REAL PEOPLE, REAL RESULTS
A Snapshot of How Pennsylvania’s State Housing Trust Fund—PHARE—is Working
PHARE stands for Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund. Also known as the state housing trust fund, PHARE expands opportunity for people and communities in need by funding local housing programs.

Return On Investment

The $26.2 million invested leveraged $191.0 million.

Economic Impact

Every $10 million from the fund creates up to 200 jobs.

Producing Homes Within Reach of People Who Need Them

Between 2013-2015, 3,117 properties were improved and 2,786 families were helped.

Allocation Categories
Based on total funds committed to eligible grantees

- New Single Family Construction & Purchase Assistance: 44%
- Combination of Acquisition, Demolition, Rehabilitation, Redevelopment and Other Pre-Development Activities: 23%
- Rehabilitation of Owner-Occupied and Renter-Occupied Units: 15%
- Rental Assistance & Homeless Prevention: 14%
- New Multifamily & Preservation of Existing Multifamily Affordable Units: 4%

Source: Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
PHARE is the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund. Also known as the state housing trust fund, PHARE expands opportunity for people and communities in need by funding local housing programs.

What would you do if you couldn’t afford the rising rent? If you couldn’t climb the stairs to your apartment? What if no one would buy your house because of the blighted property next door?

The people on these pages found answers to their problems through PHARE. Real people. Real results.

► SUCCESSFUL
While only three years old, PHARE is a success story—or series of stories. Each is unique, but they all have the same ending—stronger communities and stronger FAMILIES. Some of these stories are highlighted in this “snapshot” report.

► FLEXIBLE
Established in late 2010, PHARE received its first money in 2012 from Marcellus Shale Impact Fees (Act 13). The money is dedicated to counties with shale wells. PHARE can receive other sources of funds as well because it’s flexible.

► STRONGER FAMILIES—AND COMMUNITIES
Over the last three years PHARE has helped almost 2,800 households, providing rental assistance, new and rehabbed homes for purchase and rent, homeowner repairs, home-buyer assistance, and demolition of blighted, abandoned properties to make way for future homes.

► ECONOMIC GROWTH
PHARE is helping boost local economies. The $26 million invested over the first three years has leveraged an additional $191 million. Housing construction and, even more so, rehab and repair have a substantial economic impact, creating up to 200 jobs for every $10 million spent and generating $2.28 for every dollar spent.

► WELL-RUN, TRANSPARENT AND BUILT ON A PLAN
The story of PHARE’s success is well documented because the PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) runs it in an open and transparent way. Each year PHFA proposes a plan for the use of the funds, providing the public an opportunity to submit ideas, and the agency follows up with an annual report to the legislature.

► LOCALLY DRIVEN
PHARE is a success story because it is carried out by local communities in partnership with local nonprofits, landlords, and developers for the benefit of local residents.

► BUILDING ON SUCCESS
This report highlights how PHARE is already working throughout rural Pennsylvania. The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania is leading the effort to expand PHARE statewide.
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COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

BEAVER COUNTY
NEW BRIGHTON GATEWAY REVITALIZATION PROJECT

New Brighton’s Gateway Revitalization Project is dedicated to making the entrance into town more welcoming.

The quality of life for residents was enhanced, safety improved, and property values increased.

Newly constructed homes are affordable to local working people who earn low wages and can’t compete on the regular market. The new homes produced a ripple effect of owners fixing up their homes. New Brighton had a plan. PHARE funds helped get the revitalization started.

Larry Morley, from the Borough, Cathy Smith from the Community Development Program, and Developer John Boots (right), teamed up to demolish three vacant single-family homes and build one duplex and one single-family home to spruce-up New Brighton’s Main Street entrance. Community residents started improving their own buildings. The quality of life was enhanced, safety improved, and property values increased.
Greene County had a quality housing shortage. David Mirkovich, Retired Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority, had a solution: rehab blighted properties. The County would end up with a new taxable asset, low-to-middle income families would have affordable homes and money from the sale of the homes would finance the transaction. PHARE funds made it possible.

The County would end up with a new taxable asset, more families would have affordable homes, and money from the sales would finance the next round.

Dave Thomas, Labor Foreman for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, along with inmates from the State Correctional Institute, Greene Community Work Program, did the interior work rehabbing the homes to make them livable which included wiring, painting, flooring, cabinetry, drywall, and debris removal. The inmates gained skills for when they are released.

Pitgas neighborhood property, with a new porch. “I am really proud of what I have been able to do so far,” said David Mirkovich. “We have a good program in place, and some properties are already purchased and owned.” Acquire–Rehab–Resale will rehab or build a total of 13 homes. Seven will be completed by the end of 2015.
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COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

LYCOMING COUNTY
MEMORIAL HOMES AND BRODART NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT, WILLIAMSPORT

“Memorial Homes is an anchor and a catalyst,” according to Kim Wheeler, Deputy Director, Lycoming County Planning and Community Development. An old factory site was converted into residential space which spearheaded the revitalization of the Brodart neighborhood. “For several years the property was marketed for industrial reuse but no interested parties stepped forward. We soon realized that redeveloping the site for residential use made the most sense. It is situated in the middle of a neighborhood where new, affordably-priced homes were in demand. Five apartments in Memorial Homes are set aside for those most in need, seniors and people with disabilities living on about $7,000 a year and the rest are available for those making about $27,000 a year.”

For Ramona, moving into Memorial Homes was “the best thing I ever did.” She had owned her own manufactured home in Muncy, for eight and a half years. But being on SSI and SSDI made it difficult for her to make ends meet and pay for heating fuel in winter. Yard maintenance was a challenge as well. After several years of coping with financial and physical hardships, Ramona applied for a Housing Choice Voucher. She was approved in 2014 and told that Memorial Homes was an option. The move to her new home allowed her to end an unhealthy relationship and live comfortably without worries about her basic needs being met or maintaining a property.

Brodart Neighborhood. “The idea is to uplift not only the physical appearance and perception of the neighborhood,” said Kim Wheeler, “but also invest in the infrastructure—the public streetscape and the existing housing stock. This will provide long-term investment that will hopefully improve property values. “We asked, ‘How can you just plop down a brand new building in the middle of a deteriorating neighborhood?’” said Wheeler. “There needs to be a comprehensive approach to community development and it starts with identifying the needs of the existing neighborhood. The solution is to rehabilitate as many of the 150 homes in the surrounding area as possible, as well as build starter homes to help revitalize the neighborhood and keep it affordable, and continue to develop partnerships to enhance other aspects of the neighborhood’s assets. We see this as a neighborhood revitalization effort that is a win-win for the existing and new residents as well as for the city as a whole.”
Tina Marie, a 30 year resident of Sullivan County, was making ends meet financially until her divorce. She struggled, landed on her feet, but was then seriously injured in a car accident. Increases in rent and medical expenses placed her back in financial peril; she needed help. Tina learned about the Sullivan County Rental Assistance Program for households that earn up to $38,325 a year. At that time, working as an Instructional Aide at the County High School, she qualified. “It gave me breathing room,” she said. “I could set aside money for my vehicle, for food, utilities, and savings.”

Since completing the three-month Rental Assistance Program, Tina has been busy. She earned a degree in Criminal Justice at Bloomsburg University and currently attends graduate school virtually at Boston University. She also works full-time as a custodian at the high school. Her goal is to teach once she gets her Master’s Degree. “There are people who can’t get help because they get too much money, and yet can’t make ends meet,” she said. “The program can help make ends meet and alleviate stress for ‘tweeners.’ It gives people a chance to get caught up.”

“It gave me breathing room. I could set aside money for my vehicle, for food, utilities, and savings.”
A landlord for 28 years, Bill Roosa (left) witnessed an increase in rental prices beginning around 2010. When Roosa discovered he could not afford to make repairs on a couple of his properties without increasing the rent, he turned to the Rental Rehabilitation Program run by Tioga and Bradford County Housing and Redevelopment Authority. He didn’t want to increase the rent on his tenants—seniors and those on fixed incomes. “My wife and I decided we didn’t want to get rich on the backs of the poor,” said Roosa. Pictured here with Roosa is Jason Sawyer, Capital Improvement Manager at the Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

PHARE funds assisted landlords with modernization upgrades on their properties if they were renting to people who were utilizing or eligible for Housing Choice Vouchers. Each upgrade was capped at a bare bones of $18,000. Pleased with the program run by the Housing Authority, Roosa believes that PHARE should be expanded so that other counties can benefit and create housing stock for low-income individuals and families. Said Roosa: “The state should look at where they are spending money, and invest in housing.” Pictured here is a rental property with renovated windows.

In order to keep warm in winter, Barb had to wear two sweatshirts and a sweater. She had to place electric heaters throughout the house. Her living conditions were tough, complicated by her chronic medical condition. When her landlord made weatherization repairs through the Rental Rehabilitation Program, Barb’s utility bills became affordable and her living conditions improved. She is grateful. “It’s a wonderful program,” she said. “People need help, why not help them?” By the close of the program, nineteen households will have been assisted in Bradford County, and twenty-four households will have been assisted in Tioga County. Pictured here is the home Barb rents.
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APARTMENTS FOR SENIORS

WASHINGTON COUNTY

CENTURY PLAZA APARTMENTS

“I used to have to crawl up the stairs many days at [my old apartment] in order to get to my room,” said Kathy, who moved into the Century Plaza Apartments in December 2014. Kathy worked until she was 60, but had to stop due to a back injury and arthritic knees. After having two back surgeries, expenses became tight, especially since rent kept increasing. Safety was also an issue; strangers would knock on doors and wander around the halls.

She heard about Century Plaza Apartments. When she was 62, she got a first floor living space there. Kathy enjoys the community at Century Plaza. Everybody looks out for each other, including management. Problems are taken care of efficiently, and people’s needs are met. The residents are also great to be around, Kathy said. There are many activities that she participates in—when she’s not busy spending time with her children and grandchildren.

Lou is an 84 year-old retired executive hotel chef, who still loves to cook. He is thrilled he can do so at his new apartment in Century Plaza. The kitchen has new appliances and is safe and easy to manage. Lou has some trouble getting around, and so being able to walk into the building and directly to his apartment on the first floor is important to him.

Lou enjoys living in Century Plaza Apartments. The maintenance is great as well as the staff, he said. He gets involved in all the activities because he likes being busy and enjoys the community. He also finds time to see his grandchildren who live nearby. The apartments are warm and habitable, and a great place for someone on a fixed income to live with dignity and hope.

PHARE funds helped construct an additional 14 affordable and accessible rental homes for seniors living on fixed incomes and are adjacent to an existing senior development. The new construction was driven by a large waiting list; Washington County has one of the largest populations of elders in the United States. The new addition opened December 1, 2014, and was filled within 45 days.
This snapshot report highlights just a few of the many success stories made possible by PHARE. There are many more stories of people and communities in need who are still waiting and could benefit if PHARE was statewide. That’s why the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania is leading the effort to build on success and make PHARE statewide.

In 2013, nearly 16,000 Pennsylvanians were counted as being unsheltered, 34,959 used the homeless system and 24,504 homeless children and youth received services from Pennsylvania school districts. There is a shortage of 277,000 rental homes that are both affordable and available to people living on about $22,000 a year or less. Pennsylvania has an estimated 300,000 vacant, abandoned, and blighted homes.

It’s time to build on the success of PHARE and give every Pennsylvanian a chance for a HOME WITHIN THEIR REACH.

The Benefits of Investing in the Housing Market in Pennsylvania:

- Children in stable housing situations do significantly better in school than children who move three or more times during the school year.
- A stable housing environment can help reduce adolescent violence and levels of drug use.
- Having safe and decent housing has a direct impact on levels of life expectancy.
- A balanced housing market will save the Commonwealth money by decreasing shelter use, medical costs, and incarceration rates.
- Rental assistance is four times less expensive than a nursing home, and two times less costly than a nursing home plus community based services.
- Hundreds of people remain in prison past their release date because they have no place to go, costing taxpayers $116 per day per person.

1 Charts of Pennsylvania’s Continuum of Care programs, People’s Emergency Center, Policy Brief. Copies available upon request: jwillard@pec-cares.org
4 The 2010 U. S. Census documents 384,145 vacant non-seasonal housing units in Pennsylvania. There is no official count of vacant buildings. In addition to these vacant homes, there are a significant (but uncounted) number of vacant commercial and industrial structures, as well as vacant parcels of land across the state.
5 Kids Mobility Project, Minneapolis, 1995
9 PA Housing Finance Agency
10 Safer Communities: Reducing Recidivism and Saving Money Through Justice Reinvestment In Re-Entry Housing, Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, 2012
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PNC helps to build strong communities and create financial opportunities for individuals, families and businesses through executive leadership, technical expertise, strategic investments, project financing and employee volunteerism. PNC’s Community Development Banking group boosts the quality of life in low-income neighborhoods through affordable housing, economic revitalization and customized financial solutions.

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The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, statewide public interest advocate working to help increase the supply of safe, affordable and accessible homes available to all Keystone State residents – especially those with low incomes, including veterans, children, elderly and disabled individuals. By serving as a central information hub for housing advocates, providers and the media and seeking ways to collaborate with local, state and federal policy makers, the Housing Alliance helps Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable residents find stable, secure homes and use it as the foundation of prosperity. For more information, visit www.HousingAlliancePA.org.