

TOP STORIES

Governor Wolf announces funding for affordable rental housing



Governor Tom Wolf

In mid-October, Governor Tom Wolf announced Low-Income Housing Tax Credit funding in the amount of \$43.6 million, more than \$7.4 million in PennHOMES funding, and more than \$15.9 million in National Housing Trust Funds for the construction of 1,974 affordable multifamily rental units in Pennsylvania. The federal tax credits are administered by PHFA and approved by its board.

When completed, the developments receiving funding will preserve and create much needed affordable housing rental units, including 1,886 for low-income Pennsylvania residents, and with 93 units for people at or below 30 percent of the area median income supported by the National Housing Trust Funds.

The 37 multifamily housing developments that are being awarded tax credits can be viewed on [PHFA's website](#); the list of recipients is located under "News: 2021" and dated 10/14. To view the text of the full Oct. 14 press release, please visit our online [News Center](#).

An update about the Homeowner Assistance Fund

There is great public interest in the Pennsylvania Homeowner Assistance Fund (PAHAF) providing financial assistance to homeowners struggling due to the pandemic. It is being administered by PHFA. The agency recently submitted its PAHAF plan to the U.S. Treasury for its approval. The agency is currently operating a small pilot PAHAF program to gain a better understanding of homeowners' needs, to test its model, to gather additional data, to improve procedures, and get the funds out to those homeowners in greatest need. To date, PHFA has approved 136 applications and approved assistance totaling \$1.4 million.

PAHAF is a complex program and, once approved by Treasury, will require a massive effort to ramp up quickly to distribute assistance to Pennsylvania homeowners. For this reason, like many other states, PHFA sought a vendor to manage the full program, with oversight still provided by the agency. After a competitive procurement process, Innovative Emergency Management (IEM) was chosen to oversee day-to-day operation of the PAHAF program. IEM is in the process of developing the application portal, setting up a call center and application processing team, and developing statewide marketing materials to reach the target audience, which is lower-income Pennsylvania homeowners whose income or expenses were materially impacted by the pandemic. In the near future, the agency will be moving the pilot program to IEM, as well.

If you know of homeowners who are behind on their mortgage due to the pandemic, please direct them to the agency's [PAHAF website](#) for the latest updates.

Deadline approaching for organizations to apply for PHARE funding for local housing initiatives

PHFA has issued a Request for Proposals soliciting applications from organizations for projects to improve the availability and affordability of housing across Pennsylvania. Funding for this RFP is being provided through the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) Fund. The total PHARE funding available this year exceeds \$45 million.

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PHARE applications can be completed entirely online, eliminating the need for paper submissions and simplifying the process for applicants. The RFP is located on [PHFA's website](#). Applications are due to PHFA no later than 2 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 19.

PHARE receives its funding from the impact fee levied on natural gas drilling companies and a portion of the Realty Transfer Tax. PHARE funding is available for housing initiatives in all of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

Any questions regarding the RFP may be directed to Bryce Maretzki at PHFA via email at bmaretzki@phfa.org or by phone at 717-780-1867.

HOMEOWNERSHIP

PHFA homeownership loan programs performing well

It's been a busy year for PHFA's Homeownership Division despite many obstacles arising from the COVID pandemic. The demand for home loan financing has not slowed down, and PHFA's below-market competitive rates have kept the agency's home loan programs performing well.

PHFA's K-FIT down payment and closing cost assistance program was introduced in March and is going strong. It has been paired with 61 percent of all loan locks. The K-FIT program provides a small second loan to help buyers meet down payment and closing costs, which are often the biggest barrier to homeownership. The K-FIT loan ("FIT" stands for Forgivable In Ten) is forgiven at a rate of 10 percent per year over a period of 10 years.

Other milestones achieved by the agency's Homeownership Division in 2021 include, to date, the purchase of 3,769 loans with a value of \$657.6 million, and the purchase of 994 more loans this year compared to 2020.



PHFA AROUND THE STATE

The coronavirus hasn't stopped great progress on affordable housing construction that's going on around the state. Here are a few examples of the multifamily developments that were recently in the news with their ribbon cutting and groundbreaking ceremonies. They all received funding from PHFA.

HDC MidAtlantic celebrated the grand opening of Beach Run Apartments in Fredericksburg, Lebanon County, in early October. The new development includes 51 affordable housing units for general occupancy with a military veteran preference. This housing community will provide much needed workforce housing. PHFA's Executive Director and CEO Robin Wiessmann delivered remarks at the ceremony (left photo).



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The city of Easton will be getting a new mixed-use development as celebrated by Governor Tom Wolf (top photo and bottom photo center) and other officials in early October. The Mill at Easton is reclaiming a formerly contaminated mill site and turning it into two three-story buildings offering 55 affordable housing units, as well as providing retail space. These affordable housing units will help combat rising housing costs that come with the Lehigh Valley's growing popularity. Robin Wiessmann (bottom photo, left of Gov. Wolf), PHFA's executive director and CEO, was also on hand to welcome the new development to Easton's south side.

Braddock welcomes the new and improved Ohringer Building, once an eight-story furniture store, during a grand opening ceremony in late October. The attractive Ohringer Building will offer 37 affordable artist residences, including studios and one-bedroom units. Prospective artist residents will be screened by a committee of diverse Braddock stakeholders. Thomas Lippard was in attendance and is the grandson-in-law of original Ohringer Building founder Abe Ohringer (right photo). *Top photo courtesy of Robert Ketchum. Bottom photo courtesy of Rothschild Doyno Collaborative.*



HOUSING FELLOWSHIP

PHFA names Housing Policy Fellowship posthumously for Kathy Possinger



Kathy A. Possinger

In recognition of the career accomplishments of Kathy Possinger in the housing field, PHFA is naming its housing policy fellowship for her.

Possinger was a leading affordable housing advocate who served Pennsylvanians for two decades through her work in both the public and private sectors. Her service with nonprofit and government agencies provided significant contributions to the field of affordable housing and community development in Pennsylvania. This service included contributions to PHFA as a board designee and advocate.

PHFA's fellowship is being named the Kathy A. Possinger Housing Policy Fellowship. This action is intended to inspire individuals who participate in the fellowship and who will continue her work of service and innovation in addressing community challenges. The fellowship is intended to provide fellows with the opportunity to do cutting-edge housing research and to gain leadership skills.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION

PHFA providing financial education to incarcerated veterans preparing for release

Financial insecurity plays an important role in incarceration. Statistics show that incarcerated people in all gender, race, and ethnicity groups earned substantially less prior to their incarceration than their non-incarcerated counterparts of similar ages. A lack of personal finances is also a well-documented

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factor in the difficulties of ex-offenders reentering society that prevents them from taking care of their immediate needs, securing employment and being able to pay court costs and fines. Housing is also one of the most serious challenges a reentrant faces. Housing stability may be compromised by the stigma of incarceration, a lack of financial resources, short or poor credit history, etc. As integrating financial education and capability programs in social services is a way to improve outcomes and enhance the financial well-being of their clients, why not do the same for reentrants?

Since 2015, PHFA has been providing financial education to incarcerated veterans preparing for release. Armed with the adapted Building Your Financial House (BYFH) Ex-offender Reentry (EOR) curriculum, we have studied the impact financial education has had on behavior change, financial readiness for reentry, and, ultimately, recidivism. By offering inmates comprehensive financial education which addresses accessing and building their personal assets, securing employment, managing cash flow, and rebuilding credit, we're tackling major issues leading to housing instability and the likelihood of recidivism. Inmates who have completed the program report taking specific financial actions to improve their readiness for reentry, and those who have since been released show recidivism measures lower than those of PA reentrants in general.

Although our efforts to expand our BYFH (EOR) curriculum with incarcerated veterans have been limited during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are looking forward to getting back to the institutions within the coming months. Stay tuned.

MINORITY BUSINESS RECOGNITION

Recognizing another valued diverse business partner



Julia Reeb
President & CEO

PHFA relies on a network of business partners to achieve its mission to provide affordable homeownership and rental apartment options. We value that many of our partners, such as Reeb Building Systems, are businesses run by women and people of color. Reeb Building Systems is a certified woman-owned small business and specialty trade sub-contractor that offers structural systems and panelized wall systems, window and door systems, and a variety of finishing products and systems. Founded in 2008, Reeb Building Systems focuses on consistently delivering the best value and service to construction projects. They're a great partner we know we can rely upon when needed.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Looking for a career change? Do you like helping others? Do you want advancement opportunities and competitive pay and benefits? Then PHFA may be a good fit for you! A few jobs available now include Business Analyst I, Customer Service Coordinator I, and Development Officer. Come join the PHFA team and help us advance our mission to provide affordable housing to all Pennsylvania residents. Visit our website to learn about our current [job openings](#).



Tom Wolf, Governor • Robin Wiessmann, Executive Director & CEO

To receive an email notice when a new issue of PHFA Developments is posted, or for comments and questions, please write Renae Hyson at rhyson@phfa.org.

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