

**CITY OF DES MOINES  
MUNICIPAL HOUSING AGENCY**

**MARKETING PLAN**

January 2000  
Revised January 2002  
Revised December, 2007

**BACKGROUND**

Currently the Des Moines Municipal Housing Agency (DMMHA) utilizes a variety of media as described in the Equal Housing Opportunity Plan, to advertise the opening and closing of the waiting lists, and for marketing to solicit eligible low income to moderate income families for both the Section 8 and Public Housing Programs.

Outreach to property owners for the Section 8 Program is done through Owner's Briefing meetings held on a quarterly basis. Program information is available and provided on an on-going basis to the Iowa Landlord Association and through an Owner's Packet available at the Des Moines Municipal Housing Agency (DMMHA) for those who request it.

In particular, the Agency has followed the following guidelines in their efforts to market the programs and provide Equal Housing Opportunities:

1. Media Currently Utilized:

DMMHA has waiting lists of eligible applicants for its Section 8 and Public Housing Programs and is therefore not required to publish the availability of new allocations of programs. If the DMMHA waiting list for any particular program falls below "safe" levels (all applicants could be assisted in a one-year period), the Agency will place advertisements in newspapers, including The Des Moines Register, The Communicator, local shoppers, suburban area shoppers, and Employee and Family Resources radio station 99.1 KFMG. The Agency will follow the procedures set out in the Section 8 Administrative Plan to notify eligible families of the availability of the units and will assign preferences as established and described in the Section 8 Administrative Plan and the Public Housing Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan.

2. Other Suitable Means Used to Publicize Programs:

Brochures are available to describe DMMHA programs and copies of such brochures will be sent to community centers which primarily serve low-income neighborhoods. Agency staff participates in the Task Force for Family Self-Sufficiency, the Community Housing Resource Board and the Human Services "Networking" group, all of which provide access to low-income people through service providers. The Agency maintains a list of organizations

serving the handicapped and will annually send them program information to better reach potential applicants who are handicapped.

3. Special Outreach:

DMMHA will provide Spanish language brochures to organizations serving the Hispanic community. At least annually the Agency will contact the following to inform them of the availability of our programs:

- a. Spanish Speaking Peoples Commission
- b. Bureau of Refugee Programs
- c. Mexican-American Community Center
- d. Philippine American Association of Iowa
- e. Hispanic Ministries

The DMMHA works closely with local language interpretation service providers to ensure program access and understanding by persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

The DMMHA has also implemented the Language Line Interpretation service to aid in communications with persons with Limited English Proficiency.

The DMMHA will assess the proportion or number of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program and provide, to the extent reasonably possible, access to relevant program materials in other languages as determined necessary by the assessment. Additional procedures for outreach activities for LEP persons are included in the DMMHA LEP Plan.

4. Special Outreach to Persons Expected to Reside, If Identified in Approved HAP:

Refer to 1. and 2. above. Existing waiting lists, close cooperation with Polk County Social Services, and word of mouth based on the general knowledge of DMMHA programs throughout the community provides for publicizing of program availability to those expected to reside. In addition, the Agency participates in Iowa and National NAHRO, thus other housing agencies serving low-income refer prospective applicants to the Agency.

The following items are applicable to the Section 8 and Moderate Rehabilitation Programs:

1. Possible Sources of Media to be Utilized to Notify Owners of the Program:

- a. Des Moines Register (Newspaper)
- b. The Communicator (Newspaper)
- c. Area Shoppers, Including Suburban Area Shoppers (Newspapers)
- d. Employee and Family Resources Radio Station – 99.1 KFMG
- e. GoSection8.com website

2. Encouragement of Participation by Owners of Units Outside Low-Income and Minority Areas:

- a. Briefings for owners are conducted by DMMHA staff at a location to be determined by DMMHA.
- b. The size and history of DMMHA programs provide for incoming calls and correspondence from interested property owners and/or agents. Program information is available and provided on an on-going basis to the Iowa Landlord Association.

Additionally, community contact sources such as the Real Estate Board, City of Des Moines Website, GoSection 8.com website and community action groups will be utilized and the Agency will continue to pursue increased participation of the suburbs.

3. Actions to Explain Program Requirements Including Equal Opportunity to Owners

For a project other than Section 8, a public notice is placed in the news media described in this objective. The notice will explain the program, with particular emphasis on benefits and requirements of the program. This Notice is developed in accordance with HUD guidelines for Fair Housing and includes the Equal Opportunity Logo. Outreach for the Section 8 Programs is accomplished continually. This is done on an individual basis by telephone and written material in the form of Owner's Information Packets. When requested, the Agency will make group presentations. The Agency is a member of the Iowa Landlords Association.

4. All families selected for participation in the Agency's assisted housing programs will receive information concerning State and Federal Fair Housing Laws. "Fair Housing, It's Your Right", and Form HUD-903 are distributed to participating families at briefing sessions. State and Federal Fair Housing Laws, and the procedures for filing a Housing Discrimination Complaint, will be explained to all families during a Program Briefing Session. In addition, posters describing housing rights are prominently displayed in DMMHA offices, and staff refers aggrieved parties to the Des Moines Human Rights Commission or the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

5. Information on General Locations and Characteristics of Neighborhoods and Lists, to be Provided to Certificate and/or Voucher Holders

The Agency's area of operations is community wide, incorporates most adjoining suburbs and unincorporated Polk County. In-depth tenant briefing sessions will serve to provide specific responses to inquiry and questions. A bulletin board in the agency lists properties known to be available for rent. A map of the community is prominently displayed in the Section 8 office, and a list of participating property owner's and units is updated weekly. Applicants are encouraged to use local newspapers and shoppers to locate suitable units.

6. Actions Taken to Assist Certificate and/or Voucher Holders During Housing Search, When Requested

Case Managers will assist those having difficulty finding units, but required assistance beyond the capacity of the Agency will be arranged by referral to appropriate community agencies.

## **OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR FUTURE MARKETING OF PROGRAMS**

### **Objective 1**

Build awareness of Des Moines Municipal Housing Agency and the services it provides.

The indication from service agencies and the public in general is that they do not know what the DMMHA is and the services provided. There is some understanding that the Agency provides rental assistance but the misconceptions come in to play regarding the length of the waiting lists, screening processes, and the availability of emergency housing.

### **Strategy 1**

#### Short Term

1. Develop a brochure or flyers that describe each program in detail.
2. Conduct on-site presentations to social service agencies and other agencies upon request.
3. Include information regarding the programs offered through Housing Services via the City of Des Moines Service Guide. The guide contains useful information regarding all City Departments and the services they provide. The Service Guide is available to all new residents of the City of Des Moines through the Action Center and the DMMHA offices.
4. Active participation in the Polk County Housing Continuum

#### Long Term

1. Organize a “What is Housing Services” fair (like a job fair), inviting all Service Agencies and the public. Set up information booths for Section 8, Moderate Rehabilitation, Public Housing, Family Self-Sufficiency, Home Ownership Program. Staff to be at the booths to provide information and answer questions. Applications for all programs will be able to be picked up at each booth, if applicable.
2. Develop a Quarterly Newsletter detailing Housing Services Programs, rules, regulations, application processes, contact persons, and changes in regulations for direct mail to all service agencies. The Newsletter can be used to provide updated information.

### **Objective 2**

Obtain 100% lease-up for both Public Housing and Section 8 Programs

DMMHA has developed the following strategies to reach full lease-up and maintain it on an on-going basis.

## **Strategy 2**

### **Public Housing Strategy:**

1. Maintenance focus on the rehabilitation of vacated units.
2. Continued use of the Site-Based Waiting list to allow applicants to choose which Manor they would like to live in.
3. Send out offer letters to three applicants for one unit. First applicant to contact DMMHA has the first opportunity to lease the unit.

### **Section 8 Strategy**

1. Increase Voucher Issuance each month.
2. Hold Briefing Sessions on a bi-weekly basis until full-lease-up is obtained.
3. Call Voucher holders who have not found a unit and assist them in locating suitable housing by providing lists of interested property owners.
4. Call Voucher holders who have not found a unit due to a disability or handicap and assisting them by referring them to a social service agency that is able to help them locate suitable housing.
5. Once full lease-up is achieved, continue to issue vouchers at a rate of 2-1 for those leaving the program on a monthly basis.
6. Refer Voucher holders to the GoSection8.com website for use of the QuickMatch Rental Locator system free of charge.

## **Objective 3**

Increase number of property owners participating in the Section 8 Program

Currently participants of the Section 8 Program are finding it difficult to locate a unit throughout Polk County. This problem is two-fold:

1. Participants occasionally experience difficulty in locating a unit due to the regulatory requirement that they cannot pay over 40% of their income for rent.

2. Property owners throughout Polk County either have very little knowledge of the Section 8 Programs and how they work, or have been unfortunate in their dealings with Section 8 participants, thus leaving a bad image of the Section 8 Program.

### **Strategy 3**

#### Short Term

1. Develop a “What is Section 8 Housing” brochure detailing the benefits of renting to Section 8 participants:
  - a) Guaranteed rent payment from DMMHA
  - b) Criminal history and past participation check done by DMMHA
  - c) DMMHA Inspectors outlining tenant caused damages at least once annually. Emphasize to owners that tenants are more likely to make repairs to keep housing benefits.
2. Obtain a comprehensive mailing list of rental property owners from:
  - a) Iowa Landlord Association.
  - b) City Housing Code Enforcement database
  - c) Iowa Real Estate Association
3. Continue to hold quarterly Owner’s Briefing Meetings.
4. Contact property owner’s who have participated in Section 8 in the past. Inform them of the changes in the program and the benefits of participating. Ask for reasons why they are no longer participating and correct any issues they may have had, if possible.
5. Contact landlord groups/associations in the surrounding suburbs and encourage their participation by informing them of the benefits of participating in the Section 8 Program.
6. Encourage Property owners to use the GoSection8.com free website to list vacant units.

#### Long Term

1. Contact area landlord groups/associations that are not currently Section 8 landlords and conduct enthusiastic presentations for these groups. Concentrate on positive changes that are occurring that impact the Section 8 landlord.
2. Advertising
  - a) Flyers and brochures
  - b) Des Moines Register (Newspaper)
  - c) City View Newspaper
  - d) Website – add a Link on the City of Des Moines website that directs property owners to GoSection8.com
  - e) The Communicator Newspaper
  - f) Local “shopper” newspapers

3. Survey participating property owners to find if they have an interest in forming a “Focus” group to meet with DMMHA staff to discuss concerns they may have and any ideas they may have to improve the processes with regard to the Section 8 Program. If there is interest from the owners, this group would meet on a quarterly basis.
4. Develop a Section 8 Owner Newsletter to be included in the HAP checks on a quarterly basis. The Newsletter will feature an explanation of a different section of the HAP contract each quarter.

#### **Objective 4**

Focus on How to Improve the Image of the DMMHA

#### **Strategy 4**

##### Short Term

1. Develop brochure “Did You Know The Housing Agency Does....” highlighting all of the positive things the Agency participates in.
2. Use the City of Des Moines Public Relations Tools
  - a) Frontline News Articles on a monthly basis
  - b) Update on a monthly basis
  - c) Add a link on the City of Des Moines website that directs property owners and potential tenants to GoSection8.com
3. Send an “Owner Survey” to participating property owners asking their input on DMMHA’s administration of the Section 8 Program.
4. Advertise and promote program availability and activities through Public Service Announcements through Employee and Family Resources radio station 99.1 KFMG.

##### Long Term

1. Use the City of Des Moines Public Relations Tools
  - a) Website - more detailed - possible pre-application on-line
  - b) Cable Chanel 7 - include more detailed information in television “spots”
2. Organize a “Rental Housing Fair” for Section 8 and Public Housing.

#### **Objective 5**

Make the application process more “user friendly” when we begin to accept applications again.

## **Strategy 5**

### Short Term

1. Reduce the number of forms in the application packet.
2. Make Public Housing application packets available at various locations throughout the City of Des Moines (when the waiting list is open).
3. Section 8 Application Selection conversion from Date and Time selection to Lottery or Random drawing.

### Long Term

1. Develop a brochure describing the Section 8 and Public Housing programs that includes a “mini” pre-application form for interested persons to fill out and turn into the Agency.
2. Investigate the ability to include a “mini” pre-application on the City of Des Moines’ website.

## **Objective 6**

Improve community awareness of “Special Programs” offered by DMMHA

## **Strategy 6**

### Short Term

1. Mail Family Self-Sufficiency brochures to current participants of all programs, Service Agencies, employers, schools, and apartment complexes for posting on bulletin boards.
2. Include information on Family Self-sufficiency in briefing packets for Section 8 and Leasing Packets for Public Housing.