

THIS IS FIRST OF A TWO-PART SPECIAL SERIES COMMEMORATING THE SACRAMENTO HOUSING AUTHORITY'S 80TH ANNIVERSARY



CHANGING LIVES FOR 80 YEARS

SACRAMENTO CITY AND COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY



SHRA's La Shelle Dozier Is A Humble Housing Leader

By Michael P. Coleman

La Shelle Dozier, Executive Director of the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) is a soft-spoken woman — until you ask her about her children or her job.

“My kids are my life,” Dozier shared. “My mother will tell you that I’m an easy-going, mellow person — until you mess with my kids!”

Dozier is almost equally as passionate about SHRA. She manages the Agency’s \$212 million annual budget while leading a team of 246 who work with a coalition of residents, community organizations, businesses, elected officials, and public organizations to determine and meet the housing needs of various segments of the community.

Dozier largely eschews the spotlight, putting the focus on the individuals and families that SHRA serves. Taking credit for the agency’s accomplishments isn’t something that is of interest to her.

That modesty is a trait that Dozier learned early.

“My parents were salt of the earth type people,” Dozier recalled of her childhood in the North Highlands neighborhood of Sacramento. “They worked extremely hard to provide opportunities for me and my sister, and they were always giving individuals.”

“It’s not uncommon for my mother, even today, to be cooking for a family that’s lost a loved one, or making corsages for the mothers in the church — because at 84 years old, she doesn’t think she’s one of the mothers of the church! I came from a family of people who were always doing for others, because that was the responsibility: you don’t just focus on yourself.”

Responsibility is a big word for Dozier, but she strongly believes that her contributions to SHRA and to the Sacramento region, as with anyone’s contributions to society, shouldn’t be touted.

“We should make sure that we take care of other people based on whatever their needs are, and you don’t brag about that. You just do it, because that’s the right thing to do. That was ingrained in my makeup growing up, and it’s still a part of why I do all of the stuff that I do, and all of the stuff that the Agency does.”

SHRA does a lot of “stuff.” Over just the last few years, the Agency has begun to revitalize Sacramento’s Twin Rivers community. Via their Promise Zone initiative, they work to transform entire neighborhoods. They manage comprehensive resident training and family self-sufficiency programs designed to help public housing residents acquire the skills and resources needed to move beyond subsidized housing and into their own apartments and homes.

Dozier spoke passionately about the role she plays at

SHRA: coach, mentor, and cheerleader.

“I try to inspire people who work at SHRA [and instill in them that] it doesn’t matter what your job is at the Agency,” Dozier said. “You could be the person who’s greeting people at the front desk, or someone on the Executive team. Everybody plays a role of service.”

“When a person walks through our door, that person is



La Shelle Dozier congratulates Shontae McQueen with her family on completing the Family Self-Sufficiency program.



La Shelle Dozier helps build an affordable home during the Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento annual Woman Build event.



The Ly Family receives the key from La Shelle Dozier for their new affordable home built by Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento in partnership with SHRA.

here because they need help. It’s our job to show up and be our best selves, and be ready to show how we can help whoever that is.”

Maintaining the SHRA team’s high level of service has become more challenging over the years with shifts in the Agency’s funding, about 84% of which comes from the federal government.

“SHRA struggles with the funding problem,” Dozier continued, “and trying to cobble together resources to maintain [our programs]. When the president comes out with his budget and he’s zeroed out all of the capital fund, which is the money I use to keep our buildings in good repair, [we’re grateful that] Congress has ignored the president’s budget! But we’re not being funded at the level that we need [and] that’s been a struggle from day one.”

Dozier said the visibility of Sacramento’s longtime housing crisis presents a unique challenge.

“You see it everywhere you go,” Dozier thoughtfully reflected. “Some people look at homeless people, see ‘housing’ in the name of our Agency and ask ‘Why don’t you just house individuals?’ Homelessness is so much more



La Shelle Dozier, SHRA Executive Director

complex than just housing an individual and it requires a number of resources.”

“So if we’re struggling for resources to maintain what we have, trying to increase the pot to address the people who have fallen out of the system is another huge thing that we have to grapple with.”

“Homelessness is very complex in a lot of ways,” Dozier continued. “People think that there’s an easy solution, and some people make assumptions or judgments about other people. But you can’t paint everyone with a broad brush.”

One gets the impression that Dozier and her SHRA team

will not rest while there is a single person suffering from any type of housing insecurity. She is all about opening up avenues for people — both within and outside of SHRA’s home office in downtown Sacramento.

“Opportunities for people who work here are good,” Dozier asserted, “but I’m also about making sure we create opportunities for our residents — really lifting people up. In our resident training program, we have [individuals] who come in and work for us for two years. We train them not just on the technical stuff, but on the soft skills.”

“There’s one woman who went through our resident training program and did really well,” Dozier recalled.

“One day, she told me that she really wanted to work at SHRA. I came back to the office and told my team that we needed to find her a job at the agency. And HR was on it! That woman is now working here.”

“If we can’t be the example for our residents in terms of being able to get a job at SHRA — a good, well-paying job with great benefits that allows him or her to provide for their family, then we’re not walking the talk. And the potential opportunities don’t end at SHRA. If a resident wants to be an entrepreneur, to start their own business, we’re here to help with that.”

To learn more about the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, go to shra.org.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Michael P. Coleman is a Sacramento-based freelance writer and the principal consultant at Coleman Communications. Connect with him at MichaelPColeman.com.

Tyrone Roderick Williams Is A Promise Zone Architect Of Change

By Michael P. Coleman

Keep your wits about you as you get to know the mercurial Tyrone Roderick Williams, Deputy Executive Director - Development for the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA). The man deftly wears multiple hats, and swiftly switches between them — sometimes in mid-sentence!

Williams directs affordable housing finance, funding services and community development federally funded programs, and housing policy development and implementation. He also provides leadership to new initiatives including programs addressing homelessness and public housing redevelopment activities in both the City of Sacramento and Sacramento County.

Before earning his master's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the happily married father of two attended college at his parent's alma mater, Prairie View A&M University in Texas. He is nationally recognized for successfully leading comprehensive revitalization initiatives and projects totaling over \$1 billion.

Williams grew up in the small town of Crosby, Texas, outside of Houston, and that experience remains very much a part of who he is.

"The whole community supported and embraced each other in a way you don't see much today. We are losing our sense of community and connectedness, and I regret that."

As Williams' career flourished, he carried those early experiences growing up in Crosby to cities like Houston, Boston and Atlanta. All of those experiences have fueled his success here in Sacramento. You would be hard pressed to find a corner of the city where someone doesn't know Williams, which is remarkable given he has been in town — and with SHRA — for six short years.

Unbeknownst to Williams, he would take his model of a beloved community, the Texas one that shaped him, and apply those building blocks — interconnection, care for neighbors, etc. — as he began to create Sacramento's Promise Zone.

Launched in 2015, the Promise Zone drives community redevelopment during a 10 year period, over 22 square miles of Sacramento's most underprivileged neighborhoods. The Promise Zone focuses on

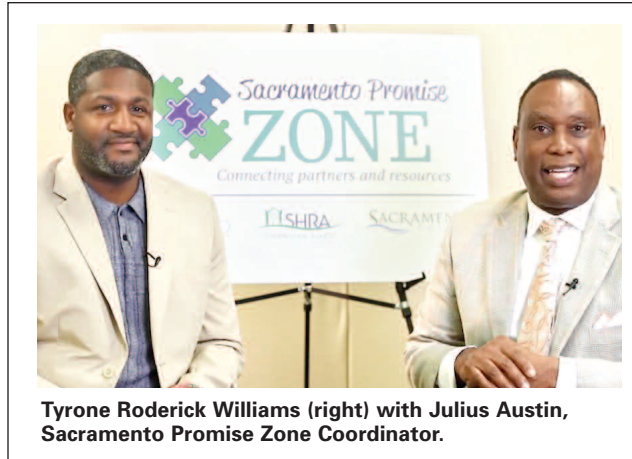
improving education, health, job training, economic development, affordable housing and much more.

Given the scope of the task at hand, it's clear that no one would have been more successful than Williams. Supported by Promise Zone Coordinator, Julius Austin, a team of AmeriCorps Vista members, and a federal liaison, Michael Huff, the Promise Zone currently has over 160 partners and partnerships with 10 federal agencies. Over the past five years, the Promise Zone collaboration partners have been awarded over \$176 million in local, state, and federal funds.

"At its core, Sacramento's Promise Zone leverages cross-sector collaborations to posi-

behavior modifications. It can be done in a socially and culturally relevant way, so that people actually receive the information and are happy to apply it to their lives."

"We can look at our business corridors and help bring capital and information, including better business practices, to them."



Tyrone Roderick Williams (right) with Julius Austin, Sacramento Promise Zone Coordinator.



Tyrone Roderick Williams with a cross-section of Sacramento corporate and business leaders who committed to a long-term \$750,000 investment effort to revitalize Sacramento's Promise Zone.

tively impact and improve outcomes for residents who are in lower income communities," Williams said. "We look at the social ills, challenges, and systematic problems that have occurred, and determine what we can do through partnerships and by attracting resources to really make a sustainable difference."

"These problems have been around for decades, and in some cases, for centuries, so we aren't delusional in thinking that we're going to solve them, but we CAN improve," Williams implored. "We can improve reading scores among our elementary school kids by bringing resources and assistance to teachers and parents."

"We can improve health outcomes by connecting with health care partners who provide services and training, and even

Williams' commitment to serving the community is a part of his DNA. His maternal grandfather was a Baptist pastor. His father was a math and science teacher at the local middle school and his mother rose through the ranks to become the highest ranking black official in Houston's county hospital system.

As Williams had walked me right up to the discussion of passion, I asked him about his, and how it intersected with his role at SHRA. He answered that question with a zeal that would have made his grandfather, the pastor, very proud.

"My passion is inspiring people and organizations to achieve their maximum potential," Williams confidently asserted. "Everything we do at SHRA touches lives. It is energizing when your passion, purpose



Tyrone Roderick Williams, SHRA Deputy Executive Director - Development

and profession are aligned, and I'm keenly aware that I'm being divinely guided." Williams said. "So I approach things from that perspective."

"That doesn't mean that I am perfect, but I am sent," Williams clarified. "So I approach things from that perspective."

In speaking with Williams, one gets the sense that he can accomplish anything that's set before him — or at the very least, he thinks he can! Williams struck me as the personification of a change agent. He is the type of guy you absolutely would want on your team, helping you face whatever challenge you might have before you.

I wondered about the challenges he faces every day.

"The challenges fall into two areas: political will and funding," Williams said. "We serve both the city and the county, and every elected official has their own personal goals, objectives, and agendas that we have to constantly cater to," Williams said.

"I don't control either of those — political will or funding — and juggling the two becomes very challenging at times," Williams added. "However, I don't run from challenges but I stay focused on finding realistic solutions and moving forward."

In describing the current season of his life, Williams shared that he is always looking for opportunities to expand his impact and influence. He recalled a talk he had recently given to a group of students at California State University, Sacramento.

"I told them I felt like, for my whole life, I'd been on a plane, assigned a seat, teetered down the runway, and right now, I've just lifted off. I've just begun to fly," Williams said. "The destination hasn't changed, but the altitude at which I soar has changed."

And where's the destination?

"I don't know," Williams exclaimed with his signature, contagious enthusiasm. "But wherever it is, it's good!"

To learn more about the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, go to shra.org and SacramentoPromiseZone.org

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SHRA: Celebrating 80 Years Empowering People And Strengthening Neighborhoods Through Affordable Housing

MILESTONES

For the past 80 years, the Sacramento Housing Authority has provided affordable housing to low-income working families, senior and disabled Sacramentans. Federal funding of public housing began in the late 1930s with the initial objective to house the working poor, improve slums, and provide construction jobs. Most projects were small one-to three story buildings. Larger public housing communities followed in the 1940s, such as Dos Rios and and helped to provide housing for Department of Defense workers at McClellan Air Force Base. After World War II, public housing returned to sheltering the poor.

The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency is the local administrator of the federal Housing Authority Public Housing Program on behalf of the City and County of Sacramento. SHRA is one of the largest landlords in the City and County with a portfolio of housing types from apartments to duplexes, garden units and single family homes. The Housing Authority provides safe, decent and well maintained affordable housing for 50,000 residents. SHRA administers more than 13,200 rental assistance vouchers in partnership with over 4,000 private residential owners to provide affordable housing for low income residents, including homeless residents and veterans.

HOUSING AUTHORITY MILESTONES

1930s

- City Council resolution creates the City of Sacramento Housing Authority

1940s

- County Housing Authority created
- First public housing communities open, serving families of Department of Defense employees at McClellan AFB during WWII
 - o New Helvetia opens as the County's first public housing community
 - o Dos Rios opens as the City's first public housing community

1950s

- River Oaks public housing community opens
- Dos Rios and New Helvetia expanded



SACRAMENTO CITY AND COUNTY
HOUSING AUTHORITY

1960s

- Housing Authority builds approximately 50 scattered housing units in the Del Paso Heights area
- Dos Rios and New Helvetia each expanded with 50 new units
- 270 units of downtown high-rise public housing constructed for elderly residents
 - o 2516 H street - Big Trees
 - o 2526 L street - Sutter View
 - o 1725 K street - Comstock
 - o 1820 Capitol Avenue - Capitol Terrace

1970s

- HUD develops Section 8 rental assistance program authorized by Congress in 1974

1980s

- Development of new public housing, including Oak Park duplexes, Las Victorianas, and scattered sites

1990s

- The City Council adopts revitalization strategy in partnership with the Housing Authority

2000s

- Revitalization strategy for troubled Phoenix Park creates 364 units affordable housing with resident services program and community amenities
 - Magic Johnson Community Empowerment center opens at Phoenix Park

2010s

- Rehabilitation of Sutter View, Washington Plaza and Sierra Vista preserves 228 units of low income project based voucher housing for elderly residents in the Central City
 - HUD awards \$2.7 million Jobs Plus Pilot Program grant at Marina Vista and Alder Grove communities to achieve economic stability through work readiness, employer networks, job place, educational advancement, technology skills, and financial literacy
 - County Housing Authority through SHRA receives HUD \$300,000 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant to develop a Neighborhood Transformation Plan for the larger River District/Railyards neighborhood
 - 218-unit Twin Rivers public housing community demolished to create Mirasol Village comprised of a 427-unit mixed income development seeded with a \$30 million HUD Choice Neighborhoods Implementation (CNI) grant

2020s

- Construction begins on first block Mirasol Village housing
 - Rental Assistance Demonstration Pilot (RAD) Program implemented to preserve public housing and sustain operations through public/private investment
 - Section 18 program launched to convert 215 scattered public housing units to project based voucher units

DID YOU KNOW...

In February 1940, the newly formed City Housing Authority conducted a door-to-door survey of 2,565 dwellings to determine housing conditions, family size and income, and rent being paid. Sixty-five percent were found to be substandard, and 20% of the families had incomes under \$60 per month.