Celebrating 20 Years of Affordable Housing Development

HEART OF THE CITY NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.

MAKING AN IMPACT

Since our incorporation in 1998, Heart of the City Neighborhoods (HOCN) has worked together with residents, neighborhood organizations, financial institutions, and real estate professionals to make Buffalo's core communities a better place to live. HOCN is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit Community Development Organization, recognized as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) by New York State. Originally incorporated as Revival!..Downtown, an independent non-profit housing corporation formed in collaboration with Buffalo Place, Inc. the managing entity for the City's downtown pedestrian mall and developer of the Glenny Center International Hostel. Since then, HOCN has undertaken a number of building and planning projects. While our original housing programs worked to increase homeownership opportunities, our most recent programming has made an effort to stabilize homeownership through repairing occupied housing, as well as ensuring tenants have safe, quality, affordable housing opportunities.

$26.5M leveraged and invested in our communities

441 units of quality, affordable housing created and restored

534 residents supported by our programs

40+ years of sustainable homeownership created

Homeownership

HOCN's first strategic initiative was to develop housing programs that restored the first block of Plymouth Avenue in Buffalo's Lower West Side neighborhood. To do so, we acquired vacant homes from the Department of Justice, rehabilitating them to resell to first-time homebuyers.

After seeing the success on Plymouth Avenue, HOCN then spread our reach with a block-by-block approach to eliminating blight, focusing on Hudson Street, Whitney Place, and Prospect Avenue.

HOCN's programs brought increased stability to the Lower West Side neighborhood by renovating 13 vacant units and establishing 8 first-time homeowners throughout the community.

Each homeowner has committed to a minimum of five years in their home, representing over 40 years of homeownership for the neighborhood.

Owner-Occupied Repair

To pair with HOCN's ongoing efforts towards neighborhood revitalization, the organization launched a new moderate home repair program in 2010. This programing was developed to address costly repairs in aging homes, providing stability and longevity to low-moderate income homeowners. Not only do these efforts create more healthy and affordable homes, but they help maintain homeownership in the community.

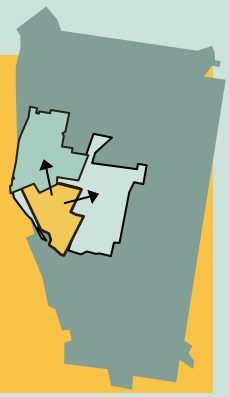
Since 2011, HOCN has partnered with state and local funders to provide grants and loans to homeowners to make needed repairs on 297 units.

Rental Housing

HOCN values quality affordable housing for all. Investing in rental housing provides just that, a direct response to the lack of quality affordable rental opportunities for working families in our neighborhood. When rents are guaranteed to remain stable, tenants move less often.

In 2001 HOCN renovated and managed the Watkins Building on Chippewa Street. In 2013, over 10 years later, we returned to managing rental housing after constructing a vacant lot in-fill on Hudson Street called Cynthia Gardens.

The need for affordable housing extends beyond our original Lower West Side target neighborhood. To help address needs in the greater City of Buffalo, we have extended our reach over the past five years into the Niagara Council District, which is also known as the West Side of Buffalo, and into the Ellicott Council District on Buffalo's East Side, which includes the Fruit Belt, Willert Park, and Masten Park communities.



Strategic Partnerships

Sharing what we've learned over the years, HOCN has partnered with community anchors in Buffalo's core communities who needed assistance with project management and community development. These efforts work to increase the availability of affordable housing services in the areas of Buffalo where there are disproportional gaps in services exist.

As a result, we have secured strategic partnerships with faith based entities as well as the private sector to bridge the gaps. Most recently aligning ourselves with out-of-town investors who support our mission and offer a much wider financial bandwidth.

Our experienced team has provided assistance with community development and organization, a key step in affordable housing development. In addition, HOCN has worked with groups on various aspects of developing affordable rental housing, from the pre-application phase through construction, including rent-up, outreach, and management.

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Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Incorporated

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HEART OF THE CITY NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

For twenty-one years, we have been investing in quality, sustainable, affordable housing in Buffalo's core communities. In 2019, our work and programming continued our mission to maintain homes and keep existing homeowners in our communities and create long-term affordable housing opportunities through partnerships with the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency, and the New York State Affordable Housing Corporation. We are increasing access to affordable housing opportunities by providing quality, safe, affordable rental units to families in our communities while providing information on available services to those we may not be able to directly assist. Our work is focused on enriching neighborhoods we work in by forming strategic partnerships to increase affordable housing units in our city, like the eleven units currently being restored at the Polly Jean Suites. These partnership also enable us to coordinate events that benefit our communities, like the United Way Day of Caring that hosted 294 volunteers to clean and paint both the Dorothy Collier Community Center and African American Cultural Center.

Maintaining existing homeownership

45 units of quality, affordable housing repaired and restored

$726,881 leveraged and invested in owner-occupied households through our housing programs

52 residents supported by our housing programs

328 home repairs completed through our housing programs

22 streets supported by our housing programs

8 homes weatherized through our housing programs

Increasing access to affordable housing

8 units of quality, affordable housing managed

27 residents supported by our rental housing

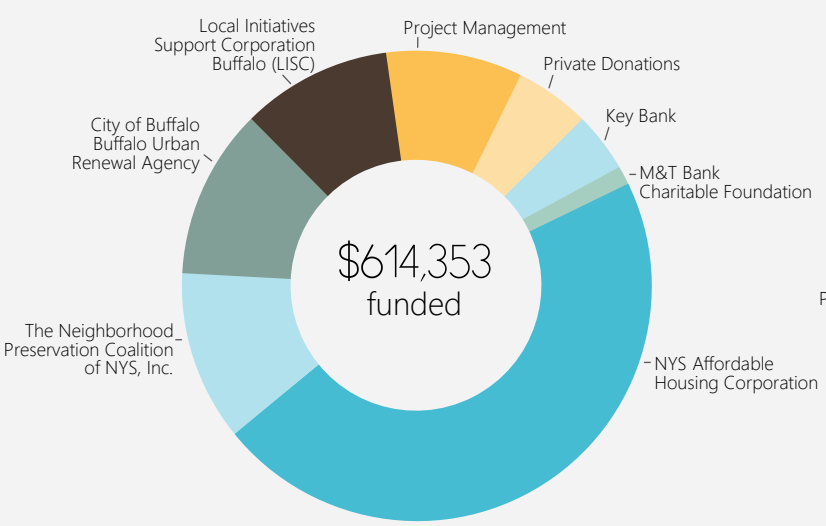
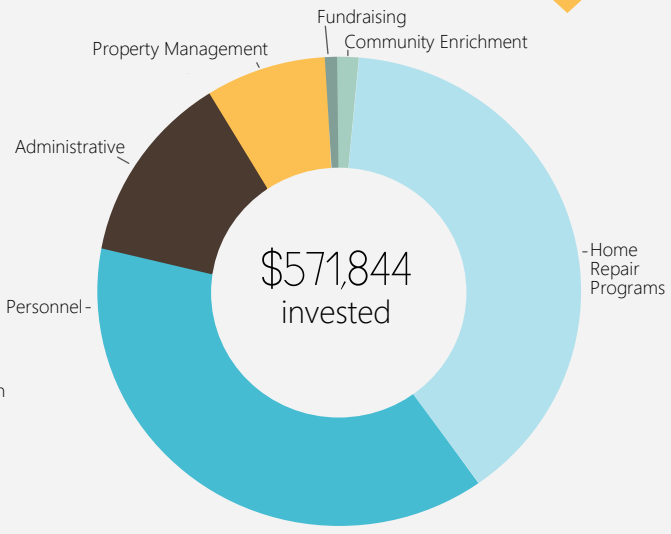
1,841 resource directories distributed in our communities resulting in an average of 86 inquiries per month

972 families given access to affordable housing resources

Enriching neighborhoods

9 strategic partnerships built in our communities

$1.8M leveraged and invested in underserved communities

11 units of quality, sustainable affordable housing created and restored

364 volunteers hosted at community events