



Laura Snyder's Remarkable Five- Year Journey at Rockford Housing Authority

In the world of affordable housing, where change is often slow and challenges are abundant, Laura Snyder stands as a beacon of transformation and progress. As the CEO of the Rockford Housing Authority for the past five years, her tenure has been marked by a string of notable accomplishments that have significantly improved the lives of residents and the community as a whole.

Financial Achievements

One of the cornerstones of Laura Snyder's leadership has been her remarkable ability to secure funding for critical programs and initiatives. Under her guidance, the Rockford Housing Authority secured a Jobs Plus award of a staggering \$2.3 million, creating two internal employment positions and six resident positions, thus stimulating economic growth within the community.

Furthermore, Laura successfully obtained annual awards of \$219,000 for three years and \$144,000 for two years for the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, providing vital resources to empower families towards self-sufficiency.

The commitment to residents' well-being is evident in the \$731,000 award for the Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) program, emphasizing self-reliance and development.

Laura's dedication to safety is also evident in the \$240,000 award for Radon remediation, ensuring the health of residents.

However, perhaps the most outstanding financial achievement during her tenure was securing a massive \$5 million award for Lead-Based Paint remediation, addressing a significant health hazard. Additionally, a \$5 million award for addressing Housing related Hazards underscores her unwavering commitment to improving living conditions for the community.

Laura Snyder's leadership also facilitated homeownership through the Low-Income Public Housing (LIPH) program, enabling residents to achieve the dream of owning their homes.

Not content with these accomplishments, she created a Section III compliance and education program that not only ensured compliance but also generated revenue, garnering accolades as an award-winning program.

Securing utility company funding totaling \$1,036,782.00 for upgrades in Blackhawk and Scattered Sites demonstrates her ability to bring resources to where they are needed most. Perhaps one of the most critical financial achievements was achieving full compliance with HUD reporting requirements, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Laura's financial acumen also shone through in building reserves to more than double the previous balance, providing a safety net for future endeavors. Her commitment to financial integrity is further underscored by maintaining clean financial audits for the past five years, a testament to her dedication to sound fiscal management.

Multiple \$5,000 grants from Associated Bank for Resident Programming, a \$15,000 grant from BMO for Resident Home Ownership, and a \$5,000 grant from the Community Foundation are just a few of the ways Laura Snyder has tirelessly sought financial support to uplift the community.

Redevelopment

Laura Snyder's visionary leadership extended to redevelopment efforts as well. She successfully recaptured Scattered Sites, ensuring greater control over housing resources. Securing a section 18 award for Brewington Oaks and presenting the board with five redevelopment strategies resulted in the creation of two employment positions and breathed new life into the community.

The section 18 award for Fairgrounds paved the way for its redevelopment, further expanding affordable housing options for the residents.

Her commitment to increasing affordable housing units in the community was evident in the development plan for Bridge Rockford, a testament to her unwavering dedication to community betterment.

Operations

Effective operations are the backbone of any organization, and under Laura Snyder's leadership, the Rockford Housing Authority has excelled. She created and implemented a robust COVID-19

response, including a dedicated website page and an employee salary protection plan, safeguarding the well-being of both staff and residents.

Her ability to manage the agency effectively during a government shutdown demonstrated her adaptability and resilience in the face of challenges.

Attaining Moving to Work (MTW) status was a significant milestone, leading to the creation of three internal employment positions and offering residents increased opportunities for self-improvement.

Relocation can be a challenging endeavor, but Laura achieved successful relocations for both Brewington Oaks and Fairgrounds residents, ensuring their comfort and safety throughout the process.

Laura prioritized ongoing training for all staff levels, emphasizing the importance of continuous improvement. Advanced training for key staff members enhanced the overall competence of the organization.

The introduction of an automated payroll platform promoted efficiency and a self-service portal for employees, streamlining administrative processes.

Human Services

Laura's commitment to the well-being of residents extended beyond housing. She established over 52 partnerships with community agencies to provide wrap-around services, ensuring that residents had access to the support they needed.

Leading the agency to become certified instructors for Bridges out of Poverty and certified LIHEAP case workers to assist the City of Rockford and residents added valuable revenue sources while addressing critical community needs.

Establishing an Empowerment Center at Blackhawk and COCC created hubs of support and empowerment within the community. Her dedication to fostering homeownership through the Low-Income Public Housing (LIPH) program provided families with a pathway to secure housing stability.

Two award-winning programs, the Youth & Police officer program and Resident Relations, showcased her innovative approach to community-building and positive engagement. The creation of the Women of Influence annual event celebrated the achievements and contributions of women in the community, inspiring future leaders.

Laura's commitment to digital empowerment was evident in the continuation of the ConnectHome program, securing additional grants to provide devices to participants. Additionally, the launch of the Life Force Development Institute, including the creation of the "Launch My Future" website, opened up new opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Leadership and Board Participation

Active leadership extends beyond the organization, and Laura Snyder was deeply engaged in the community. Serving on three PHADA boards, she stayed updated on regulatory changes, ensured compliance, and guided affordable housing direction.

Implementing an automated payroll and human resources platform for increased efficiency was a testament to her forward-thinking leadership.

Currently serving on five local boards and workgroups, including Community Action, Violence Reduction, Peace and Non-Violence, and the Early Learning Council, demonstrated her commitment to addressing broader community issues. Developing department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) provided clear guidance and expectations for all staff, ensuring a streamlined and accountable organization.

Laura's foresight in creating succession plans for key staff members ensured continuity and stability within the organization.

The creation of an employee recognition program, "Directors Spotlight," and an all-staff City-Wide Scavenger Hunt / Amazing Race fostered a positive and motivated work environment.

Community Engagement and Advocacy

Laura's leadership extended to advocacy and community engagement. She fostered positive relationships with elected officials through independent meetings with council members to gain support for redevelopment projects, including Brewington, Fairgrounds relocation, and Bridge redevelopment plans, showing her dedication to bringing positive change to the community.

Her rebranding strategy successfully removed the negative connotation of Public Housing, promoting the successes of the agency, staff, and residents, ultimately changing public perception and enhancing the community's image.

Laura Snyder's remarkable achievements during her tenure as CEO of the Rockford Housing Authority have transformed the lives of residents and the community as a whole. Her unwavering commitment to financial stability, redevelopment, effective operations, human services, leadership, and community engagement has left an indelible mark on Rockford, Illinois. As she continues to lead, the future holds even more promise for the residents and the community she has tirelessly served.