

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

The National Public Housing Museum was incorporated in 2007 as a 501(c)3 non-profit cultural institution devoted to telling the story of public housing in America. The mission of the organization is to preserve, promote, and propel the right of all Americans to a place where they can live and prosper—a place to call home. The Museum interprets the last remaining building of the Jane Addams Homes, preserved for cultural use through the grassroots efforts of Chicago public housing residents. NPHM catalyzes audiences with creative exhibits and programming, bridging the arts and culture with transformative public policy, as a place for communal learning and sharing of a great diversity of stories from the history of public housing in America.

We are located on the Near West Side of Chicago, but serve a national audience through touring exhibitions, oral history programs, and other national programming. We are proud of the demographic diversity we have cultivated. While the Museum's mission is to engage the general public through exhibits and programming that promote transformative change, the main population that this project will serve is public housing residents. We will draw participants from the entire spectrum of Chicago's public housing population which currently numbers over 138,000 individuals. African Americans comprise 83 percent of the total Chicago public housing residents. Hispanic (9 percent), White (5 percent), Asian (2 percent) and Other/Unknown (1 percent) comprise the rest.

Over 150,000 people have attended NPHM exhibits including *History Coming Home* (Chicago Tourism Center Gallery, Oct '10–May '11); *The Sound, The Soul, The Syncopation: Experience the Music of Public Housing* (Merchandise Mart and the Chicago Cultural Center Expo 72, Nov '12–Mar '13); touring exhibit at the Ford Foundation (NYC) during the *Reimagining Public Housing: Beyond the Bricks and Mortar* symposium (Oct '13); Fresno Housing Authority in California (2013), and National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials Conference in Baltimore (2014). *Women's Rights are Human Rights* (NPHM Office Gallery at Archeworks) opened in 2017, and as a program partner of the Chicago Architecture Biennial (CAB), the Museum welcomed over 2,500 visitors over 9 weekends to view exhibits in the Museum's future permanent home. The current CAB exhibit, *Housing as Human Right* (NPHM Gallery at Archeworks, Oct. '17- January '18), serves as a laboratory for future exhibits. Exhibitions and public programs in the last year engaged 15,000 people. Feasibility studies anticipate 40,000-60,000 visitors yearly when the Museum opens in our permanent home.

NPHM's strategic plan points to the importance of oral history for the archive, but also as a methodology for generating exhibitions content that are the core of the restored apartment exhibits, and utilized in virtually all of our public programs. NPHM staff has successfully trained graduate student interns and public housing residents to conduct oral histories in our summer programs. We have a strong foundation of working with the oral history community local and nationally with our Advisory Board, and our Director of Programs Shirley Alfaro, is a respected expert in the field. Residents work as office and program coordinators and are being trained as Museum Educators, and we are confident in our ability to expand this practice of hiring residents as oral historians.

NPHM's Executive Director has an international profile as an arts and cultural leader and in museum leadership. She has assembled a core team of above staff, including Associate Director, Robert Smith III, a leader in museum education and public programming. With an operating budget of \$611,304 (FY16), the NPHM currently operates administrative offices at 625 N. Kingsbury St, and the staff maintains a collection of artifacts contributed by former and current public housing residents.

STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

The National Public Housing Museum's 7-year strategic plan emerged from a series of planning workshops funded by the Pierce Foundation and the NEH-funded "Our Stories" plenaries held during the Museum's planning phase in 2011–2012. These retreats and town hall conversations enabled board members, staff, advisors, and community stakeholders to interrogate the mission, vision and values, and articulate exhibition and program priorities and aspirations. The plan was approved by the Board of Directors in 2013.

The strategic plan points to the importance of oral history as a methodology that marginalized communities like public housing residents have embraced as an accessible and fundamental form of historical documentation. The plan also articulates the necessary priorities for employing oral history as a model and a method for both documenting public memory as well as generating stories for use in exhibitions and programs at the Museum. During the Museum's planning phase conversations, we explored the challenges and opportunities that come with first-person narratives, and envisioned an in-depth discussion that encouraged dialogue from multiple perspectives including current and former public housing residents, community leaders, activists, neighbors of public housing, policy makers, urban planners, and architects.

The first priority in the Plan was to conduct deep oral history work with three families—one Jewish, one Italian, and one African American—whose residence at the Jane Addams Homes spanned nearly 40 years. These oral histories became the core of the restored apartment exhibits and also informed which major public policies we would interpret through the telling of the lived experiences of these longtime residents of the Jane Addams Homes. NPHM staff worked in conjunction with graduate student interns to conduct the oral histories and to do the research and development necessary to create the initial framework for the exhibitions in the apartment.

The Strategic Plan outlines, as part of the collections policy, a commitment to working with residents to identify personal belongings and ordinary objects as tangible catalysts for additional oral history work and storytelling, by which museum educators and exhibit labels might prompt critical inquiry into the history and role of housing in society.

Additional priority was given to development of a youth program that would provide para-professional training and pre-college experiences to young people who have grown up or are living in public housing. To that end, in 2013 the Museum partnered with StoryCorps and the University of Chicago to provide oral history and documentary training to the Youth Advisory Council. Out of that program, 13 youth facilitated a two-day pilot oral history-based program that reached dozens of senior residents and also led to videotaped oral history discussions which built upon their training modules of engaging peers, parents, and leaders of the seven distinct public housing communities. More recently, in 2017, the Museum held an Oral History Summer School that offered an intergenerational group in-depth oral history training and media skills.

Oral History Fellows Program at the National Public Housing Museum (NPHM)

The final part of the plan stresses the importance of investing in professional staff to manage and maintain the oral history program, including the oversight of ongoing efforts to gather oral histories in a way that engages scholars, residents, and other participants.

A primary commitment articulated at the core of the Museum's mission and throughout the plan is the value of shared authority with public housing residents in the most essential ways. This includes the fundamental work of exhibition and program development, exhibition interpretation, and in workforce development.

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum

Narrative

The National Public Housing Museum (NPHM) requests \$150,000 to support the Entrepreneurship Hub (the Hub), an innovative creative placemaking initiative that seeks to invest in the existing assets of Chicago's public housing communities to help generate ongoing civic dialogue, transform public perceptions about public housing, and stimulate equitable economic development.

The Hub is made up of four parts:

1. Social Justice Business School, a curriculum of classes on economic development, economic democracy, cooperative enterprise, small business ecosystems, racialization of space, and neighborhood change.
2. Open Hours, drop-in pro-bono business services for public housing residents provided by Chicago designers, architects, and small business owners with expertise in user experience design, web development, graphic design, marketing, finance, HR, among others.
3. The Museum Store, a groundbreaking public housing resident-owned cooperative business.
4. Storytelling workshops to empower residents to tell their share their own stories about entrepreneurship as well as train residents to become oral historians themselves.

The goals of the Entrepreneurship Hub are to:

1. Educate the next generation of entrepreneurs within Chicago's public housing communities.
2. Leverage the power of Chicago's creative class to support equitable economic development in communities left behind by a history of segregation.
3. Innovate new models of museum-community collaboration, strengthening the relationship between NPHM and its constituents.
4. Transform the public perception of public housing by empowering its inhabitants to tell their own stories, while engaging in workforce development and job creation for marginalized communities.

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum will be located at the future home of the Museum at 1322 West Taylor Street, the last remaining building of the historic Jane Addams Homes public housing development, opening in September 2019. The project is inspired by the resilience of Chicago's public housing residents who have worked in informal economies as artists, hair stylists, food purveyors, fashion designers, social entrepreneurs, and so on, for decades. The Entrepreneurship Hub focuses on Chicago's homegrown talent and invests in the innovative potential of public

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum

housing residents by providing support, resources, and collective imagining as they move their businesses from the kitchen table to the storefront and beyond. The Museum will use its cultural capital as well as its existing relationship with Chicago Housing Authority to nurture and grow the social and economic capital of low and very low-income people by providing gathering space to share knowledge, giving opportunities to build business skills through workshops, and offering creative, cultural, design, and architectural services to public housing residents in a dedicated effort to help realize their fresh, dynamic ideas. The Hub will be, as one resident put it, “a hand up, not a handout.” Rather than focusing on individualism or self-reliance, the Entrepreneurship Hub at the NPHM emphasizes community, interdependence, and the common good in order to advance sustainability and strengthen the city’s economic, social, and cultural fabric.

The work at the Entrepreneurship Hub takes cues from public housing residents, often black women, have pioneered fleeting small business and co-ops with mixed success, but there has never been a sustained effort in our particular community. While there are other business incubators throughout Chicago serving a variety of constituencies, we’re focusing on public housing residents within one-half mile radius of the Museum and its advantageous proximity to UIC.

The Hub leverages one of our community’s greatest resources: the history of how innovative entrepreneurship has been used as a strategy of surviving and thriving for public housing residents, low-income people, and communities of color. The Hub addresses the systemic and structural causes for the disappearance of innovative cooperatives and other forms of entrepreneurship, including unchecked capitalism, racism, and sexism; limited support from public housing management; limited access to capital and space; a transient resident population with limited business skills; changes in demographics and consumer tastes; well-resourced competitors; and a lack of historical memory about the struggles and strategies of previous generations. The Hub addresses these challenges through oral history, storytelling, and design thinking to reignite and support a legacy of creativity and self-sufficiency.

The Hub at NPHM builds off of decades of creative placemaking projects from around the U.S. In creative placemaking, “partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities” (Markusen, 2010). Rather than an artist-centered projects (for example, those of Theaster Gates, Mark Bradford, or Rick Lowe), the Hub centers members of Chicago’s public housing communities to drive the design of the Hub and its component parts. While placemaking

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum

activities have often done work in marginalized communities, NPHM's efforts constitute the first sustained project by a museum to align itself with the economic development goals of public housing communities in the United States.

The program design of the Entrepreneurship Hub attempts to advance theory and practice in the museum field by leveraging the cultural capital of the National Public Housing Museum to bolster the economic capital of very low income people, including public housing residents. The Hub does not reinvent the wheel. Rather, it seeks to connect pre-existing spokes of resources, knowledge, and community formations that already exist in communities of color and low-income communities. Process matters, thus Museum staff share authority with public housing residents via the Central Advisory Council, the elected tenant representatives of the broader community.

The selection of public housing entrepreneurship as an opportunity for economic development emerged from multiple directions. The CAC, as evidenced by its own entrepreneur training efforts which preceded NPHM's, insisted on the importance of self-sufficiency in a changing landscape in which government is decreasingly interested in traditional public housing. Museum staff likewise saw themes of self-sufficiency and economic resilience emerge from the oral histories we collected. Design thinking workshops and stakeholder meetings refined what became a multidisciplinary approach. The Hub expands the scope/scale with a dedicated arts/culture intervention led by architects, designers, oral historians, storytellers. We have the opportunity to shape redevelopment set to reshape our community with a permanent presence when the Museum opens.

Through our efforts we hope to unify the community through positive perceptions of public housing residents; build a dynamic co-op that improves the quality of life of all residents; and facilitate the improvement of community-university relations through community engaged scholarship.

The development of the Entrepreneurship Hub aligns with a number of public, private, governmental, and academic initiatives that are working to spur more equitable economic development in a famously segregated Chicago. The Central Advisory Council, the elected representation of public housing tenants hosts an Entrepreneurship Training Program offering some training and seed funding for entrepreneurs. The Hub builds off the momentum of the Central Advisory Council, which provided training and startup funds to 30+ small business run by PH residents over two years. The Hub will continue to incubate those businesses that have a social responsibility focus. In the government sector, the City of Chicago is actively redistributing some of the revenue

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum

generated by the explosion of real estate development in the downtown area of the city out to frequently overlooked communities, including those in and around public housing. The Cook County Commission on Social Innovation is undertaking an ambitious effort to integrate cooperative businesses into the mainstream of economic life in the nation's second largest county. An expanding network of small business incubators and cooperative businesses has created an ecosystem of community partners that paves the way for the Hub at NPHM. The Social Justice Initiative at the University of Chicago serves as our key academic partner in this endeavor and is co-creating the Social Justice Business School curriculum with Museum staff.

We are a multidisciplinary group skilled in oral history, storytelling, architecture, design, curating, media literacy, and arts administration. The Hub will empower residents with media literacy and skills through oral history and storytelling workshops to generate new histories of entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency, empowering residents to tell and record their own stories. Creating a new generation of oral historians/change agents within the community is critical for both a more inclusive historical record and the struggle for social justice. The Hub will also incorporate Design & Architecture during our Open Hours and in community charrettes to guide the design of the space, programming, and services. We will deploy the design thinking process to help residents solve complex market problems and use systemic reasoning to imagine the future of economic development in the community.

Responding to the needs and methods of stakeholders—designers, legal experts, artists, academics, university partners, and public housing residents—instead of hosting four formal planning workshops, we had no less than 10 informal meetings to research, develop and advance each facet of the Hub and also planned to large public forums.

We met with people from across this city associated with this work including people like Claudia Weems, the head of Section 3 Entrepreneurship at Chicago Housing Authority, and Cheryl Johnson, a resident leader of Altgeld, and Monica Chadha from Civic Projects, who leads a hybrid architecture practice in Chicago that takes a participatory approach to design, building teams and working collaboratively with communities and organizations to develop work that address community revitalization. Monica has helped to design the Sugar Beet food Co-op and is also working on the Contemporary Visual Arts Hub, both in Oak Park, and we have retained her as our partner as a result of this planning process. Sometimes our meetings included an invitation to individuals and communities to visit our current site to view the exhibition that explores the significant history of innovative entrepreneurship and alternative economies that are a rarely recognized facet of public housing. The exhibit includes artifacts, photography, and

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum

theater props from the show *The Project(s)* that help to ground how public housing residents have innovated forms of cooperative economies. Using art, artifacts, design, and cultural and material history to inspire and propel these conversations has proven to be one of the most effective ways of exciting people, and communicating the potential and importance of this work.

Toward building a critical mass of residents interested in the Hub, we also planned a public program series, in partnership with UIC, featuring one of the most exciting leaders working today in the cooperative enterprises, Kali Akuno, co-founder and co-director of Cooperation Jackson. Additionally, we hosted a public program in partnership with the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign where we publicized and received feedback about our upcoming plan for the Hub from a diverse group of housing activists, residents from Chicago and Charlottesville, Virginia, real estate developers, and other co-op leaders. The qualitative data collected from these meetings and public programs will continue to inform and guide the development of the Hub.

We will also continue our research and planning for our oral history archive and the gathering of histories of creative entrepreneurship. Although we have heard plenty of stories from the informal economy “candy ladies,” barber shops and beauty salons and other businesses that took place in public housing complexes, we needed a plan for both how to gather these oral histories, who to record and how these materials would be shared with the public. To that end, we are currently piloting a walking tour the Vamonde mobile phone app of the neighborhood surrounding the museum that focuses on historic businesses in the area. This is the beginning of imagining and implementing a broad platform for disseminating these stories of entrepreneurship that benefit and inspire community and transform perceptions.

Engaging with an independent evaluator, NPHM will share the work and findings of the Hub through an existing ecosystem of small business expos; local, national, and international gatherings of worker cooperatives; and through an annual symposium that highlights and investigates the intersection between arts and culture with strategies for equitable economic development in marginalized communities, public housing residents, immigrants, formerly incarcerated, and others often found on the margins of the formal economy.

At completion, there will be a robust and scalable infrastructure to support a new generation of small businesses and cooperatives owned by public housing residents in our community. Students of our Social Justice Business School will learn to analyze systems of oppression and discuss their community’s history of resistance and

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum

resilience. Skilled entrepreneurs, supported by mentors, business experts, and creative professionals through the SJBS and Open Hours, will launch new digital and brick-and-mortar business in the community. After the Museum's opening, public housing resident entrepreneurs will collectively own and operate a cooperative shop at the Museum's site in place of traditional museum retail. A significant permanent oral history archive will inspire the next generation of self-sufficient entrepreneurs and improve perceptions of residents of public housing.

As stated above, NPHM has developed deep relationships with select community partners—the Social Justice Initiative at the University of Illinois Chicago and the Central Advisory Council of the Chicago Housing Authority, and architects and designers of Archeworks and Civic Projects. Importantly, this project is accountable to and informed by the demands and desires of public housing residents; the Museum itself is the product of community organizing by the neighborhood's public housing residents, who now hold key roles as board, staff, advisors. University Village/Little Italy, including public housing residents, have been engaged in design thinking workshops for entrepreneurs; presentations at town hall meetings concerning development and replacement of demolished housing; conversations with stakeholders, including community organizations, elected officials, and the Board of Central Advisory Council, our project partner. Moving forward, neighboring small businesses will serve as mentors to entrepreneurs in residence at the Hub.

Since 2008, NPHM has worked with key leaders, organizations, stakeholders, and local advisory councils (LAC) at each housing site and the tenant-elected Central Advisory Council (CAC) to share authority in making critical decisions about the Museum. During ongoing meetings with LAC's Presidents, they identified the desire and need to become co-creators of the Oral History Archive and for the Museum to provide training and museum employment for individuals living in public housing. In March 2017, NPHM created an oral history advisory committee (residents, archivists, cultural workers, educators, NPHM staff) to inform the Museum on the process by which stories are collected, preserved, and shared. The group echoed the need to train and employ public housing residents as oral historians.

We understand the oral histories as the building blocks for our exhibition development, public programs, and as a powerful tool in building social movements and enhancing justice-based projects. While the field of oral history emerged from a recognition that more traditional forms of research and documentation have ignored the large demographics of people and histories, particularly those of people of color and people living in poverty, the interviewer has not reflected those with the lived experiences and

the subjects of the stories. Marginalized communities are all too often left out of the process of recording and editing these stories. While NPHM has worked to change who is able to share their story, there is the need to provide the spaces for who can facilitate the conversations. We are committed to including public housing residents in all aspects of this process.

Community members expressed the desire and need to see the stories used in more tangible ways. In 2017 NPHM demonstrated the power of these everyday experiences in shaping and influencing policy change in Chicago and Cook County, working in partnership with the PRC Directors, 25 students from the University of Chicago, and the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance. This pilot project brought together approximately 45 Housing Choice Voucher program participants, eight housing advocacy organizations, and local public housing authorities. Following a training conducted by NPHM staff, the students facilitated four story circles at a public event, digitally recorded narratives from residents impacted by current housing policies, and qualitatively analyzed transcripts to contribute to a published report, "Not Welcome: The Uneven Geographies of Housing Choice." This report has received positive recognition from residents, advocacy organizations, civic leaders, and government officials, and was featured in local media outlets including the Chicago Reader and WBEZ. Described by the Chicago Housing Authority as "a great example of the advocates, the data crunchers, and the policy makers all coming together to effectuate good policy change," the resident narratives have influenced a series of policy recommendations that impact the lived experiences of residents across the region. Since publication, these recommendations have been approved by local public housing authorities and submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for implementation. These narratives, together with a comprehensive quantitative analysis of the accessible rental stock in Chicago, supported several policies, including the implementation of a new policy increasing the value of a Housing Choice Voucher from 150% of the fair market rent to 250%, effective January 2018. At the storytelling event, residents articulated challenges in securing affordable housing, shared stories of discrimination in the rental market, and expressed that these issues were particularly severe for households with accessibility needs. These will all be possible topics for exploration, as well as an examination of the barriers to choice and opportunity due to racial and source of income discrimination; unfair and unjust practices in policing and surveillance of residents in mixed-income housing developments; and erasure of public housing identity through the recent conversion of traditional public housing developments to project-based voucher developments.

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum

Importantly, there is a body of collected oral histories and stories that focus on the great tradition of entrepreneurship and cooperative enterprises within public housing communities. Indeed The Hub leverages one of our community's greatest resources: the history of how innovative entrepreneurship has been used as a strategy of surviving and thriving for public housing residents, low-income people, and communities of color. The Hub addresses the systemic and structural causes for the disappearance of innovative cooperatives and other forms of entrepreneurship, including unchecked capitalism, racism, and sexism; limited support from public housing management; limited access to capital and space; a transient resident population with limited business skills; changes in demographics and consumer tastes; well-resourced competitors; and a lack of historical memory about the struggles and strategies of previous generations. The Hub addresses these challenges through oral history, storytelling, and design thinking to reignite and support a legacy of creativity and self-sufficiency.

The Hub emerged from intentional listening by Museum staff about the needs and assets of Chicago's public housing communities, which is built into the DNA of our institution and baked into our community benefits agreement. Adaptation and replication of our model to other LAMs should start with a similarly intentional and open-minded approach.

Aligned with the best practices of social well-being and collective impact frameworks, the Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum will be an anchor institution that convenes a number of public, academic, civic, and commercial organizations that drive improvements in economic well-being, cultural engagement, political voice, and social connection on the Near West Side of Chicago.

Economic well-being: Increasingly, businesses organized as worker cooperatives have been touted as alternatives to business-as-usual and as a way to produce more equitable distributions of income. Propelled by the history of cooperative business in public housing communities, an outcome of this project will be to connect the past with the present interest in co-ops and to create jobs, wealth, and a degree of economic democracy in communities that have been left behind by downtown prosperity.

Cultural engagement: Public housing communities are of the most misunderstood and maligned in U.S. society today. By amplifying the ways in which residents are indeed productive, creative, and resilient, we seek to transform perceptions and contribute to a notion of a shared future in a profoundly segregated city.

The Entrepreneurship Hub at the National Public Housing Museum

Political voice: This project amplifies the notable political voice of public housing residents by bringing the stories of the community into contact with scholars, policymakers, and artists.

Social connection: The Near West Side in which the Museum located has been a racial diverse section of the city since the birth of industrial Chicago. However, racial and ethnic groups have frequently shared close quarters without sincere commingling. We see our project and our Museum in general as a place for diverse groups to come to terms with difference by coming to terms with the complex American past.

Project Work Plan

See attached "Schedule of Completion."