

## OPENING REMARKS

- Good evening, Mr. Mayor and members of Council.
- On behalf of the staff and the Board of Commissioners of Bristol Redevelopment & Housing Authority, I am honored to receive this Resolution from Council recognizing our 75 years of service to the Bristol community ....
- And thank you for allowing me a few minutes to mark this important milestone for our agency.

## REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

- 75 years ago that HA Board's application for Bristol's first two public housing developments was successful... and it created 201 units of affordable housing in our City that opened in 1941.
- And we have been "*Growing with Bristol*" ever since.
- By 1953 an additional 140 public housing units were available.
- Eventually, through these and subsequent actions, the Housing Authority developed more than 425 units of public housing for Bristol's low-income families.
- Developing and operating public housing is, of course, what BRHA is best-known for in our community. And we are proud to provide this most basic of needs for citizens in Bristol...
- **But** BRHA has done quite a bit more than that for this community during its tenure.
- Some in this room may remember that, for more than 20 years throughout the 1960s, 70s and early 1980s, BRHA implemented two Urban Renewal projects for the City of Bristol.
- Through these "Central Business District Urban Renewal Projects" BRHA removed "blighting conditions," and created opportunities for new public and private development.
- The results are still visible today in the WCYB Building, the TriSummit Bank building, the current City Courthouse and the City Correctional Facilities, downtown public parking areas, and the beautiful public space in Cumberland Park.
- In the 1980s BRHA issued mortgage revenue bonds to assist private developers in creating additional affordable housing in the city.
- From the 1980s on thru today BRHA has secured grant resources for the community - to assist the needs of residents, and to modernize public housing apartments.

- During the past decade BRHA has been implementing its Master Plan to redevelop its PH inventory;
- We have already redeveloped one site, creating the Sapling Grove Apartments; and have completed major renovations at another site across the street.

## BRHA TODAY

- Today, BRHA is the largest provider of affordable rental housing in Bristol.
- Through our various housing programs BRHA serves more than 600 households – this is approximately 7% of all households in Bristol and 40% of low-income rental households.
- The BRHA employs 26 staff members and has an annual operating budget of approximately \$3.5 million; nearly \$2.5 million of which are funds from **outside** of Bristol that we bring into the community – every year.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR UPWARD MOBILITY

- In addition to our primary mission to provide safe, attractive and affordable housing, BRHA provides opportunities for families to achieve a higher standard of living.
- We offer programs that provide linkages to secondary education, job training, job placement, drug prevention, health services and preparation for homeownership.
- Known collectively as our “Find a Way” program, these activities help residents attain self-sufficiency, which means, getting out of *public assistance programs* of all kinds, including public housing.
- Two recent examples are on the sheets that I handed to you earlier.
  - One gentleman, Mr. Mark Arzu, just last week completed the program...he spent four years with us attaining stable employment at the Boys & Girls Club, sometimes with a second part-time job; he saved over \$6,000 and has just accepted a job in NYC where he intends to work, continue his education and eventually work with delinquent youth.
  - Perhaps our most stunning success can be found in the person of Donna Boardwine, a former PH resident who, during her 5 years in the Find a Way program, improved her employment, saved over \$20,000 and was able to achieve her dream of buying a single family home in the Bristol community where she still lives.

## 75 MORE YEARS OF GROWING WITH BRISTOL

- Even while we celebrate the past we have an eye toward the next 75 years.
- BRHA is working to redevelop our affordable housing inventory and find ways to meet the needs of Bristol's neighborhoods.
- Some of the things we are working on for the near-term future include:
  - The next step in our Master Plan, which is removal of the Bonham Circle apartments & developing a mixed-income community on the site
  - Doing some infill construction on a number of empty lots in the Historic Virginia Hill Neighborhood
  - We are looking at creating a community garden and perhaps a small park on some parcels we have acquired around our PH developments
  - And re-purposing some PH units to create more senior housing, and perhaps also creating some smoke-free communities.

## CLOSING REMARKS

- During the past 75 years, BRHA has provided safe, attractive, affordable housing in Bristol for thousands of families in need; we have changed the landscape of Bristol, both in neighborhoods and in business districts; we have invested 10s of millions of dollars in the community.
- We have truly been *Growing with Bristol* and are proud of what we have accomplished...so far!
- Throughout this year we will have a number of public events to celebrate our accomplishments and to announce what's coming next. We'll make sure that Council knows about them.
- In fact, I'd like to remind Council about one invitation that has already been circulated to you – tomorrow morning at 11:00 am we will have the Grand Opening of our Community Computer Lab at the Resident Services Center on Clinton Avenue. We hope to see you there.

Thank you for your support over the years and for this opportunity to share a little bit about BRHA, and, again, thank you for recognizing Bristol Redevelopment & Housing Authority for its 75 years of service to the community.