

2006 AGENCY AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS

ADMINISTRATIVE INNOVATION

SCAN TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES APPLICATION PROCESS

Previously, the Miami-Dade Housing Agency (MDHA) utilized a one-page housing application, which required MDHA staff to manually input data from applications into the computer - a labor-intensive, time-consuming process. MDHA now utilizes a scannable application, which provides the agency with a cost-effective solution to create its housing waiting lists.

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WFYI – THE INFORMATION CHANNEL

The Housing Commission wanted to communicate much more effectively and creatively with the residents in its mid-rise buildings. Residents wanted a system that relied heavily upon technology and ease of use. Staff met with cable providers and utilized a system similar to those used in large hotels to provide information on televisions via a specific channel within the cable system. Staff creates colorful and dazzling PowerPoint presentations that run continuously on a specific cable channel in each building. This channel communicates information about meetings, health services, weather, council events and upcoming services that affect everyone in the building.

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FRAUD RECOVERY TECHNIQUES

Since January 1, 2005, the Housing Authority has employed innovative techniques, policies, and procedures for detecting, investigating and recovering funds lost, and then terminating assistance for those who are unwilling to repay amounts due. These techniques have resulted in the recovery of \$94,195 of lost subsidies while reducing administrative expenses and increasing revenues by \$62,750, and promoting administrative efficiency, reduced program turn over, and improved goodwill between staff and program participants. Given the current state of reduced funding for public housing authorities, aggressive fraud detection and recovery have been necessary to assure that sufficient funding is available to serve all authorized families and meet all operating expenses.

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OPERATION COPA (CRACKDOWN ON PROGRAM ABUSE)

The Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA) was troubled by the influx of complaints regarding unreported income, illegal live-ins, and drug and criminal activity within its LPH and HCVP programs, and aware of the growing distrust of local governments. It decided it was time to end fraud. The ACHA Department of Public Safety established a task force, Crackdown of Program Abuse, comprised of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies that were charged with the mission to hold LPH and HCVP participants liable for criminal and fraudulent behavior. Due to the program's success, confidence is restored and those legitimately qualified receive improved assistance.

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PROGRAM INNOVATION – AFFORDABLE HOUSING

HOLIDAY NEIGHBORHOOD

The Holiday Neighborhood is a model project incorporating 42% affordable housing units in a new urban development in North Boulder. The area has a strong need for affordable housing and an area plan that indicates a preference for a walkable design. By partnering with the City early in the process and taking on the infrastructure construction, Boulder Housing Partners, the local housing authority, was able to create attractive development-ready lots in a cohesive site plan. Because a public sector agency led the project, a unified neighborhood with a wide variety of community amenities was created. In addition, the affordable units were designed to have identical exteriors to the market rate units and were scattered throughout the community to reduce separation and discrimination. The homes in the neighborhood reflect a high degree of innovation and design excellence.

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HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The Housing Opportunities Enhancement (HOPE) Program is a locally funded gap financing program that provides loans to housing developers who create or preserve affordable rental and owner-occupied housing in Dakota County, Minnesota. Units funded by the HOPE Program are reserved to households whose incomes are not more than 50% of area median income. Since the program's inception in 2002, it has provided over \$6.15 million in loans to 21 projects assisting in the production or preservation of 956 units of affordable housing for low-income families, seniors and special needs households.

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VALOR HOUSE: MISSOULA, MONTANA

Valor House is Montana's first housing development for homeless veterans. Missoula Housing Authority (MHA), using Department of Veterans Affairs funding, developed and implemented this program to provide housing with associated supportive services. The goal of the Valor House is to provide supportive services and housing that will transition into permanent housing for those who are disabled, elderly, or Native Americans, as well as those with substance abuse problems, those who suffer with mental illnesses, and those who are homeless veterans with dual diagnosis.

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FAIRCHILD SENIOR LIVING

Recognizing the possibilities for an abandoned nursing home in Fairchild, an economically depressed community of 516 people with a high population of low-income elderly residents, the Eau Claire County Housing Authority secured financing and contracted to convert the structure to low-income housing for senior citizens. The result is Fairchild Senior Living, a complex with 11 two-bedroom fully accessible apartments, common kitchen and living room areas, laundry facilities, and a beauty shop -- created where senior housing never before existed. Public and private supportive services are coordinated by housing authority staff, allowing the residents to live independently.

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PROGRAM INNOVATION – COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

PROVIDENCE WALK

Providence Walk, designed and built by the Olson Company, is an in-fill housing project that exemplifies the true meaning of neighborhood revitalization. Replacing a crime-ridden, dilapidated mobile-home park, which was housing of last resort, with attractive for-sale housing plays a critical role both in revitalizing this formerly blighted site as well as increasing homeownership opportunities in this primarily rental neighborhood. This project supports and complements goals and the previous efforts by the Fairfield Redevelopment Agency to revitalize the adjacent North Texas Street commercial corridor. Forty percent of the homes were sold to low and moderate-income households.

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MAGNOLIA POINTE DEVELOPMENT

The Housing Authority was interested in the revitalization within census tract 626 in Cocoa, Florida, which is known as Florida's worst census tract due to the high crime rate, highest unemployment rate, and lowest per capita income. The objective was to design an affordable residential development that would attract new families and seniors to a permanent housing environment, supported by local businesses and services. The result was the Magnolia Pointe Development - a mixed use project combining elderly and family housing with a supportive retail component.

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REVITALIZATION OF WESTFIELD ACRE INTO BALDWIN RUN

Located in East Camden, Westfield Acres was a 500-unit neighborhood consisting of primarily single-family houses. Poorly maintained and managed, it was a hotbed for drug dealing and a blighting influence on adjoining neighborhoods. Property values were down and houses abandoned. The Camden Housing Authority received a HOPE VI grant to revitalize this site. A total of 268 rental and 219 single-family homes were planned for what is now known as Baldwin's Run. The entire infrastructure and utilities had to be re-constructed. The first six phases are built and occupied while construction is underway for the remaining two phases and the community building.

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ESTHER SHORT COMMONS

The area around Esther Short Park had seen better days, affordable housing for lower-income workers was non-existent in a redeveloping downtown Vancouver, and Vancouver's Farmer's Market needed a new home. Working with private developers and community partners, Vancouver Housing Authority created Esther Short Commons, a mixed-use, mixed-income housing and commercial development that is also home to the Farmer's Market. The result is an attractive, affordable development with 160 residential units and several businesses, a building that complements the refurbished park and a place that has become a destination for the whole region.

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PROGRAM INNOVATION – PROJECT DESIGN

MANDELA GATEWAY: MIXED USE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Mandela Gateway is a new, affordable housing project that is central to revitalization efforts in the historically underserved community of West Oakland, California. Developed by the Oakland Housing Authority and its partner BRIDGE Housing Corporation, this HOPE VI project is located near a major inter-modal transit station and is serving as the impetus for further transit-oriented development. Mandela Gateway was designed by architect Michael Willis to be both bold and thoughtful -- to bridge the gap between an older, mostly lower-income, Victorian-influenced community and the cutting-edge transit-oriented contemporary development -- and to promote mixed-income development in a rapidly gentrifying area.

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HOLIDAY NEIGHBORHOOD

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MODERNIZATION CONCEPT

The Arbors at Rubin Padgett Estate is a 119-unit development that was formally a motel. The authority faced an uphill challenge in transforming the development identity. The physical appearance and lack of an on-site management office brought a challenge to providing services. The stigma associated with low social image and crisis of self-esteem added to the problems. The sloped corrugated metal roof, architectural towers, improved landscape, site base management office, laundry facility, and energy-efficient fixtures/appliances are designed to restore a sense of place and pride and to foster a sense of privacy, ownership, and community.

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SUMMER HILL APARTMENTS

The Housing Authority sought to design affordable housing that would stay within budget, appease stiff neighborhood opposition, and entice market rate tenants to live next door to low-income families. The Authority used an exterior design with bungalow/craftsmanship architectural details; quality construction materials; universal design; amenities; and generous landscaping and open space to give Summer Hill Apartments the appearance of upscale market rate housing and ensure its financial success and acceptance by both tenants and neighbors. The project's mixed-income rent structure and accessible units expand housing options for a wide range of households.

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REGIONAL HOUSING CENTER AND ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

A one-stop information center for affordable housing was needed in the north Willamette Valley region of Oregon that would offer an easily accessible resource of information on all aspects of affordable housing. In addition, the Housing Authority of Yamhill County needed to centralize and expand the facilities for client training, administration, and maintenance. The result was a uniquely designed, environmentally friendly, and easily accessible facility that vastly improves client services and working conditions for staff. Cost savings are realized in the areas of client services, utilities and staff time.

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ESTHER SHORT COMMONS

The area around Esther Short Park had seen better days, affordable housing for lower-income workers was non-existent in a redeveloping downtown Vancouver, and Vancouver's Farmer's Market needed a new home. Working with private developers and community partners, Vancouver Housing Authority created Esther Short Commons, a mixed-use, mixed-income housing and commercial development that is also home to the Farmer's Market. The result is an attractive, affordable development with 160 residential units and several businesses, a building that complements the refurbished park and a place that has become a destination for the whole region.

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PROGRAM INNOVATION – RESIDENT AND CLIENT SERVICES

TZU-CHI FREE MULTI-SERVICE HEALTH CLINIC

The Housing Authority and the Tzu Chi Foundation collaborated to assemble numerous health care services for uninsured residents and community members in an area where the need is extremely high. Participants were provided free primary care services, including immunizations, medical, optometric, and dental care at the O'Banion Learning Center, located amid Merced County's largest public housing development. More than 120 volunteers set-up equipment, delivered medical services, provided translating, gave referrals to low/no cost insurance providers, and distributed free school supplies, personal hygiene items, and cleaning products to almost 300 people. Many received multiple exams and services.

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SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM

The "Summer Youth Program" was created in order to provide educational and constructive activities for the youth of our community, targeting low-to-moderate income neighborhoods. This program consisted of city departments and outside agencies providing interactive trainings regarding career options, resume writing, interview skills, leadership development, equipment use, and safety. Local firefighters guided youth with "hands on" experience, providing transformations of the exteriors of eight homes in the community that are owned by the elderly, single parents, and persons with disabilities. In lieu of wages, youth were rewarded with incentives and a Leadership Excellence trip to Disney's Epcot Center.

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SHARE THE HARVEST

Given the frail condition of many residents and realizing that the elderly tenants' incomes were being taken up by the increased costs of prescription drugs, the staff decided to build a community garden. Staff from the Housing Authority volunteered their time and energy to prepare, plant, and then harvest a community vegetable garden for the elderly/homebound residents in the Authority's 40-unit senior high rise facility.

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HOPEWORK'S 'N CAMDEN

Over a two-year period computer technologies were used to foster youth development with a program that integrated training, employment, educational assistance, job readiness, and community-oriented leadership experience. Ninety-seven public housing youth, 14 to 24 years old, were trained in the latest computer technologies in the fields of Geographic Information Systems, Website Design & Development, Computer Graphics; Computer Video, Computer Hardware Operations and Repair, and Microsoft Office Specialist Training. The housing authority has linked participants with supports services such as childcare services, financial management services, transportation assistance, health care, and other referral services.

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CAPPA – SHAPING TOMORROW’S LEADERS TODAY

CPA Youth Intervention and Development Project, Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders Today is a comprehensive community based youth project located in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania. The project specifically targets at-risk and economically-disadvantaged youth enrolled in elementary through high school, however, programs are open to all youth. The Project has been in operation since the summer of 2002 and serves over 400 youth. Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders Today builds character through participation in organized sports, creative and performing arts programs, workshops, community service projects, summer youth employment as well as providing academic support for all participants.

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GOING THE EXTRA MILE – HURRICAN RITA EVACUATION

On September 21, 2005, the Mayor of the City of Galveston, Texas, called for a mandatory evacuation in anticipation of category-five Hurricane Rita. The Galveston Housing Authority (GHA) implemented its detailed evacuation plan for the very first time. Residents who had signed up on the evacuation list were contacted in person by staff notification teams and boarded on the contracted buses to go to a pre-arranged shelter. Resident Services staff accompanied the residents on the buses and at the shelter. As a result of the efficiency of GHA's plan, the City of Galveston has now adopted it.

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