Safe, decent and affordable housing for low-income residents in the Kingsport area
In the early days of Kingsport, substandard housing was a common sight. Many residents had no electricity, running water, or sanitary plumbing.
Low-income residents got by as best they could.
Some families resorted to living in an abandoned chemical dye plant.

Chickens roam the yard in front of the dye plant.

Notice the small child near the open pits in the concrete floor of the dye plant.
This photograph taken on East Sullivan Street shows an outdoor privy that served 19 families.
Pictured in the forefront, children in the Burnett family lived in this house on Roller Street near the old cement plant.
The Fleenor family lived in this shack on land that would later be developed into Frank Cloud Apartments.
The formation of the Kingsport Housing Authority

In early 1939, a group of prominent Kingsport citizens who were concerned about housing conditions for the city’s low-income families met with officials of the U.S. Housing Authority (later to be named the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development). The group, headed by J. Fred Johnson, wanted to find out if the city could get a loan for low-rent housing. Soon after, more than 700 citizens met at City Hall to hear about the possibilities for public housing. After the meeting, Mayor W.L. Holyoke appointed five commissioners who formed the Kingsport Housing Authority, with the primary goal of providing decent homes in suitable living environments for families who cannot afford standard private housing.
KHA entered into a loan contract with the U.S. Housing Authority and a 7.2-acre site was purchased for $14,000 for a new 128-unit complex called Robert E. Lee Homes.
Kingsport’s first two public housing developments, Robert E. Lee Apartments and Riverview, cost $600,000 to construct. The U.S. Housing Authority, the predecessor of HUD, paid for 90% of the cost, while the city’s BMA chipped in the other 10%.

Construction gets underway at the site of the new Lee Apartments.
This photograph from 1940 shows Robert E. Lee Apartments just before the first tenants moved in.
That same year, the first phase of Riverview was completed, providing apartments for the city's black population.
This program from 1940 was handed out at the dedication of the Riverview Apartments.

To qualify for housing at Riverview, a two-person family living in substandard housing had annual income of $831 or less, while a three-person family had annual income of $884 or less. A family of four or more had annual income of not more than $937. If the family had three or more children, they could have annual income of up to $1,125 and qualify for housing.
While the new Lee Apartments and Riverview provided housing for more than 100 families, the demand for safe, decent housing continued to rise in Kingsport.

This photo taken in 1942 shows trailers that were brought in to house workers who were constructing the new Holston Army Ammunition Plant. The trailers were located between what is now Market and Main Street. The ditch in front is now covered by a concrete alley between Market and Main.
Due to increasing demand for low-rent housing, another 36 public housing units were added at Riverview in 1951, bringing the total number of apartments there to 92.
Meanwhile, KHA was constructing its largest public housing development in the Gibsontown area. Frank L. Cloud Apartments would open in 1952, featuring 189 units for low-income families.
This photograph taken in March 1952 shows Cloud Apartments and Highway 11W to the north.
After Cloud Apartments was completed, city officials believed that a sufficient number of low-rent units had been constructed in Kingsport.

No other public housing units would be built in the city for nearly 30 years.
In October 1980, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the new Dogwood Terrace on Bowater Drive. This development opened in 1981 and included 42 family units and 34 units designed for the elderly.
In the late 70’s, KHA operated the Title XX Social Services and Homemaker Program for elderly and disabled tenants. These programs and staff provided the guidance to tenants to establish tenant organizations. These programs have evolved into Resident Initiatives today.
In 1983, KHA got the go-ahead to build new administrative offices on E. Sevier Avenue to replace the old office on Dale Street at Lee Apartments. The new office opened in November 1984.
KHA was constructing Holly Hills Apartments around that same time. The new public housing development on the west side of town opened in 1984.
In 1989, KHA’s nonprofit arm, Housing Partnership of Kingsport, Inc., was created through the efforts of KHA and private citizens to provide a means for the public and private sector to work together to provide affordable housing and other services for low and very low-income families.

Funding from the homeownership program enabled the Housing Partnership to purchase an eight-unit apartment complex in Colonial Heights. In 1995, the Housing Partnership sold the apartments to KHA, which then acquired another eight units next door. KHA renovated all 14 units, and established Tiffany Court Apartments.
In 1999, Housing Partnership of Kingsport, Inc. was renamed the Greater Kingsport Alliance for Development to reflect its expanding role in the community.
In 1991, construction began on Holston Terrace, a cooperative endeavor among KHA, Holston Services Inc., and the City of Kingsport. This development features 48 one-bedroom units for elderly and disabled residents.
In 2003, KHRA was awarded its first Shelter Plus Care grant through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development’s Continuum of Care process. KHRA has since been awarded other Supportive Housing grants to help homeless, disabled individuals and families and the chronically homeless.

In 2006, KHRA was awarded a Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) grant through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. Through its Supportive Housing Programs and HOPWA program, KHRA houses approximately 160 individuals and families.
KHRA has also operated a Family Self Sufficiency program since 1998 to help residents of Public Housing and the Housing Choice Voucher program move towards self-sufficiency through job skills training, employment readiness, and budget counseling.
In addition to providing safe, decent and affordable housing, the Housing Authority has served as the redevelopment arm for the City of Kingsport. In 1988, the BMA asked KHA to create a redevelopment plan.

A year later, the city approved that redevelopment plan, and KHA was charged with overseeing the redevelopment. Since then, the BMA has adopted five Redevelopment Districts, making them eligible for tax increment financing to spur redevelopment.
To reflect its redevelopment work, the Kingsport Housing Authority was renamed the Kingsport Housing & Redevelopment Authority in the late 1990s.
In the spring of 2003, KHRA approved tax increment financing (TIF) for the new East Stone Commons, a 275,000-square-foot development constructed at the site of the old Kingsport Mall. The development features various retail stores and restaurants.

KHRA also approved TIF for the redevelopment of the Crown Point Shopping Center and district wide TIF for the downtown.
Today, the East Stone Commons TIF is generating $493,439 in combined property taxes for the city and county, an increase of $431,970. The TIF loan for East Stone Commons is expected to be paid off in 2016. At that time, the full amount of the property taxes will revert to the city and county.

The Crown Point TIF is generating $171,224 in combined property taxes, an increase of $111,575. The TIF loan for Crown Point should be paid off in 2021, when the full amount of the property taxes will revert to the city and county.
Meanwhile, KHRA continued its mission to provide safe, decent and affordable housing. In 2006, it was awarded an $11.9 million HOPE VI grant from HUD for the redevelopment of the Riverview Apartments.

The first phase of the project was 54 elderly units developed in the historic George Washington School.

$42,104 in city and county taxes
After redevelopment, the new homes generated $51,212 in property taxes, an increase of $38,938 a year.

The second phase replaced 29 houses along Sherwood and Hiwassee with 24 new, affordable homes.
The third phase of HOPE VI called for the demolition of the old Riverview Apartments, and the construction of 32 rental houses and duplexes at the original site, along with six additional houses built in the Riverview community.
With HOPE VI completed, KHRA applied and was awarded a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Planning Grant from HUD in October 2012. KHRA, the City of Kingsport, and various stakeholders in the community would spend the next two years developing a transformation plan for the redevelopment of the Midtown Neighborhood of Kingsport.

The target public housing site would be Robert E. Lee Apartments.
KHRA submitted its final CNI Transformation Plan to HUD in October 2014. HUD accepted the plan paving the way for KHRA, the City, and their stakeholders to move forward with the redevelopment of the Midtown Neighborhood.
Building on its strong foundation, KHRA is moving forward to ensure another successful 75 years to come.