



From Michigan to the Midwest



Our History

Housing cooperatives were becoming popular in the early 1960s, primarily due to FHA mortgage insurance programs. Michigan rapidly expanded its housing base by developing cooperatives under Section 213 of the National Housing Act.

The Foundation for Cooperative Housing (FCH) was the recognized leader in the development of housing cooperatives in Michigan and, by 1963, had several housing cooperatives in Michigan in various stages of development. A meeting was held at the Book Cadillac Hotel in Detroit to discuss forming an association of housing cooperatives. Members from 13 or 14 housing cooperatives attended the meeting. While many of the cooperatives had yet to reach final endorsement, there were numerous concerns and unanswered questions regarding the future of the properties and their governance.

It was decided that they would not establish a formal organization then; however, they would begin publishing a newsletter. The newsletter contained articles regarding the operations of housing cooperatives, including many tips on the do's and don'ts for Board Members.

First Conference

The Michigan Association of Housing Cooperatives was organized.

Later that same year a second meeting was held at Cobo Hall in downtown Detroit and cooperative members expressed overwhelming support for a formal organization to represent the interests of housing cooperatives in Michigan. The Michigan Association of Housing Cooperatives was organized, modeling its dues and membership structure after those of the National Association of Housing Cooperatives (NAHC).

First Board of Directors

The first board of directors was elected and represented a mix of cooperative members and FCH staff:

March Miller II, President

James J. Tahash, Asst. to the President

David Page, Asst. to the President

Dr. D. Samuel Harris, Vice President

Maurice Shepherd, Secretary

Hon. Percival Piper, Treasurer

Wendell Addington, Exec. Secretary

The organizations first conference held at COBO Hall located in Detroit, Michigan had the following initial representative membership:

Blackstone Cooperative, Chateaufort Place Cooperative, Colonial Townhouses Cooperative, Cooperative Services, Lafayette Park Cooperative, Pontiac Townhouses Cooperative, Royal Oak Townhouses Cooperative, Royalwood Cooperative, Williamsburg Townhouses Cooperative, Woodward Heights Cooperative and University Townhouses. Several of these original participants are still members today.

The Early Years

Wendell Addington was head of FCH's Michigan operations, the Honorable Percival Piper was the Secretary of State for the state of Michigan, and lived at Lafayette Park Cooperative in Detroit. Dr. D. Samuel Harris and his son Paul were active in creating the first by-laws for the organization. Dr. Harris lived at Lafayette Park Cooperative in Detroit, and Paul lived in University Townhouses in Ann Arbor.

(1963 – 1972) C. March Miller was the first Michigan Association of Housing cooperatives president. He was followed by James Tashahs, Paul Harris, Dennis, Al Reynolds, Estelle DePolo, and Ray LaRocque.

Both C. March Miller II and James J. Tahash later became employed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, where they continued to make great contributions to the housing cooperative community.

FCH's active involvement during the early years was helpful to the growth of the association. FCH would build association dues into the operating budgets of the cooperatives, assuring the Michigan Association of Housing Cooperatives an ongoing income and membership base.

The expansion of HUD's 221 (d)(3) (BMIR) and 236 mortgage insurance programs allowed for the growth of cooperative housing in the mid and late 1960s. FCH continued to dominate the Michigan cooperative development market and began developing more low and moderate-income cooperatives.

Supporting Cooperatives

In the early start of MAHC, they worked on a strong quarterly newsletter, paid dues accurately and promptly, quarterly training, Education and Growth, and cooperatives working together as people. Monthly meetings of the Board of Directors and quarterly training sessions for housing cooperators, managers, and others whose concerns were cooperative housing services.

The first few years were dominated by FCH involvement; By 1971, several Cooperators expressed concern with the dominant influence FCH yielded over the organization and mounted a campaign to change the organizational structure.

Several cooperatives from Illinois and Indiana had begun attending the conferences and meetings in the late 1960s, and in 1973 Eden Green Cooperative in Chicago, Illinois, joined. The organization grew and broadened its scope.

Name Change

MAHC needs to reach out farther than Michigan to some of the surrounding states. At the next election, the By-Laws were drafted to ensure that the housing cooperators were elected to most of the board seats. With the new By-Laws, cooperators would continue to hold most of the board seats. The Board of Directors of the Midwest Association of Housing cooperators comprised 15 housing cooperators or 12 housing cooperatives with three professional or individual positions. Allowing for a maximum of 3 seats to be held by persons classified as "Professionals."

Midwest Association of Housing Authority

Dr. Herman Curtis, from Stonegate Manor in Flint Michigan was the first President of the new organization. Dr. Herman Curtis served 15 years as president. As president he oversaw the transition and expansion of Michigan Association of Housing Cooperative to Midwest Association of housing Cooperatives. Mr. Curtis devoted his life to improving the quality of life at his cooperative and the cooperatives through the Midwest.

Leadership in Education and and Resource Centers

In 1974, the MAHC Board President, Mr. Herman Curtis, was invited to address the Mo-Kan Association of Housing Cooperatives membership, now known as the Great Plains Association.

In April 1974, MAHC leaders went to Washington, D.C., to take part in the National Conference On Cooperative Housing, which was developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the National Association of Housing-Cooperatives (NAHC) and the Organization for Applied Science in Society (OASIS). The meeting encouraged all programs in cooperative housing to present a slate of current problems for possible problem-solving and solutions.

Several issues were identified, including proper training and education for the cooperative boards. The Ford Foundation had provided a grant for conference participants' expenses and asked MAHC and OASIS to develop a proposal to address some of the problems and concerns raised at the conference.

This situation led to three years of Ford Foundation funding to develop MAHC as an education and resource center for housing Cooperatives. HUD supplemented the first-year funding on a contract basis.

MAHC established task forces to work on the various areas of the contract, including the Handbook, Discount Purchasing, Training, and Management Evaluation. After the first year, MAHC had accomplished the following: Produced the first draft of the handbook.

- Prepared a report on the items and services available for a discount purchasing program.
- Developed a Financial Management course for cooperatives.
- Designed a course on Evaluating the Management of a cooperative.
- Developed a course on Understanding Management Contracts.

Throughout the years, MAHC has continued to develop and present courses to aid cooperative board members in governing the affairs of their cooperatives.

The Association had held a conference every year of its existence, and it began with one-day affairs held close to home in Detroit and Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1975 MAHC started moving around the conference after out-of-state folks joined.

MAHC later started mini-seminars in Ohio and Indiana to assist those housing cooperatives with their problems. After, it was called Midyear conferences that moved around the Midwest states.

Building Bridges for the Future

Bill Magee joined MAHC in 1982 and was elected president in 1990. Bill Magee touched many people's hearts, minds, and souls over the years. He had a great love and passion for the Housing Cooperative Movement. So much so that he served this community for over 35 years in various capacities.

Bill was a strong advocate for education and was instrumental in planning the classes for the MAHC conferences. He strongly encouraged board members to "steep themselves in the learning process" and "Collect all the knowledge you can while in attendance and bring it back in the Cooperative spirit to your fellow members."

His passion for the Cooperative Community was never more evident than when it was expressed through his tireless pursuit of helping to organize housing cooperatives "We must continue to outreach to those still in the dark to shed light on the acres of uninformed Cooperatives." He worked side by side with distressed Cooperatives to educate and lead them to go on and become thriving efficient communities.

MAHC has published a quarterly Newsletter since 1971. The quarterly newsletter provides timely informative articles from the "how to" of problem-solving to the analysis of new legislation. It also includes information regarding upcoming events and answers to members' questions.

(1972 – Present) Dr. Herman E. Curtis was the first president of the Midwest Association of Housing cooperatives. He was followed by Almeda L. Ritter, William Magee, Dave Rudicel, Richard Berendson, and Blaine Honeycutt.



In 2023 MAHC celebrated their 60th year!