

• CELEBRATING •
80 YEARS

1937 - 2017

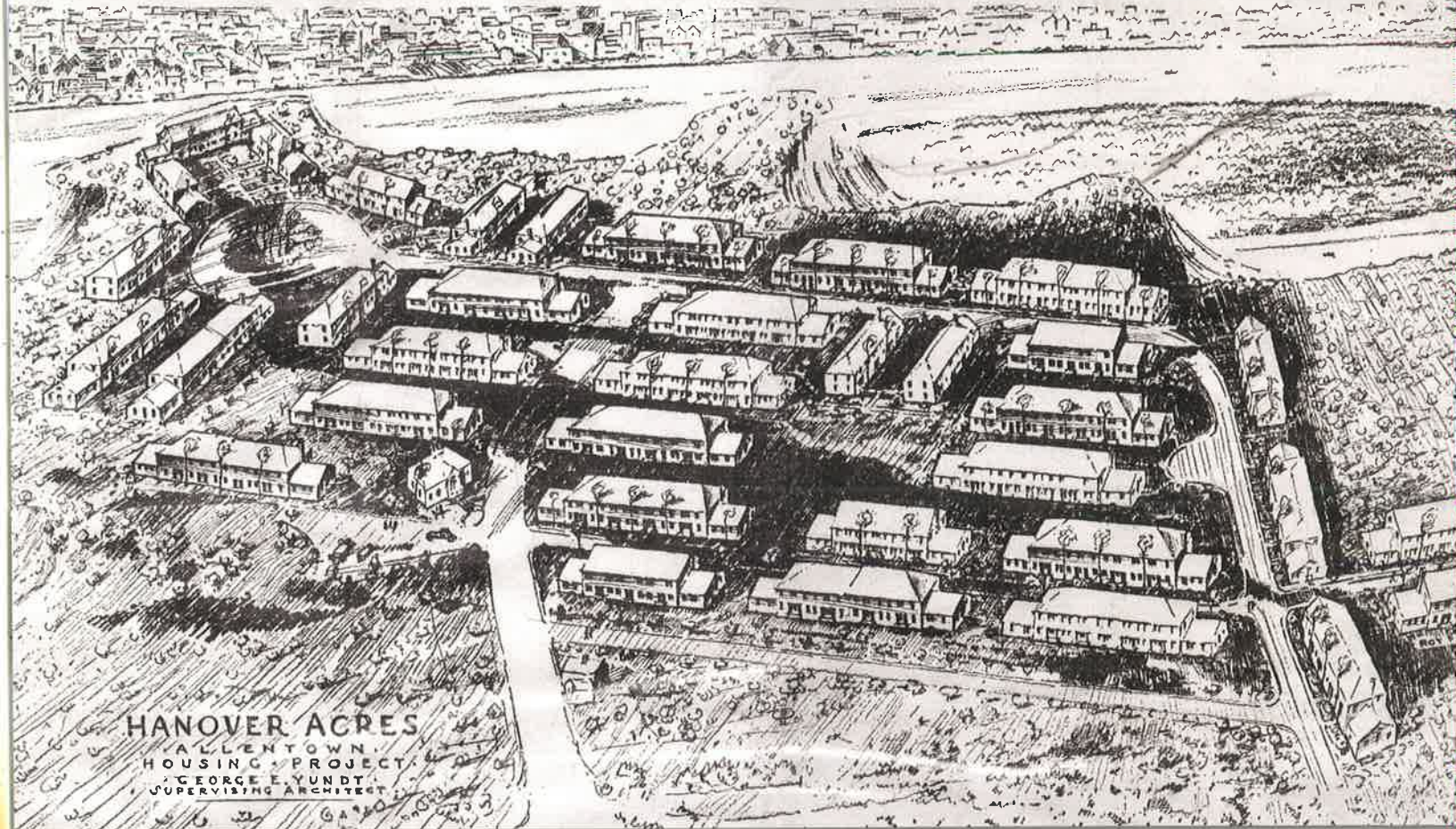


**Allentown
Housing
Authority**

Opening Doors for the Community

ALLENTOWN CHRONICLE AND NEWS, THURSDAY, JANUARY 5, 1939

First Complete Architect's Drawing of Allentown's \$1,607,000 Housing Project for Which Contracts Will Soon Be Awarded



Annual Report 2017

Allentown Housing Authority Mission Evolves with the Times

The Allentown Housing Authority was created to address overcrowding and prohibitive rents that relegated the city's poorest residents to its most dangerous and insecure housing. At the time, the idea was to provide "temporary housing" to help low-income residents till they could escape poverty.

Eighty years later, we are still here.

We have evolved with the times, moving beyond our original mission to aid just families. Over the past eight decades the authority has been a leader in providing safe, secure and affordable housing to individuals, families, senior citizens and the physically disabled. We have built high-rises and rebuilt entire neighborhoods.

We have improved our facilities and rental housing to keep up with the times. We have a staff of dedicated employees

who work to deliver critical services to our residents and represent our organization with pride in the community.

We have partnered with other organizations and government agencies to deliver crucial services that extend past the need for housing. We bring job training, education, healthcare, emergency services and culture to our residents.

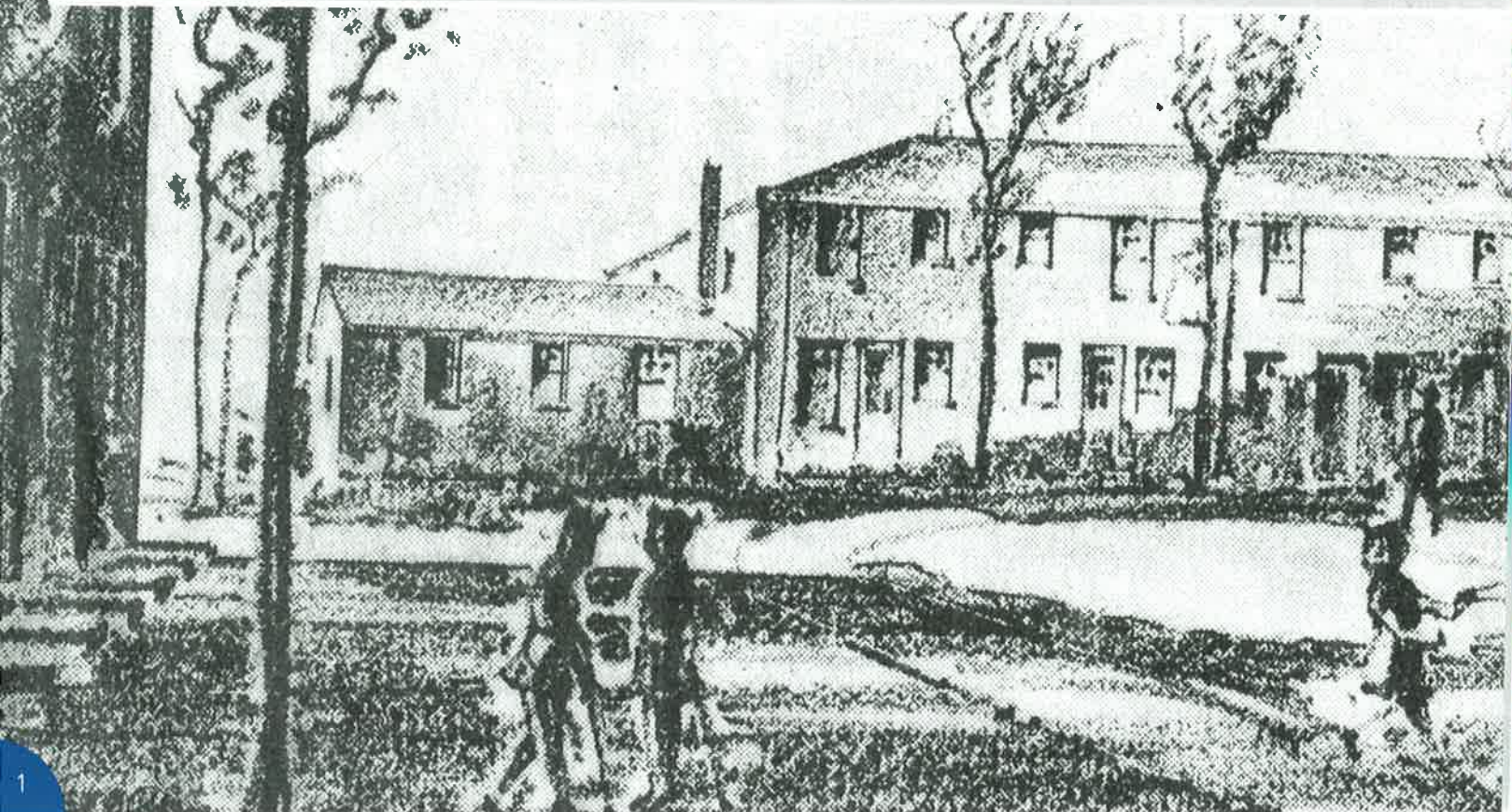
We incorporate new technology as it develops.

We cope with constantly changing mandates and funding streams from the federal and state governments.

Nothing makes us happier than to see our residents succeed when they find quality, family-sustaining jobs and reach the point where they are able to move beyond public housing and into home ownership.

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Allentown Housing Project, Pennsylvania's F



In an ideal world the Allentown Housing Authority could look forward to a time when its services will no longer be needed. Unfortunately, we do not live in that world. So we will continue to adapt. We will continue to work. We will continue to find new, cost-efficient ways to deliver the services that make the City of Allentown a stronger, safer and economically viable community.

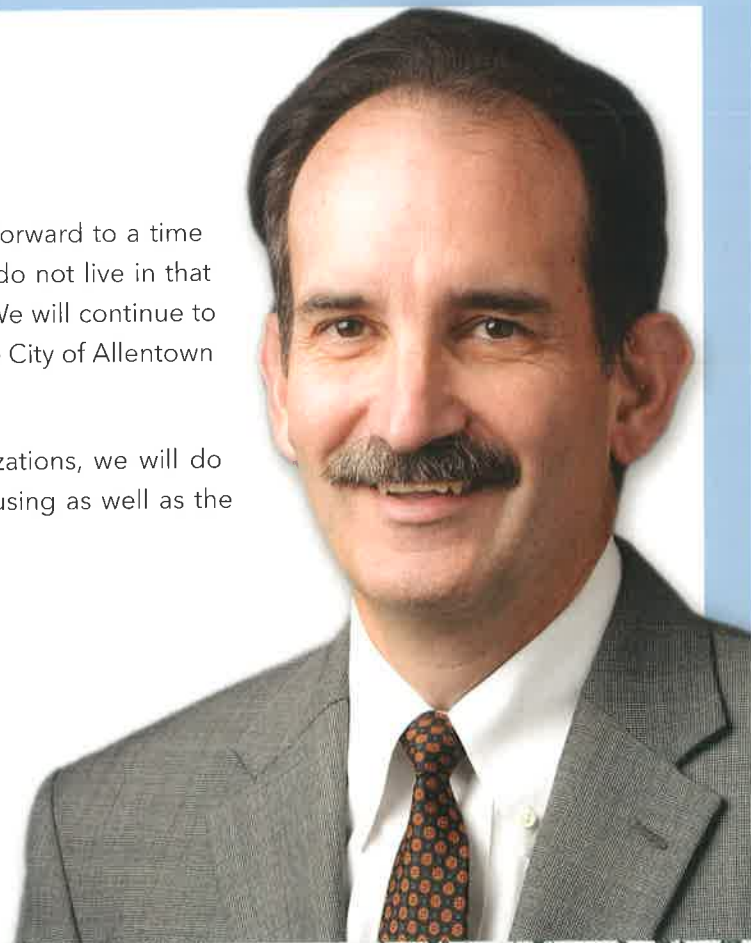
Working in conjunction with our partner agencies and organizations, we will do our best to continue providing safe, secure and affordable housing as well as the relevant services to our residents.

Even if it take another 80 years.

Sincerely,

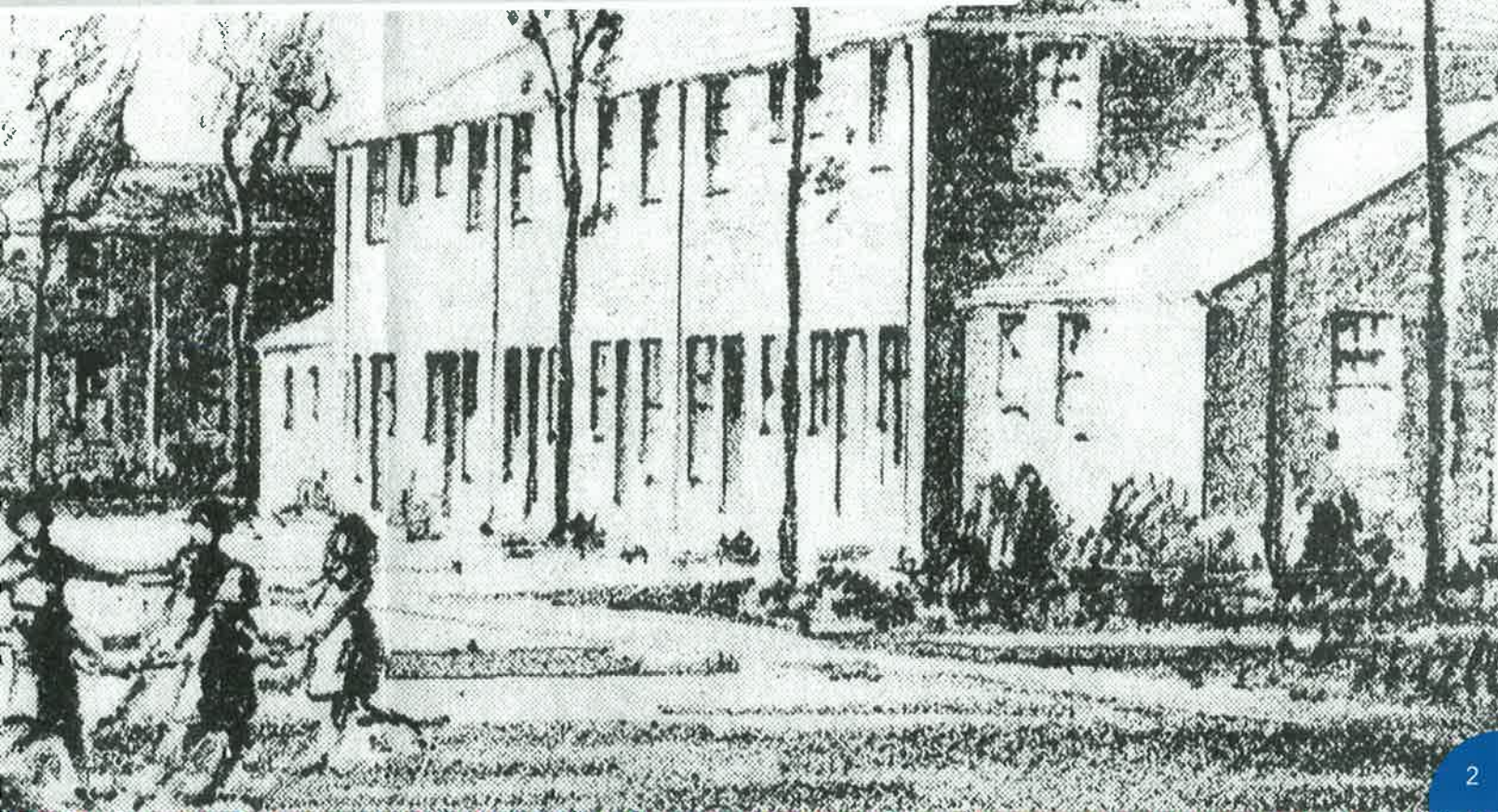


Executive Director
Allentown Housing Authority



DAY, AUGUST 12, 1938

First, as Visualized by Architect



AHA MISSION CONTINUES AFTER EIGHT DECADES

Allentown a Pioneer in Public Housing

In the 1930s when the United States was struggling to emerge from the depths of The Great Depression, leaders in the City of Allentown found themselves wrestling with a related problem exacerbated by the economic woes of the decade: An eruption of substandard housing that led to overcrowded conditions, prohibitive rents and dangerous conditions that ranged from crime and fire hazards to disease and other health concerns.

In 1937, looking to leverage new federal programs created under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" program, Allentown City Council created the Allentown Housing Authority and charged it with finding ways to provide safe, secure and affordable housing to the city's poorest residents.

Authorized by the National Recovery Act of 1933 and the United States Housing Act of 1937, the authority held its first meeting on Nov. 10, 1937. The original Board of Commissioners included Chairman Asa Obert; Vice Chair Charles W. Ettinger; S.W. Traylor Jr.; Edward N. Woolston and Raymond J. Bader.

Working with a \$5,000 budget, the board began surveying housing conditions in the city and searching for an appropriate location for what would be one of the first public housing communities in the United States. They settled on a site on the east side of the Lehigh River overlooking Center City and work began to erect Hanover Acres, the fifth public housing project in the country and the first in Pennsylvania.

The 323 apartments, built at a cost of \$1.1 million, were intended for what was then considered the "temporarily poor" - those once-middle class families and residents left in dire financial straits or without housing because of The Depression. By the early 1940s, the outbreak of World War II and the need for war workers in regional factories such as Bethlehem Steel, Mack Trucks, the Vultee-Convair aircraft plant and other manufacturers prompted the construction of the adjacent Riverview Terrace to ease a growing low-income housing shortage in the city. Riverview Terrace was started in 1942 and finished in 1943 and included 104 apartments.

On May 26, 1942 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt became the first First Lady to come to Allentown when she visited Hanover Acres on her way to a Woman's Day celebration at Muhlenberg College. According to news reports, the popular Mrs. Roosevelt was greeted by then board Chairman Ettinger and stunned residents when she asked to meet with families living in the community.

As she departed, she told AHA commissioners and city leaders "You've done a fine job, gentlemen."

First Lady On Tour of Allentown's Low-rent Project



Girl Scout Escorts for President's Wife



Satisfaction the Word At New Gross Towers

A New Frontier in Public Housing - Providing for Senior Citizens

As the city and nation entered the 1960s, concern began growing about a new segment of the population facing housing challenges - the growing numbers of senior citizens. In June 1960 a White House Conference Committee unveiled a report identifying the need for affordable senior housing in Lehigh County and called for up to 700 new apartments and 400 beds for the ill.

In 1962 Allentown received a grant to begin planning for senior housing and in the Spring of 1965 construction began on a new high-rise at 14th and Allen streets on a property once dubbed the "Jackson Jungle" because of its overgrown vegetation and proximity to Jackson Elementary School. By May 1965 the AHA had received 650 applications for 150 units in what became known as the John T. Gross Tower, named for the mayor under whose administration construction began.

By June 1966 tours of the new building were provided to local dignitaries and by March 1967 tenants got their first look at the modern complex. Gross Tower was dedicated on July 8, 1967. Between 1965 and 1976 four other senior high-rises were built in various section of the city, including Towers East adjacent to the original at 14th and Allen; Walnut Manor at 15th and Walnut Streets; Central Park on the site of an old amusement park on Wahneta Street in the city's East Side and the 700 Building on Union Street near center city.



SHE LIKED WHAT SHE SAW — First to get a look at the facilities of the new John T. Gross Towers apartments for the elderly was Mrs. Albert Boyer, 1452 Liberty St., left, who plans to move into one of the apartments with her husband shortly. She is being shown the kitchen of the apartment she chose this morning by Mrs. Irene Harte, tenant relations aide, during the initial previews of the facilities given six of the prospective tenants today.

Revitalization Paves Way for Expanded Family Housing

Meanwhile, city leaders once again turned their attention to substandard housing and overcrowding in long-blighted areas close to Center City. Council created the Allentown Redevelopment Authority to revitalize the neighborhoods by demolishing blocks and blocks of blighted homes. The Allentown Housing Authority was asked to construct a new public housing development to address the need for quality low income housing and the board decided on a 16-acre tract off of Susquehanna Street and Cumberland Street in South Allentown.

On May 10, 1964 the site selection was announced and by Dec. 8, 1964 the first lawsuit was filed seeking to block construction of what would be known as Cumberland Gardens. The suits, brought by city residents, wound their

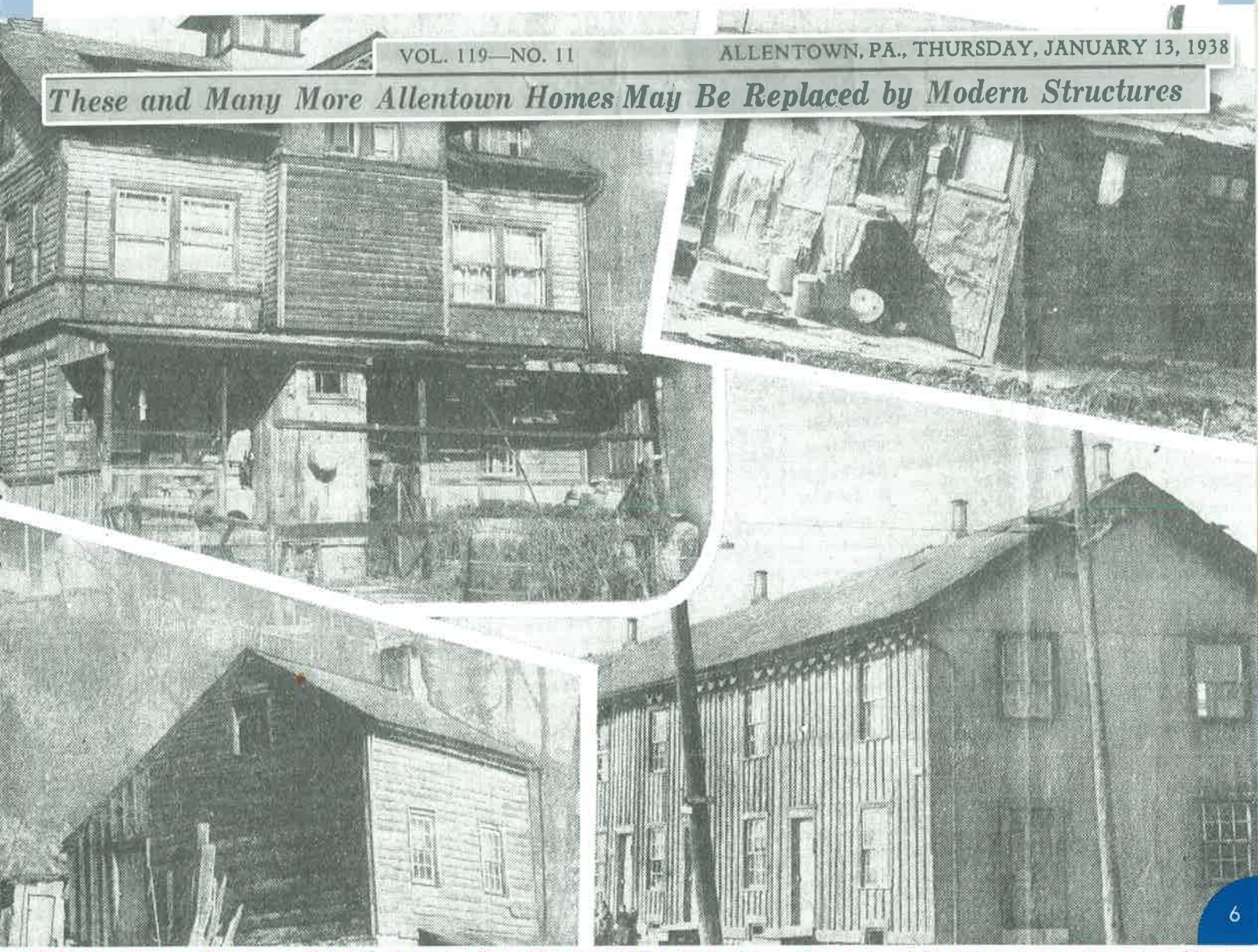
way through the courts for almost five years before the last of the challenges was resolved and work began on the 200 homes.

At the same time, both the AHA and ARA were focusing efforts on the Center City revitalization. Homes along what was once known as Lawrence Street -- now Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard -- were razed and the housing authority proposed a new public housing community to be built along Lehigh Street between Union and Lawrence streets. At Union at the base of 7th Street, a new high-rise known as the 700 Building was erected to serve senior citizens. Little Lehigh, a family community, was below the high-rise closer to Lawrence Street.

VOL. 119—NO. 11

ALLENTOWN, PA., THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 1938

These and Many More Allentown Homes May Be Replaced by Modern Structures



New Outreach Programs Expand Housing Opportunities

The 1980s brought new programs and new opportunities which allowed the AHA to expand its housing opportunities without the costs and controversies of major construction projects. In the 1980s Congress amended the Public Housing Act to create a new concept that allows low-income individuals and families to rent apartments and homes through federally subsidized programs administered by local housing authorities. The Housing Choice Voucher Act became commonly known as "Section 8" housing in which the authorities worked with local landlords to maintain established housing standards in exchange for the rent subsidies.

The authority also began acquiring scattered sites around the city, instituted a focused rehabilitation program, and created a non-profit entity to oversee senior living sites in Catasauqua, Slatington and other communities. That entity, then known as Lehigh Housing Development Corporation, was spun off into a private, independent agency during the 1990s and is now known as the Alliance For Building Communities.



A New Century Brings New Challenges

As Allentown entered the 21st century it became increasingly clear that the aging and dated properties that had been the hallmark of the authority's work - Hanover Acres, Riverview Terrace and Cumberland Gardens - were in dire need of upgrades to maintain the safety and security of the buildings and communities as well as accommodate the needs of 21st Century families. In 2005 the Allentown Housing Authority received a \$20 million HOPE VI grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to demolish and rebuild Hanover Acres and Riverview Terrace. That \$87 million project was undertaken in conjunction with Pennrose Properties Inc. of Philadelphia, which created the new community of Overlook Park, consisting of 269 rental town homes and twins for public housing and 53 homes made available to low-income home buyers. Overlook Park opened in October 2007.

In 2010, the Allentown Housing Authority began a systematic reconstruction of the then-almost 40-year-old Cumberland Gardens community.

The \$45 million, three-phase project included the complete rehabilitation of the properties both inside and out, improved accessibility for residents and substantial changes to common indoor and outdoor areas to increase green space and make the community closer and more pedestrian-friendly.

The first phase was funded in part by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, AHA and City of Allentown funds.



The second and third phases were financed through a combination of Low Income Housing Tax Credits from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, City of Allentown and AHA funds. Fulton Financial of Lancaster provided tax credit equity funding critical to the third phase of the project.

Construction and general contracting was provided by Harkins Builders and Pennrose Properties Inc. of Philadelphia, which partnered with the housing authority on the successful reconstruction of Overlook Park in east Allentown.

The project won praise from federal, state and city officials and in 2013 it received an Award of Merit from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.



Looking Ahead

Today the Allentown Housing Authority remains focused on its mission to provide safe, secure and affordable housing for low-income residents through on-going property maintenance and improvement projects for its existing properties. The Board of Commissioners and administration maintain an evolving five-year plan to address both regulatory and physical plant issues, and work with the City of Allentown, Allentown School District and numerous other partners to provide services aimed at assisting residents to find a better future.





Cumberland Gardens, 1983.

Former Cumberland Gardens Resident Seeks To Help Youngsters Thrive

When his family moved to Cumberland Gardens in 1973, David Jones thought it was a pretty good deal. For the first time the family had two bathrooms to accommodate eight children and their mother. He would play in the woods on the mountain behind the then-new homes, chasing snakes and salamanders with his friends.

"For me, growing up in the Gardens was a great experience," says Lehigh County Commissioner David Jones, a former global human resources executive who served almost two full terms on the county governing board after leaving the corporate world behind. "We were on the edge of the city with the mountain behind us. We grew up in those woods. We would build go-karts and race them down Cumberland Street. I don't think we knew how poor we were."

Jones knows the struggles that poverty brings as well as the temptation to follow a bad path and he has dedicated his life to helping others avoid his mistakes.

As he grew up he hung with gangs. He sold drugs. He did drugs. By the time he reached his mid-20s, he was homeless and on the street, not knowing what the next day would bring or if he would be there to see it.

"By the time I was 25 I lost 18 friends," he said recently. "I did a lot of stupid stuff and I probably shouldn't be here. I was stabbed nine times once. I did so many drugs I should have over-dosed more than once."

For Jones, salvation came through religion. And hard work. Lots and lots of hard work.

"I was 24 or 25 years old and I ended up on the street and strung out on drugs," he recalled. "I walked the streets for a year-and-a-half. It was really a relationship with the Lord that turned me around."

Now 53 and the father of four grown women and a son in high school, Jones said he wants youngsters now living in poverty to know they are not defined by their economic status or circumstances.

"You owe it to yourself to fight for your future," he said. "You can't control the circumstances of your birth but you can fight for your future."

He finished his term on the county board in December and now looks forward to developing his own church, New Vision Ministries, in Bethlehem and continuing as executive director of My Brother's Keeper, an organization that works with young minority men to introduce them to minorities in business and professional careers. The goal is to expose them to alternatives and let them know they can grow.

"I grew up in an environment where you weren't allowed to be smart. You could be street-savvy, but not smart," he said. "This is why I am passionate about My Brother's Keeper. Education is not a burden. It is a pathway."

1994 Gas Explosion Closed Gross Towers for a Year

On a quiet night in June 1994 residents of Gross Towers were rocked by a gas explosion that tore away the facade of the building, left one resident dead and injured almost 100 others.

The explosion occurred when a contracting crew struck a 2-inch gas main. A 73-year-old man died, there was serious damage to the first and second floors, windows in the building were shattered, garbage chutes were blown away from the structure and the heating and air conditioning vents were blown out. Buildings were rocked more than a block away, according to news reports at the time.

The June 9 blast left a hole 15 feet deep and 25 feet

wide in the building's parking lot and it wasn't till April 1995 that repairs were completed and residents were able to start moving back in. The renovations included fire sprinklers throughout the building, more accessible apartments for the physically disabled and a building-wide messaging system to alert residents to future problems.

Twenty years later Gross Towers would serve as a community rallying point and headquarters for Allentown and Lehigh County emergency response teams when another gas explosion destroyed several homes on 13th Street.

Photo courtesy of The Morning Call.



AHA Hosted Major 2000 US Presidential Campaign Event

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt may have been the first nationally recognized dignitary to visit an Allentown Housing Authority property when she came to Hanover Acres in 1942, but she was far from the last.

Over the years AHA properties have played host to many state and national elected officials who have come to learn about public housing and to deliver grants for expansion, reconstruction and safety enhancement projects. From U.S. Sens. Harris Wofford and John Heinz in the 1980s and 1990s to former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge and others, AHA has been a community rallying point for many events.

But the biggest crowd to ever occupy the Gross Towers Community Room may have occurred on Sept. 5, 2000 when then-presidential candidate and Texas Gov. George

W. Bush came to Gross Towers to make a major speech in his race against Democratic Vice President Al Gore. Bush used the visit to announce his plans to upgrade and change the nation's Medicare program.

Banks of television cameras and dozens of national political correspondents lined the back wall of the community room as Bush made his entrance with running mate Dick Cheney. Accompanying them were then Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge, then U.S. Rep and now Sen. Pat Toomey; then state Sen. and now U.S. Rep Charlie Dent, then city Mayor William Heydt and other political dignitaries.

Bush brought national attention to Gross Towers, the Allentown Housing Authority and the City of Allentown in his successful campaign for the highest office in the land.

Photo courtesy of The Morning Call.



Allentown Native Recalls Early Years in Hanover Acres

Hanover Acres was the first home Patricia Stednetz Infanti ever knew. Born in 1945 when her family lived there, she remained until after high school graduation in 1963 as a member of the second class of the Louis E. Dieruff High School.

She learned how to roller skate on skates shared with siblings and neighbors. She remembers one bicycle shared by neighborhood kids.

As a child, she rolled down the hill to kindergarten in a school by the Lehigh River then had to walk back up the steep incline to get home. She attended Mosser Elementary School and shopped with her family for groceries at the "economy market" in the heart of the Acres. Her first ride in a real automobile came from a City of Allentown police officer who used to give neighborhood kids a ride in his patrol car. During the rides they would spill the beans on what was going on, blissfully unaware of what they were doing.

"We were poor but we didn't know we were poor," she said, remembering that her father made \$40 a week as a bartender on Hanover Street. That weekly salary paid the rent, which was 25 percent of the family's monthly income. "When I needed glasses we sold my bike to pay for them. I didn't mind. It's what you did."

"I spoke three or four languages at the time, not so much now," said the daughter of a Polish refugee mother and a father from the Pennsylvania coal regions. "I was quiet then. I had trouble speaking. My mother tried teaching me in broken English and I taught my mother English."

As she grew up, there were "cellar dances" on Fridays and Saturdays when neighborhood kids would gather in the basement of a neighbor's home to play records on the Victrola, and "cellar-brations" for weddings and other milestone events.

"We would sit on the porch and listen to (former WAEB-AM disc jockey) Gene Kaye from Castle Gardens," she said, adding that she got her first job at Dorney Park when she was 12 and remained there till she was married.

Most of all, she remembers a sense of community, a sense that there was something better, someday.

"I'd say 99 percent of the kids I grew up with there got out. They owned their own houses, they got good jobs," she said. "I think the lesson we learned was that it's not the place where you grew up (that makes you successful), it's the people you associate with who make the difference."



Hanover Acres, 1939.

High-Rises Provide Sense of Community for Residents

The high-rises owned and operated by the Allentown Housing Authority do more than just provide safe and secure housing for senior citizens and the physically disabled. They provide a sense of community, as well.

One example is the art classes conducted at Central Park, where amateur artists gather weekly with resident Claudia Evans to produce a plethora of decorations, ornaments and artwork that adorn the ceiling and walls of the community room.

"I started the classes because I am an artist," said Evans, who trained as a graphic designer at the Art Institute of Philadelphia, then worked at Rodale and as an industrial house painter. "We started with a lot more people, but then people started doing it in their homes. They do bring their work back to show us."

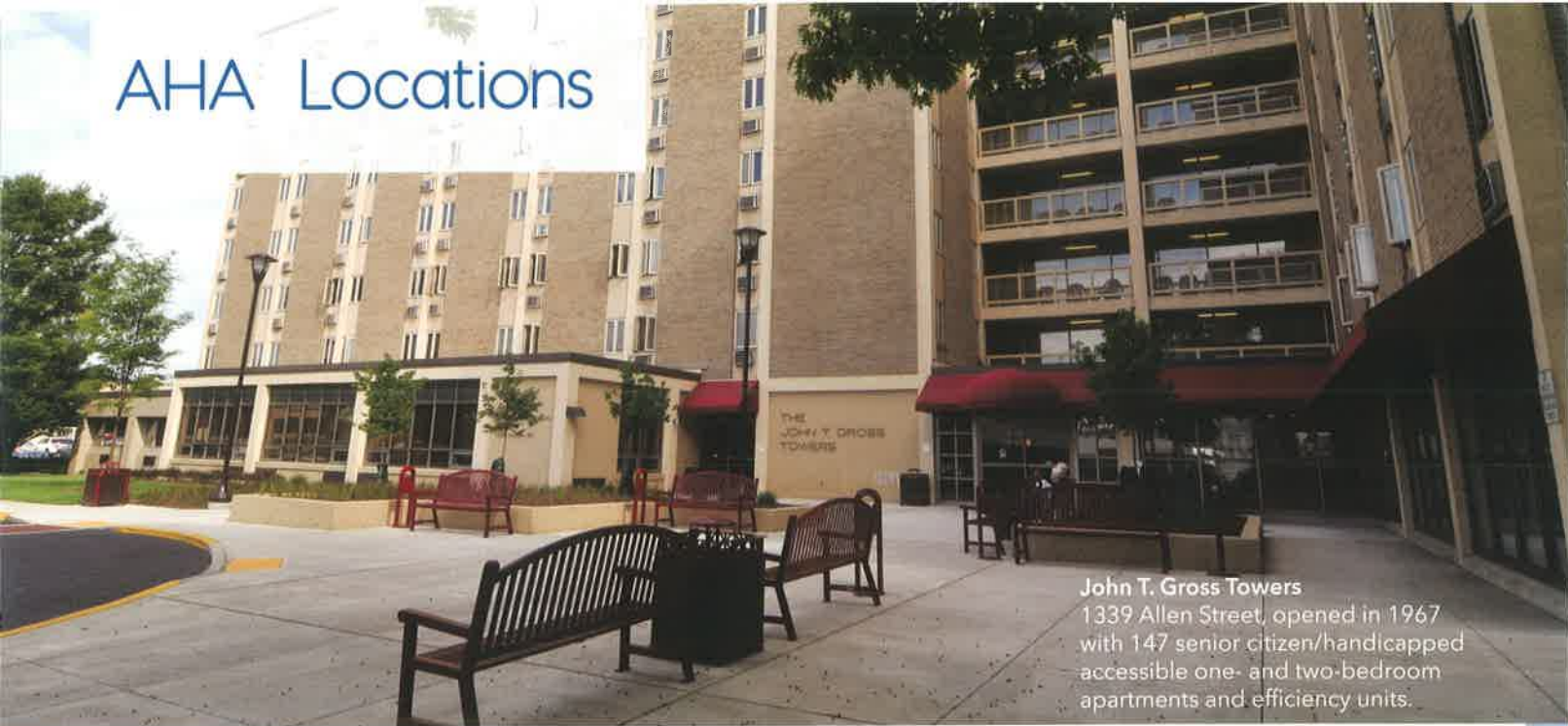
Evans purchases materials for the class at A. C. Moore for \$1 a piece – her budget is just \$20 a month – and the in-house artists decorate them.

"We started doing cards and then moved up to painting," she said. "We do ornaments that hang on hooks here in the Community Room and on our Christmas tree. The fairy farm is the biggest project we have done."

"I told them when we started that you don't have to be perfect, you don't have to stay within the lines, but they didn't like that," she said, laughing. "They wanted to stay within the lines."



AHA Locations



John T. Gross Towers
1339 Allen Street, opened in 1967 with 147 senior citizen/handicapped accessible one- and two-bedroom apartments and efficiency units.



Cumberland Gardens 501 East Cumberland Street offers 200 family townhomes with one, two, three and four bedrooms. Completed in 1971, all 200 homes were completely renovated between 2011 and 2015 to bring the community into alignment with 21st Century family needs. The homes are now equipped with modern kitchens, laundry facilities and adaptable to modern technology to encourage learning and advancement for both children and adults.



Towers East 1337 Allen Street, opened in 1975 and offers 125 one-bedroom and four two-bedroom apartments for senior citizens and the physically disabled.



700 Building 7th and Union streets, includes 124 one-bedroom and four two-bedroom apartments for senior citizens and the physically disabled. It opened in 1974.



Little Lehigh located at Lehigh Street and Martin Luther King Boulevard and includes 76 family housing units including 2-, 3-, 4- and 5-bedroom units. It was completed in 1975.



Walnut Manor 1519 Walnut Street provides 144 one-bedroom and six two-bedroom apartments for senior citizens and physically disabled residents. It opened in 1972.

Scattered Site Family The Allentown Housing Authority manages 75 smaller scattered site properties throughout the city for families.

Neighborhood Strategy Area 95 apartments located in seven buildings in the central city area provide housing to seniors and families. The one and two bedroom apartments are funded through the HUD multi-family program.



Central Park 683 Wahneta Street in east Allentown, opened 1976 and offers 70 one-bedroom apartments for seniors and the physically disabled.

Scattered Sites The Allentown Housing Authority also includes several smaller sites for senior citizen and physically disabled housing, including 42 one-bedroom apartments in buildings at 401 Market Street, 102-104 E. Wyoming Street and 616-632 N. Godfrey Street.

Financials

Revenue

Operating revenue:

Tenant revenue	\$2,923,695
HUD PHA operating subsidy	4,105,816
Housing choice vouchers	11,825,016
Other revenue	555,794
Total operating revenue	19,410,321

Non-operating revenues:

Public housing capital fund	1,227,238
Investment income	19,629
Total non-operating revenues	1,246,867

Total revenues \$ 20,657,188

Expenses

Operating expenses:

Administrative	\$3,718,007
Tenant services	120,185
Utilities	1,014,263
Maintenance	2,303,267
General expense	855,043
Housing assistance payments	11,063,538
Depreciation expense	2,044,611
Interest expense	156,592

Total expenses \$21,275,506

Seacon

Allentown, Pa., Thursday, Sept. 29, 1949

5 Cen

\$5,000,000 Housing Project Here; 16th Ward May Be Site

Allentown's Housing Authority this week awaited a go-ahead nod (and a check) from Washington after receiving approval from the U. S. Public Housing Administration for a low-rent housing program which may cost more than \$5,000,000.

Acting on Allentown's request for 600 low-rent housing units under the recently enacted Federal Housing Act, the Public Housing Administration last week gave

Board of Commissioners

Donald Senderowitz Chair, Associate Broker. ReMax Real Estate, Allentown
Jack Sherry. Resident Representative
Alan Jennings Executive Director, Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley
Julio Guridy Allentown City Council
Fred Bañuelos Vice President, Harrisburg Housing Authority

Administrative Staff

Daniel R. Farrell Executive Director
Bernadette Berry Executive Secretary
Eric Reinert. Comptroller
Ann Peters Purchasing Agent
Lenny Jenkins Social Services Coordinator
Aida Núñez Director of Housing Management
Diane Groman Property Manager - 700 Building, Central Park, Little Lehigh
Daniel Weidenhammer Property Manager - NSA, Scattered Sites
Naomi Brice Property Manager - Cumberland Gardens
Frances Smith Property Manager - Gross Towers/Towers East, Walnut Manor

Gross Towers under construction, 1965.



Board of Commissioners Oversight and Guidance Ensures Fiscal Responsibility

As the Chairman of the Allentown Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, it is my honor to lead an organization that has been delivering a critical service to the neediest residents in the City of Allentown. Housing – safe, secure and affordable – is the keystone to a quality life. Without it, one cannot focus on employment, on education, on health or on the future.

That's why the Allentown Housing Authority was created 80 years ago. The board I lead now held its first meeting on Nov. 10, 1937. Over the past eight decades the AHA has been at the forefront of helping individuals, families, senior citizens and the physically disabled obtain the basic service that enables them to be productive members of the community.

The board's role is to provide oversight and guidance to our executive team and administrative staff, and we are extremely grateful for the quality of the employees that deliver our services. However, we are also charged with ensuring that the tax dollars that fund our work are used wisely.

In recent years as Congress and the Executive Branch have tightened the federal purse strings it has become more incumbent on the board and the authority to find new ways to deliver our critical services at minimal expense to the taxpayer. Where possible, we have reduced staff. We have instituted new technologies that enable our team to do more with less. We have implemented energy efficiencies wherever possible in our buildings and properties.

We have created and follow strategic plans that allow us to plan ahead to avoid needless expenses. And we have partnered with other agencies and organizations to achieve the maximum impact for every tax dollar we spend on behalf of our residents.

We also work to ensure that our spending contributes directly to our community by working with local vendors, contractors and suppliers wherever and whenever possible to support the regional economy and reinforce the tax base.

When the Allentown Housing Authority began its work I am sure my predecessors could not envision that it would still be a critical part of the community 80 years later. But we are here, and we will remain here, to do our best to provide a hand up to those who need it.

Sincerely,

Donald Senderowitz

Chairman, Allentown Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

ALLENTOWN CHRONICLE AND NEWS, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 1938

County Commissioners Meet With City and State Housing Authorities





Opening Doors for the Community

1339 Allen Street
Allentown, PA 18102
Phone: 610-439-8678
Fax: 610-439-8884

Website:www.allentownhousing.org



A NEW HOME? Prospective tenants look over the entrance to what may become their new home in the John Gross Towers.