

## VISUAL HOMES CASE STUDY

# Housing Authority, City of Milwaukee

### Organization: Housing Authority, City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin

*The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) manages more than 10,000 units of subsidized housing with its VisualHOMES public housing management software. With an annual budget of \$100 million and a staff of 300 employees, HACM has over twenty locations throughout the City of Milwaukee where its staff uses VisualHOMES to manage its properties, residents and support services. The housing authority manages 4,000 HUD low-income public housing units, 5,000 Section 8 vouchers, 1,000 affordable housing units for veterans, 200 tax credit units, and 100 market rate rental housing units. HACM is designated by HUD as a “High Performer” agency.*

### Project: Phased Implementation of Fully-Integrated Housing Management and Financial Accounting System

As with many VisualHOMES clients, HACM was converting from character-based systems for housing management and financial accounting that weren't integrated. They wanted an intuitive solution that would support their demand for performance and back-end integration, without the need to manually transfer data between housing management and financial accounting modules. An intuitive system would lower their costs of training, a significant expense and activity for HACM's 200 users. High performance, particularly in month-end closings, would help keep the system usable by hundreds of staff throughout the month, yielding higher productivity.

A key requirement for HACM was that it wished to maintain its current financial system and workflow for a period of time after the housing management system was implemented. “VisualHOMES' flexibility allowed us to do this,” said Mr. Roger Rick, HACM's director of business systems.

Its modular architecture allowed HACM to bring online just the components it needed, as it needed them, so it could reduce project risks associated with switching financial accounting systems at the same time that they switched housing management systems. Given that HACM was implementing VisualHOMES during a year-end closing of the books, the software's modularity — and a phased deployment — was essential.

The VisualHOMES “wizards”, which automatically walk users step-by-step through key processes in the system, reduced training requirements, making it easier for HACM to get new users and employees up to speed quicker (a key HR benefit considering employee turnover rates in many large agencies) while maintaining data consistency (a key HUD compliance and IT benefit). VisualHOMES also supported integration with Microsoft® Windows Active Directory, an LDAP-style security module that allows single-sign-on for HACM staff.

#### VisualHOMES

8601 Georgia Avenue  
Suite 708  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Tel: 1.800.295.3301  
Fax: 301.588.3986  
info@visualhomes.com

www.visualhomes.com

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Mr. Rick explains, "This simply reduces the burden on our IT department to administer logins, and it makes it one less password for users to remember." The resulting system is user-friendly, well integrated into existing systems, and supportive of regulatory rules that govern the housing authority.

At the start of the project, VisualHOMES' IT staff centrally deployed the system in one business day, quickly providing access to 200 users spread out over twenty locations throughout the city. "VisualHOMES typically installs its software at client sites at the beginning of the project, so users have a live test system to get comfortable with," said Mr. Raj Bhaskar, president of VisualHOMES.

This deployment timing helps ease training, but there is no replacement for comprehensive, hands-on experience with the system. "As we got closer to the authority's go-live date, we had several of our trainers on-site to train the authority's hundreds of users," said Mr. Bhaskar. "Many of our trainers were previously our clients, having used our systems at their agencies, prior to joining our team. And many of our trainers previously used our competitors' products, which helps them relate to our clients as they go through a conversion from an older system to VisualHOMES."

VisualHOMES met the requirements for performance, up-time and simplicity of use. But just as importantly, the company was able to deal deftly with the human issues that often play a key role in project success. Customized deployments, adoptability through ease of use, and experienced trainers help make VisualHOMES a strong partner for housing authorities nationwide.

## About VisualHOMES

VisualHOMES is the leader in public housing software solutions, providing the most proven and complete software solution for public housing, Section 8 and financial accounting management in the industry. Public housing and redevelopment authorities, Departments of housing and community development, non-profits and related agencies of all sizes have been successfully using VisualHOMES' Windows-based solutions in real world, mission-critical operations across the country for nearly a decade. The company's unmatched experience and commitment to responsive service have made it the leading national provider of public housing software solutions.

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