The New Look
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Message from the Executive Director</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHA New Look Sites Map</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Diamonds Townhouse Apartments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Rosen Manor</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Allen Homes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitehall Apartments</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk Manor Apartments</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge Plaza</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Olivet Village</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman Blumberg Apartments</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Grays Ferry Estates</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson Park</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbotsford Homes</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falls Ridge</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHA — Giant Steps</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtyard Apartments at Riverview</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairhill</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucien E. Blackwell Homes</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117 New Homes</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If a picture is worth a thousand words, you may lose count reading this brochure. As you leaf through the pages, you will see amazing illustrations of recent changes in public housing in Philadelphia. We have compared the archaic concepts of public housing of yesterday, to the quality low-density developments PHA builds and manages today. These are communities people want to live in. They are environments that build a sense of pride for residents who are compelled to maintain their surroundings.

What you see in this book is a result of the planning and implementation of a multi-year, billion-dollar construction program. PHA is systematically resurrecting what were Philadelphia’s most blighted neighborhoods. We have made efficient use of our federal funding, which we have leveraged with significant private investments. PHA is working at an unprecedented pace, developing major projects in several communities simultaneously.

The design of our new housing is tailored to each neighborhood. At the Martin Luther King development, PHA is building Victorian style housing to blend in with the historic architecture of South Philadelphia. At Richard Allen Homes we have built modern suburban style housing to reflect the rebirth of North Philadelphia. PHA properties are developed with strict guidelines and are built within budget, completed on or before schedule.

PHA’s 2000 employees have one overriding goal — to raise the quality of life for our customers and the citizens in the surrounding communities. Building, modernizing and managing affordable housing at the highest possible standard is the only outcome we will accept.

We are building 6,000 homes — 3,000 are brand new and 3,000 totally renovated. The incredible change is captured in this brochure. Each page reflects our view of how affordable housing can and should look, as PHA continues living up to our motto — Building Beyond Expectations.

“...We know that the developments that we own, build and manage have an immediate and powerful impact on the quality of life in the city.”

Carl R. Greene, Executive Director
8 Diamonds Townhouse Apartments is the name of a sparkling, new development covering eight city blocks in North Philadelphia. The area stretches between 20th and Van Pelt Streets and Cecil B. Moore Avenue and Diamond Street.

The construction of “8 Diamonds” marked the first time that PHA built homes outside one of its own developments. PHA has invested $27 million building 152 modern, attractive townhouses that have three, four and five bedrooms. The townhouse homes are beautiful and offer lots of space for families with easy access to public transportation, Temple University and Center City. The new homes feature central air conditioning, off-street parking and green space, a dramatic change from what was once a drab, cramped neighborhood. Interstate Realty Management, a private firm, manages this development.

“8 Diamonds” is the third and final phase of a plan that transformed the old Raymond Rosen property and the area near it. A neighborhood that was once a boarded up slum has become an attractive, desirable area.

PHA has invested $76 million in the redevelopment of the site now known as Raymond Rosen Manor. It is one of the largest and oldest developments owned by PHA and the site of one of the most extensive public housing renovations in the United States.

The new development replaced the old Raymond Rosen Apartments that comprised over 1100 apartments in eight high-rise buildings and another 58 in low-rise buildings. PHA imploded the high-rises in 1995.

The first phase of renovation involved the exterior of 308 apartments. They received new roofs, gutters, windows, siding and electrical upgrades. The outside lighting was improved for better security. During the second phase, new kitchen and bathroom appliances, washer/dryer connections, new heating systems, and new interior and exterior doors were installed.

In addition, 47 new housing units were built on the site.

The redevelopment of Raymond Rosen is a shining example of how PHA has reclaimed a neighborhood and turned it into a vibrant, livable and safe community.
The final phase of the beautiful new Richard Allen Homes opened in March 2003.

The opening of this phase of the development was also a homecoming for three prominent Philadelphians who grew up in the original development: comedian Bill Cosby, City Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, and public relations executive Bruce Crawley.

People living at the new Richard Allen have much more living space. PHA replaced multi-family buildings with multi-bedroom townhouses spread over a larger area. Each set of townhouses has private yards, additional open green space and off-street parking.

The redevelopment of Richard Allen includes a new five-story, 80-unit complex for seniors. Residents also benefit from a new healthcare clinic and 16,000 square foot community center that serve not only Richard Allen, but the entire neighborhood.

The Community Center, named for Mayor John F. Street, sits in the center of a beautiful town square.

“Back in the 1990’s we determined that traditional public housing wasn’t working, so we changed our approach. Richard Allen is evidence of that change.”
The modernization of Whitehall Apartments in Northeast Philadelphia will make the complex sparkle and improve the neighborhood. The senior citizens who reside there will enjoy the amenities and have more living space.

There are three phases for this project. In the first phase, 131 townhouse units received new kitchens, baths, piping and drain lines, heating and cooling systems, and new electric panels and wiring. Crews removed lead-based paint and asbestos. They put a new drywall finish on the walls and ceilings, laid new floor tile, and replaced all doors in the complex.

Fourteen efficiency units were converted into seven two-bedroom units. One of the townhouse units was converted into a computer lab, allowing seniors to stay in touch more easily with their family and friends. And there’s a lot more to come in the next two phases of modernization, covering 127 units. Whitehall Apartments will become the envy of other retirement communities.

Suffolk Manor Apartments are an award-winning historic property located in the Olney section of Philadelphia. The complex contains five six-story buildings which house both seniors and families.

PHA acquired Suffolk Manor from an affiliate of the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, then obtained historic designation for the development from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Park Service. In turn, PHA was able to obtain historic tax credits that contributed to the funding used to rehabilitate and remodel the site.

Suffolk Manor’s redevelopment includes: new plumbing and electrical systems; new heating and cooling systems; new kitchens; new enlarged automatic elevators; cable TV hookups; security monitoring and entrance systems. We installed new plumbing fixtures too, but some old fixtures remained due to their historic value.

Suffolk Manor is convenient for residents to catch a ride on the regional rail, the Broad Street subway or the bus. Stores and other services are within walking distance.
Cambridge Plaza

For years, residents of Cambridge Plaza were cut off from the rest of Philadelphia, and from the services and infrastructure provided to other city dwellers. Their neighborhood, filled with empty, distressed buildings, was anything but safe and comfortable.

The site between 10th and 12th Streets, Girard Avenue and Poplar Street was crowded and contained 372 apartments, largely concentrated in two antiquated high-rise buildings.

The new Cambridge Plaza relieves crowding and brightens the neighborhood.

It features just 124 homes, a reduction of two-thirds from the original site that was developed in 1957. A family-friendly atmosphere has been created because Cambridge Plaza has 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes to accommodate larger families. Several homes are designed for people with mobility, hearing and visual impairments.

A new tennis facility has opened nearby on Girard Avenue, making the development even more appealing.

Cambridge Plaza is safer, too, with new lighting, streets and sidewalks. Residents also benefit from the installation of new water, sewer, electrical, and other utility lines.

PHA will have invested about $34 million when redevelopment is complete. The breathtaking design of these homes makes this a community people are proud to live in.

“...The new homes at Cambridge Plaza demonstrate that the words gorgeous and affordable housing can be used in the same sentence.”
PHA still has some attractive high-rise complexes in its portfolio, and one of them is the Norman Blumberg Apartments in North Philadelphia. This site, which includes 15 low-rise buildings, has gone through three phases of modernization.

PHA has invested over $60 million dollars to give residents a more pleasant place to live. The kitchens, bathrooms, floors, walls and ceilings, and the common areas all underwent complete renovation. A new laundromat was built. Forty-six efficiency units in one of the towers occupied by seniors were converted to one-bedroom units.

Security at the Blumberg Apartments improved with construction of a new, secured entrance, and installation of a magnetic card system. Also, residents now control who enters their buildings by use of a paging system from the guardhouse. The new security measures have lowered crime at this site.

PHA's modernization of the complex is part of a larger plan to reverse the decline of neighborhoods in North Philadelphia.

Sometimes less is more. And that’s the case with Mount Olivet Village in West Philadelphia, where there will soon be fewer but more spacious apartments.

Mount Olivet Village was built in 1967 from collections at the neighboring Mount Olivet Tabernacle Baptist Church. Most of the apartments were efficiencies and became obsolete over the years.


PHA has reduced the available number of apartments to offer seniors more space where they live. One hundred twenty-two studio apartments have been converted into 61 one-bedroom units. Other apartments have been created or enlarged by taking advantage of unused storage space. The change increases the number of one-bedroom apartments to 151 to go along with 10 two-bedroom units.

Mount Olivet will also receive new hot water heaters and new roofs. The development already features a day care facility, a community center, a senior center, and office management space.

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Greater Grays Ferry Estates, located just off the Schuylkill Expressway in South Philadelphia, will be completely rebuilt by 2006. It is PHA’s most ambitious development, setting the standard for innovative, mixed financing.

The development dates back to 1940, making it one of the oldest PHA properties. The 40 acre site at 30th and Tasker Streets in the city’s Grays Ferry neighborhood was in very poor condition. It just made sense to knock it down and build anew.

The new development will provide residents with a much better quality of life. It features a 13,500 square foot workforce development center, a senior center, and a mix of rental and homeownership units.

We’re rebuilding the neighborhood, too, fixing environmental, utility, and drainage problems, and reconnecting the development’s streets to the surrounding neighborhood. Greater Grays Ferry Estates will be one of the shining stars of the PHA portfolio, comprising 554 homes.

“This development is not some isolated island... The houses blend in with and lift up the entire community.”

Grays Ferry

South Philadelphia
554 units
Handicap accessible units
13,500 sq. foot workforce
development center
Crime at Wilson Park dropped dramatically after the first two phases of major renovations took place. Wilson Park proves that when families have pride in their homes, neighborhoods become safer.

New bathrooms and kitchens were installed in 295 family low-rise units at the site during Phase II. Asbestos and lead paint were removed. New plumbing, electrical, and heating systems were installed along with new roofing.

The remaining 153-townhouses at the site were renovated during the third phase of modernization. Renovations included new kitchens and baths, central air conditioning and heating, more off-street parking, decorative security lighting, landscaping improvements and ornamental site fencing.

The money for this latest phase of redevelopment was part of a large, innovative financial package, linked to the rebuilding of Greater Grays Ferry Estates. Wilson Park also offers its residents a convenient location near jobs in Center City and at the new stadium complex in South Philadelphia.

The Abbottsford Homes are located within walking distance of the Wissahickon and East Falls section of Philadelphia. The site has some dramatic views of the surrounding streetscapes. This historic location (the former site of the Dobson Mansion) features easy access to mass transit to both Center City and the suburbs.

Abbottsford had a new look and feel when residents started returning to their homes late in 2000. PHA had expanded 136 units into three bedroom homes. The facades of many of the homes received a facelift and the landscaping was improved.

Abbottsford also features a spacious community center, and a health center.
Residents of East Falls have already benefited from the redevelopment of PHA’s Falls Ridge development, formerly known as Schuylkill Falls. Property values in East Falls soared when the towers that once occupied the site came down. The new homes will enhance the neighborhood further. They are going up on a hill overlooking Fairmount Park and the Schuylkill River.

The development will serve a mixed income community with nearly 285 units comprised of townhouses and apartment buildings. Each townhouse will have a front and rear yard and a porch. Some of the homes will be rentals. Others will be privately owned, with many selling at market rates.

Falls Ridge will also feature over 17 thousand square feet of new retail space, providing much needed services to the entire neighborhood.

“Falls Ridge brings a new vibrancy to the Ridge Avenue corridor and the entire East Falls community.”
To truly appreciate PHA’s New Look, it helps to review the old look. Not very many years ago, PHA “projects” suffered from cramped living space, high crime, low maintenance, and worst of all, low expectations. As you can see, PHA represented the housing of last resort.

Through a series of implosions, PHA took down the worst buildings in its inventory. The agency built new low-rise developments from the ground up. In other locations, homes were completely renovated. The era of the “projects” is long gone in Philadelphia.
The new Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Plaza will have the most dramatic effect of any PHA development because of its location.

MLK, built on the edge of Center City in 1960, was symbolic of many public housing sites with four high-rise towers that warehoused residents. PHA imploded the site in October 1999.

The new MLK, a $74 million investment, represents the future of public housing in America. When completed, it will feature two and three-story townhouses, duplexes, and two small apartment buildings. MLK is privately managed and offers both rentals and homeownership options. In fact, almost half of the new homes will be for sale. PHA is also building new homes at scattered locations near the new development to help revive neglected blocks and give private companies an incentive to do the same.

With homes for sale and rent, MLK will have residents of varying income levels, creating a diverse community. MLK Plaza is close to the Avenue of the Arts, major hotels, Center City jobs, and public transportation. This development, in a spectacular residential neighborhood featuring Victorian architecture, provides a great connection between Center City and the lively South Street area.
Residents of Fairhill in North Philadelphia are in an excellent location. They’re close to Temple University and Center City. Residents can easily travel to suburban Philadelphia either by car or public transportation.

Fairhill, completed in June of 2000, has 264 units located in two 18-story towers and seven townhouse buildings. Part of the modernization was the conversion of 30 units into 3-bedroom apartments. When potential residents inspect the site, they will find new balcony enclosures. Major exterior building renovations are complete. There are new windows, kitchens, bathrooms, and related upgrades. Each tower has six laundry rooms. The development’s security system and lighting have been updated. For the kids, new playground equipment has been installed on the renovated landscape.

The modernization of The Fairhill Apartments symbolizes the resurgence of North Philadelphia as a good place to live, work and raise a family.

There is not one development that characterizes the new wave of public housing in Philadelphia better than Courtyard Apartments at Riverview, the former Southwark Plaza. When two of the Southwark Towers were imploded in January of 2000, a new day arrived for PHA, so much so that we changed the site’s name.

Courtyard Apartments at Riverview is home for 305 families who live in new townhouses, while the remaining 165-unit tower was modernized for senior citizens. Parents have access to a day care center at the site as well.

The development is conveniently located south of Queen Village, and adjacent to the Italian Market area. It is also within walking distance of Penn’s Landing and a short bus ride away from Center City.

The Courtyard Apartments at Riverview are privately managed, and with its financing, planning, and tenant mix has become a national template for public housing.

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The modernization of The Fairhill Apartments symbolizes the resurgence of North Philadelphia as a good place to live, work and raise a family.
Lucien E. Blackwell Homes in West Philadelphia is a nationally known historic site and one of the PHA’s largest properties, covering 17 square blocks. Three high-rise towers that dominated the development came tumbling down during an implosion in November 2002. Other low-rise buildings adjacent to the towers were also demolished to make way for a family-friendly neighborhood. Groundbreaking for the new $127 million development took place in August 2003. The site, formerly called Mill Creek, was renamed Lucien E. Blackwell Homes in honor of the late Congressman who represented the area.

The new development replaces a project that had problems dating back to its construction in the 1950’s. The foundations of many of the buildings were built over an underground stream. Over time, many of the units were severely damaged. Lucien E. Blackwell Homes will feature a mix of row homes, twins, duplexes, multi-story homes with various floor plans and sizes. About 250 of the new homes will be for sale while over 370 homes will be rentals, and all homes have all the amenities — from central air to fully-equipped kitchens.

The new development will have easy access to retailers, support services, employers, schools and churches. It will emphasize the area’s natural beauty with plenty of park space.

PHA expects to have all the new homes and facilities completed by December 2006. Lucien E. Blackwell Homes will fit in with other redevelopment efforts in adjacent neighborhoods and encourage private developers to reinvest in West Philadelphia.

This development will spread far beyond the original Mill Creek site. We’re building houses on blocks in all directions.

West Philadelphia 627 units
To be completed by December 2006
PHA is making a huge investment in North Philadelphia where some of the city’s oldest houses exist. In some instances, those old homes fell to the wrecking ball, the victims of a changing economy, abandonment, neglect and vandalism. North Philadelphia was left with many empty lots available for redevelopment. PHA seized the opportunity as part of its effort to revitalize neighborhoods throughout the city.

We built townhouse and duplex units, filling in those empty lots, a total of 117 new homes on seven different blocks in North Philadelphia. Over half of those homes are fully handicap accessible units. The new homes went up on Diamond Street, College Avenue, Marshall Street, 6th Street and 13th Street, and serve as a model for other developers.

These new homes are near Center City, services and mass transit. They feature off street parking, central heating and air conditioning, washer/dryer hookups, wall to wall carpeting, waste disposals and lots of closet space.

North Philadelphia is coming back, slowly but surely, and PHA is a major player in that revival.