



## GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION

**CONTACT: Carlos A. Sanchez**  
**Executive Director**  
**(616) 235-2600**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION PARTICIPATES IN HOUSING AMERICA 2008 CAMPAIGN**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, August 22, 2008—Federally subsidized public housing, a \$100 billion asset in this country, is home to over two million people, more than 40 percent of whom are children. Public housing is a vital resource that serves some of our nation’s most vulnerable citizens, yet the program is currently funded at less than 85 percent of what is needed to maintain existing public housing stock in decent, safe and sanitary condition.

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) is joining affordable housing industry partners across the country in support of the Housing America 2008 campaign, which aims to educate decision makers and the general public about the importance of affordable housing and community development programs as well as the challenges facing these programs.

GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez said the need for affordable housing in Greater Grand Rapids far exceeds the available supply: “We currently serve more than 3,900 households, yet there is a waiting list of more than 2,900 to rent a unit at our public housing developments and a waiting list of more than 4,100 for our Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program—these are families, senior citizens and disabled persons who have an annual household income of less than \$12,000.” Sanchez continued, “A ‘perfect storm’ of an economic downturn that has intensified the need for affordable housing and federal funding shortfalls over a period of

(more)

years has created a critical situation with regard to public housing in particular, with many low-income housing developments across the nation in dire need of extensive renovation or even total redevelopment.”

Sanchez cited the closure of the GRHC’s Section 8 waiting list in 2004 as further evidence that a lack of affordable housing has been a long-term problem for our community. The Housing Commission stopped accepting Section 8 applications when the number of applicants to the program topped 7,700 and the wait to obtain a rental housing subsidy stretched to an untenable five years or more for many families. The Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness reported that in the Greater Grand Rapids area 5,731 persons—including 1,888 children—were homeless in 2007.

Housing America 2008 is spearheaded by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), a membership organization of more than 3,200 housing and community development agencies and more than 19,000 individual members. NAHRO is the leading housing and community development advocate for the provision of adequate and affordable housing and strong, viable communities for all Americans—particularly those who have low or moderate incomes. Housing America 2008 is also strongly supported by partner organizations from the nonprofit, governmental and private sectors.

###

**BACKGROUND:** The Grand Rapids Housing Commission was established by the Grand Rapids City Commission in 1966 as a public-body corporation under the state enabling law now known as Public Act 18. The law empowers the City to act to provide housing for low-income people and to eliminate substandard housing conditions.

Funded primarily through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Grand Rapids Housing Commission is an independently administered entity governed by a five-member board appointed by the City Manager and approved by the City Commission. The Housing Commission currently makes affordable housing available to 3,966 West Michigan families through a diverse portfolio of housing programs.