

Rededication of the Riverside Park Community Center

Riverside Park, a housing development owned by the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, is a property with a rich and enthralling history. The construction of Riverside Park was conceived from a Federal need for housing for war workers contributing to the production efforts during World War II. During the wartime of the 1940s, the entire country was asked to suspend business-as-usual to take up the cause and contribute to the war efforts of the United States Armed Forces. CMHA answered this call by focusing its efforts and attention on providing desperately needed housing for workers who had in-migrated to war product manufacturing plants in Cuyahoga County. In 1942, CMHA, as an agent for the Federal Public Housing Agency, was tasked with the construction of 440 units of war housing on a vacant, 80 acre property on the West-Side of Cleveland adjacent to the bomber production plant, which would come to be known as Riverside Park. Construction on the Riverside Park project, including the community center, began in 1943, and the first units were available for occupancy in 1944.

The Riverside Park Community center was officially completed at the end of 1944. At this time, it included an assembly hall, nursery school, kitchen, management offices, and maintenance shops. On January 1, 1948, after the victory of the United States in the efforts of World War II, Riverside Park was officially converted from war housing to low-rent housing by Executive Order of the President of the United States of America, Harry S. Truman.

Since the original construction of the 5,400 square foot Riverside Park Community Center, no major rehabilitation or renovation has been performed on this building. This \$425,000 project marks the first of its kind at Riverside Park and the first rehabilitation project funded by the Western Reserve Revitalization and Management Company (WRRMC), the non-profit development affiliate of CMHA, with additional funds contributed from the CMHA Capital Fund. Through this project, CMHA has revamped the interior and exterior spaces of the Riverside Park Community Center by installing new finishes such as wall painting and floor tile throughout the building, renovating and restructuring the management office area, installing new energy efficient lighting, air conditioning equipment, and a state-of-the-art alarm system, restoring all amenities, including the refurbishment of the original stage, and renovating the exterior facades, the cupola, and performing extensive landscaping and beautification.

Although the function of Riverside Park has evolved over time, the purpose of this property remains the same: to provide much-needed, affordable, quality housing to those who truly need it. The Riverside Park Community Center has provided a place for meeting and recreation through the course of its dynamic history, and now provides beneficial programs such as a Head Start Daycare, computer lab, 21st Century Community Learning Center, a domestic violence support program, and programs for seniors.