

Value of Home



2015 PAHRC REPORT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE VALUE OF HOME

The value of having a safe and decent place to live is much greater than simply the cost of housing. The shelter and stability that a home provides allows us to meet our basic human needs, maintain a certain quality of life, and reach our full potential. For those who cannot afford to buy a home, rental assistance helps to bridge the gap between housing that low-income families can afford and what the housing market offers. In doing so, it provides essential support in many communities and gives struggling families the boost they need to achieve housing stability and economic advancement.

THE NEED FOR ASSISTED RENTAL HOUSING

The need for rental assistance is growing as rents rise nearly three times as fast as household incomes. At the same time, the supply of federal rental assistance is inadequate to meet the mounting need. The total number of units in the primary housing assistance programs has increased less than 3% compared to the nearly 24% increase in poverty and nearly 21% increase in the number of extremely low-income households over the same time period. Other indicators such as the length of waiting lists for assistance programs also demonstrate the deep need for rental assistance, particularly in high-cost areas. For every 100 units of existing public housing, 150 families are on the waiting list.

RESIDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Housing assistance provided through the public housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) programs primarily serves households and individuals who would be most vulnerable to the effects of poverty if unassisted. Children under 18 are the largest individual demographic, representing 41% of all individual residents. These programs also serve more elderly and disabled households, which make up 51% of all household heads served, a larger percentage than households headed by these groups in the US population at large. Further, a growing percentage of seniors are projected to need housing assistance as the Baby Boomers age.

VALUE TO RESIDENTS

Housing assistance provides more value than the cost of rent to recipients. Despite being more vulnerable to the effects of poverty if unassisted, families receiving housing assistance report better outcomes compared to low-income unassisted renter households. For example, assisted renters are less likely to live in overcrowded conditions or move, and are more likely to report living closer to public transportation. Additionally, assisted renters who recently moved were more likely to move to housing and neighborhoods that they considered better than where they previously lived compared to unassisted renters below the median income.

VALUE TO COMMUNITIES

Similarly, rental housing assistance can provide added value to community residents by helping to reduce costs to local governments and nonprofits and by helping to improve the economic climate of communities. For example, the construction of new affordable housing units has been shown to generate new jobs and induce local spending. Similarly the redevelopment of public housing has helped to raise home values in some areas.

