response to mailings and flyers in the Rental Office.

Participation on the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) is voluntary. Public housing resident leaders who are not currently members of the City- Wide Resident Council Board have participated actively in the RAB meetings.

For additional information, call the PHA Executive Assistant, at 651-292-6086.