

Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA)

Innovative Public Housing Waiting List Solution

Customer



- Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA)
- www.shra.org

Industry

- Government, Public Housing

Location

- Sacramento, California

Challenges

- Staff investing significant time conducting background checks on public housing applicants; too often, eligible applicants turned down open housing options thus wasting staff time
- Massive volume of applicants made it very difficult to facilitate the waiting list process

Peelle Tech Products & Services

- Online waiting list portal dedicated to SHRA with IT infrastructure hosted by Peelle Tech: www.sacwaitlist.com
- Multiple, site-specific public housing waiting list electronic forms requiring on-site applicant visits prior to form submission
- HCV Waiting List featuring computer-based lottery application to help manage the large volume of submissions

“SHRA opened several online, site-based waiting lists in January 2010. Between June and September 2010, 76% of applicants determined eligible leased a unit that was offered to them. For the same period the prior year, before implementing this new process, only 40% of applicants determined eligible leased a unit once offered. The change represents a significant increase and demonstrates the success of the Peelle Tech solution.”

— MaryLiz Paulson, Assistant Director, Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA)

The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) addresses the housing and economic needs in low-income communities and older commercial corridors in the City and County of Sacramento. As the Housing Authority for both jurisdictions, SHRA assists over 40,000 people through the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program and 3,000 public housing units that it owns and manages throughout the County.

SHRA is dedicated to continually improving its processes and leveraging unique and innovative solutions to better serve the citizens of Sacramento. Overall, SHRA has a strategy to leverage technology as much as possible to give applicants an easy method to submit applications, receive immediate confirmation that their application has been received and then update their own information and find out where their application is in the process. This sentence combines technology in place as well as technology in development.

Peelle Technologies’ online waiting list solution is currently utilized for SHRA’s HCV and Public Housing Waiting Lists. MaryLiz Paulson, SHRA Assistant Director, states, “We began working with Peelle Technologies in 2006, when we opened our first online waiting list to enable simple and secure electronic application submissions for the HCV Program. Over the next few years, we expanded the solution to include the Public and Affordable Housing Programs and then, in January 2010, we opened several site-based waiting lists.”

Peelle Techs’ innovations, which include 1) maintaining separate site-based waiting lists, 2) requiring applicants to enter an access code obtained during an on-site visit and 3) income/residence-related validations that occur during the application entry process have proven to greatly streamline SHRA’s operations while simultaneously enhancing the application process.

Public Housing Waiting List Innovations: Required Site Visits and Separate Site-Based Waiting Lists

Prior to January 2010, the Housing Authority had a centralized waiting list for all 3,000+ public housing units. However, public housing sites were offered in different locations throughout the County, each with unique styles (e.g. urban apartments, garden-style duplexes). The Housing Authority found that eligible applicants might be given two or three options, but would turn them down. "We'd be forced to remove them from the list, but our staff had already invested significant time conducting background checks, income verifications and criminal histories to approve them", states MaryLiz Paulson, SHRA Assistant Director.

After conducting interviews of eligible applicants who elected not to move in, the Housing Authority found that location was a common reason applicants turned down the property options. "We determined that if the applicants visited the property before applying, they would likely self-select out of the process if the site didn't meet their needs. In that way, we wouldn't unnecessarily invest staff time to determine them eligible", states Paulson.

In an effort to make the process more efficient for both the applicants and SHRA staff, the Housing Authority worked with Peelle Tech to implement a solution that offered separate waiting lists for the largest public housing sites. In addition, applicants were required to visit the site prior to submitting their on-line application. To facilitate this process, Peelle Tech implemented a property access code system for each property that required the applicant to go on-site, receive a unique access code from the site manager and then use that required code to access the on-line application for that site.

Application Web Form

SHRA BROADWAY

701 12th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 440-1390
www.shra.org

PROPERTY LOCATION
4021 to 4041 Broadway, Sacramento, CA
95817, near San Jose Way, south of Highway
50, east of Highway 99.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION
This site consists of 24 units. All the units are
single-story with lots of large established trees
and grass.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS**

What types of rental units are available?
Two and three bedroom, one bath units are
available at this property. All are single-story.
These units can accommodate families of
two to six people, depending their age and
gender. Some units are fully accessible.

What amenities does this property offer?

- Washer and Dryer connections
- Private patios
- Tot lots
- Schools nearby
- On-site parking

How much is the rent?
The rent amount is based on your income.
Rent and utilities are calculated to be about 30
percent of your income. The rental assistance
is not transferable.

What are the income requirements to live here?
The total gross annual household income must not be more than the following amounts
for your family size:

1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person	6 Person
\$40,800	\$46,600	\$52,400	\$58,200	\$64,000	\$67,600

Can I receive a tenant-based voucher if I live here?
No. You may apply to be on the waiting list when it opens again.

Is the waiting list first come, first served?
Yes, based on income eligibility, bedroom size availability and the date and time you
submit your application.

To submit an application for this property, [click here](#)

The Peelle Tech waiting list solution for SHRA can be found at www.sacwaitlist.com.

Fewer families applied because they self-selected out of a location they were not interested in. Much more often, those that visited the site and then applied would end up accepting the site when they became eligible. Paulson states, "We began using the Peelle Tech access codes in January 2010, when we opened several site-based wait lists. Between June 2010 and September 2010, 76% of applicants determined eligible leased a unit that was offered to them. For the same period the prior year (June 2009 to September 2009), before implementing this new process, only 40% of applicants determined eligible leased a unit once offered. The change represents a significant increase and demonstrates the success of the Peelle Tech solution.

Implementing an Electronic HCV Application Process

SHRA also leverages Peelle Tech's HCV on-line waiting list solution. Server crashes and confidential data leakages are just some of the risks housing agencies can face when trying to implement an on-line applicant system. Peelle Tech's HCV waiting list solution is a hosted offering, thus removing the IT burden and risk from SHRA. Not only were the appropriate servers, storage and databases dedicated to handle the volume of information, but Peelle Tech's staff of personnel, experienced with the volumes typical of wait list opening projects, oversaw the entire infrastructure.

Paulson states, "We wanted to offer an on-line application system, but we also knew that paper applications were still an important part of the applicant process. Our hope was that we could encourage more on-line applications over time while still offering paper applications to individuals." When SHRA implemented Peelle Tech's on-line waiting list solution for the HCV Waiting List, it opened the waiting list for one week. During that time, 35,000 applications were received electronically and via mail. The paper application forms were sent directly to Peelle Tech, where staff converted the applicant information to a digital format.

A common misconception is that applicants do not have access to computers and will still leverage paper forms. SHRA found that more than 90% of the applications were electronically submitted. Online applicants received multiple benefits, including the following:

- Error reduction resulting from illegible handwriting and the fact that the applicant is entering their own data
- Validation of fields that required all information to be filled out (versus paper in which an applicant may skip certain required fields)
- A confirmation code gave the applicant instant validation that their form was successfully submitted
- Enabled other constituents (e.g. social workers) to apply on behalf of their clientele

SHRA then used a computer-based lottery system that came with the Peelle Tech solution to randomly accept 10,000 applicants. In that way, SHRA was able to set up a fair applicant process that reduced the staff's administration overhead and gave successful applicants a reasonable chance of qualifying for HCV assistance. Overall, the solution reduced SHRA staff time by reducing the amount of paper data entry, the need to field phone calls and the amount of accepted applicants to manage after the process.

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