

Community Housing Network founder set to retire, COO to be promoted

By Sherri Welch

After 22 years, Community Housing Network's founder, president and CEO Marc Craig is retiring and will hand oversight of the nonprofit to its next leader over the coming year.

COO and Vice President Kirsten Elliott will be promoted as part of the internal succession plan. She will be named president and CEO following Craig's retirement in fall 2024.

Craig, 69, will continue as CEO during the transition.

"It's been an incredible journey leading this team that helps people overcome challenges every day. With Kirsten's leadership, I'm confident the organization will continue to grow, evolve and advocate for the members of society who need us the most," he said in a news release.

Craig founded Community Housing Network in 2001 to leverage resources to increase affordable housing. Since then, it has leveraged more than \$120 million to increase the availability of affordable housing.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, CHN was the lead agency in Oakland County providing federally-funded COVID Emergency Rental Assistance, funding for households facing eviction and other housing crises due to pandemic-related hardships and for landlords to help ensure they can maintain local rental housing stock.

CHN, a finalist in Crain's 2022 Best-Managed Nonprofit contest, has grown to an organization with more than 110 employees at offices in Oakland and Macomb counties and a \$15 million annual budget, after contractions during the pandemic when it administered twice that much with added federal relief dollars.

The organization develops affordable housing, provides homelessness preven-



Community Housing Network's founder, president and CEO Marc Craig (left) is retiring and will hand oversight of the nonprofit to COO and Vice President Kirsten Elliott next year.

tion resources and is one of the largest providers of permanent supportive housing in Oakland and Macomb counties.

Elliott, 52, joined CHN within months of its founding and has helped develop a strong leadership team, a comprehensive strategic plan and growth strategies for the organization, CHN said in the release.

She established the nonprofit's Housing Resource Center to connect individuals and families with affordable and accessible housing options and comprehensive supportive services such as referrals to behavioral health services.

She also collaborated with local, state and federal entities to conceive and execute the development of several affordable housing communities in Michigan and managed funding and fundraising to acquire and rehabilitate homes for people in need. That funding led to the development of nearly 1,000 new affordable housing units across the state.

Elliott, named a Crain's 2019 Notable Woman in Real Estate, has managed all aspects of real estate development, analyzed

proposed legislation and ensured the voices of people in need are heard by advocating for funding increases at the local, state and federal levels.

She has a bachelor of fine arts in ceramics and printmaking from Wayne State University and served as Oakland County Homeless Continuum of Care co-chair for more than a dozen years. She has served on the boards of organizations including the Community Development Association of Michigan and the Furniture Bank of Southeastern Michigan.

"We are so fortunate to have a leader with Kirsten's knowledge, experience, and ability step in as president," CHN President Bill Robinson said in the release. "She shares our entire team's passion for sustainable, inclusive communities, and she has already implemented the creation of innovative programs and a more streamlined organizational structure. Kirsten's reputation and deep knowledge of Community Housing Network's daily operations undoubtedly make her the right choice to lead us forward."