



## **Official Statement from the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance on HANO's National Search for a New Executive Director**

**NEW ORLEANS**—The GNOHA membership would like to commend the Housing Authority of New Orleans' Board of Commissioners for providing the public an opportunity to provide feedback regarding the search for a new Executive Director. HANO plays a crucial role in providing affordable housing to some of New Orleans' most vulnerable citizens: seniors on fixed incomes, low-wage renters and children living in poverty. The next Executive Director will be charged with the duty of supporting this role in the most efficient ways possible.

HANO began revitalizing its aged housing stock well before Hurricane Katrina. The agency brokered agreements to bring online 2,174 units of housing before the storm, and greenlit efforts to build another 5,366 units in the first 10 years after the flood waters receded. Unfortunately, 2,383 of those units remain unbuilt, meaning that there is a huge backlog of affordable homes that have not received 'notice to proceed.' There are now 10 new deals that have been authorized in the past few years but they don't have executed master development agreements. There are many variables in the development process that contribute to this backlog, however, an Executive Director who has experience and a practical understanding of real estate development would be most effective in working to advance projects in a more efficient manner to increase production and meet HANO's commitment goals.

We encourage HANO to seek an ED who would make it a priority to collaborate with entities throughout the state, who provide development funding for housing development, with a goal of leveraging HANO's voucher program with new affordable housing development in New Orleans. Not only could HANO use vouchers to incentivize new development, advocacy that is coordinated by the Executive Director could play a role in securing and increasing statewide and local funding, and securing additional funding for the voucher program to better serve New Orleans Families.

As we combat the affordable housing crisis, the new Executive Director must believe in the importance of exploring and executing policies that would encourage more landlords to accept vouchers. In November 2017, HANO reported that about 53% of voucher holders were cost-burdened. He or she will have to make it a priority to explore mobility counseling, landlord recruitment,

expanded training for property managers, landlords and voucher holders, outreach to neighborhood groups and income discrimination ordinances.

Finally, the new Executive Director should be transparent and willing to accept feedback and suggestions from the community on how to improve the efficiency and impact of HANO programs. The new Executive Director must prioritize securing supportive services for Section 8 residents and standardizing services also for public housing residents and properties that are undergoing or have completed revitalization. We say Put Housing First because we believe that safe, stable and affordable housing is the first step, the foundation for a thriving community. As a matter of course, Section 8 and public housing residents who are paying what they can afford, should have the chance to access resources that will increase their educational attainment, economic outlook and overall health and well being.

Simply put, HANO can be a force for good in the lives of the people it serves and the Executive Director should believe that and see it as a necessary goal. GNOHA believes an Executive Director with these skills will increase HANO's ability to provide supportive services and housing to low-income renters and creating effective long-term solutions for New Orleanians in the years to come. This is a necessary step in ensuring the execution of the HousingNOLA 10 Year Plan and guaranteeing that New Orleans is equitable and consistently Puts Housing First!