

NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal NYS Housing Trust Fund Corporation

Management Innovation: Technology www.NYHousingSearch.gov

"At a time when a record number of New Yorkers are struggling with unemployment and our declining economy, the State must find new and affordable ways to provide additional resources to those most at risk. Working families and people with disabilities must have access to quality, affordable housing. By developing tools that connect people to available housing, we can help assure that more New Yorkers have a safe, decent place to live."

David A. Paterson, Governor

Innovative Solution

NYHousingSearch.gov is a **FREE** public service provided by the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), New York State Department of Health (DOH) and Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD).

The site is funded in part through a Money Follows the Person (MFP) Rebalancing Demonstration Grant and a Real Choice Systems Change, Systems Transformation Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. These grants assist states with making effective and enduring improvements in community-based long-term care and support systems for seniors and people with disabilities.

The site is hosted by Socialserve.com, a national not-for-profit provider of housing locator services. Socialserve.com is responsible for maintaining the site and providing toll-free call center support.

This innovative service connects people with housing they can afford that meets their individual needs and is located in the communities of their choice.

NYHousingSearch.gov can be accessed online 24-hours a day and is supported by a toll-free, bilingual call center M-F, 9-6 EST.

The easy-to-use, **FREE** search lets people look for housing using a wide variety of criteria and special mapping features. In particular the site offers an 'accessible housing' search feature and icons to identify bilingual, and section 8 friendly landlords Listings display detailed information about each unit. Properties listed on the site are vacancies current within 2 weeks, and active waitlists, shortening the amount of time housing seekers must cull through housing inventory that meets their needs. The service also provides links to housing resources and helpful tools for renters such as an affordability calculator, rental checklist, and information about renter rights and responsibilities.

Property owners and managers, including housing authorities and private landlords, can use this service to manage their property listings for **FREE**. Listings can include pictures, maps, and information about nearby amenities such as hospitals and schools. Property providers and housing authorities can register and manage their listings online or via phone and fax.

Meeting Fair Housing Requirements

DHCR requires as part of Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plans (AFHMP) that projects receiving subsidies register with www.NYHousingSearch.gov and report vacancies. The primary purpose of the affirmative marketing program is to promote an environment in which individuals of similar income levels in the same housing market area have available to them a like range of choices in housing, regardless of the individual's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, age or disability.

Promoting the Service

DHCR developed an extensive marketing and advertising campaign to promote NYHousingSearch.gov. An initial google ad word search campaign was launched to raise on-line awareness of the site. Newspaper ads were placed in every county throughout the state in multiple editions. Email blasts were sent to interested stakeholders, as well as information to include in newsletters and publications. Giveaways were distributed through DHCR's NYHousingSearch.gov themed booth at statewide conferences. Various trainings and brown bag lunch seminars were conducted to engage DHCR staff, as well as the public.

DCHR also distributed press packets, posters, and palm cards (English and Spanish) on disk to our statewide network of Local Section 8 Housing Administrators and Preservation Companies, enlisting their help in promoting the site throughout the state.

Measuring Success

The volume of listings and frequency of searches illustrates a success rate that exceeded our projections. While numbers are a measure of success, the greatest tool to demonstrate worthiness is whether those searching for housing are successful as a result of the site. In exit surveys landlords report that over thirty-five percent of tenants find housing as a direct result of NYHousingSearch.gov.

Below is a timeline demonstrating the growth in listings and searches since the site was launched in December, 2008 through July, 2009:

1/1/2009	Site included 32,822 units in system with 1,573 available units from 317 landlords. 1 day search total of 207 and 4,418 since the soft launch on 12/08.
2/1/2009	Site included 43,571 units in system with 2,150 available units from 447 landlords. 1 day search total of 261 and 15,509 since the soft launch on 12/08.
3/1/2009	Site included 57,412 units in system with 2,826 available units from 587 landlords. 1 day search total of 567 and 32,264 since the soft launch on 12/08.
4/1/2009	Site included 77,473 units in system with 3,239 available units from 708 landlords. 1 day search total of 732 and 54,523 since the soft launch on 12/08.
5/1/2009	Site included 75,207 units in system with 2,818 available units from 715 landlords. 1 day search total of 440 and 67,801 since the soft launch on 12/08.
6/1/2009	Site included 78,337 units in system with 3,065 available units from 747 landlords. 1 day search total of 551 and 87,491 since the soft launch on 12/08.
7/1/2009	Site includes 79,624 units in system with 2,674 available units from 780 landlords. 1 day search total of 651 and 107,645 since the soft launch on 12/08.