

2019 Awards of Excellence Winners

Nominated from among the Awards of Merit winners each year, the Awards of Excellence are chosen by national juries and represent the very best work being done by housing and community development agencies nationwide.

Administrative Innovation

Community Solar Gardens, Sustainable Energy Use

The Public Housing Agency of the City of Saint Paul owns and manages 4,274 units of public housing and is therefore a large consumer of energy. The Community Solar Garden program was created by the Minnesota Legislature, and it provides Minnesotans with convenient opportunities to invest in renewable resources. Under the program, the PHA entered into a 25-year community solar garden agreement with a private developer. Under the Agreement, 10 hi-rises and the PHA's Central Administrative Office building are connected to a community solar garden where the PHA completely offsets its electric costs with billing credits from solar energy. Last year, the PHA saved \$112,000 in energy costs.

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Do More With AmeriCorps

The East Greenwich Rhode Island Housing Authority demonstrates how a small agency can see big results by partnering with AmeriCorps. Tools for successful tenancy, eviction prevention, community resource, awareness, and an enhanced social media presence are just some of the value added through this partnership.

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Online Section 8 Annual Recertifications

Imagine HCV clients clicking on a link in an email at home and being able to answer questions online in one of seven languages. Imagine their answers leading to prompts to upload specific documents, and then that uploaded information reaching caseworkers who process it. Imagine clients and landlords receiving automated emails with their new HAPs and client portions with no paper at all. In 2018, the Everett Housing Authority laid the groundwork for this imagined future. No more disruption of clients'

schedules, taking time off work, traveling to meet with caseworkers, snail-mailing multiple forms, individual meetings with clients to verify completeness of information, follow-up meetings, data entry, and paper files.

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Rent Increase Request Process Improvement

In 2015 King County Housing Authority (KCHA) did not have an automated process to receive rent increases. Instead, landlords sent requests to individual case managers. In an effort to improve customer service and provide better tracking of rental trends in the community, KCHA developed an online rent increase system, a rent increase facilitator, and an automated workflow and notification process. These new processes improved landlord interaction, streamlined landlord contact with the agency, and allowed the KCHA to keep up with the increase in rent requests due to market conditions in the county.

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Affordable Housing

Woven House and Creekview Plaza II (AVS56)

Alaska Village Senior 56 (AVS56) is a mixed-tenancy development, comprised of three buildings: Woven House, which features 38 apartments, located in two sister buildings offering independent senior rentals for residents aged 55 years or older; and Creekview Plaza II, a mixed-use, mixed-income building that houses 18 one-bedroom apartments with retail on the street level. AVS56 is the continuation of the Creekside Town Center concept bringing affordable, independent living opportunities to east Anchorage. AVS56 joins CIHA's other Creekside Town Center developments: Grass Creek Village, Creekside Plaza 49 and Grass Creek North.

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Fifty Eight Hundred

Since early 2014, the average rent in Lakewood, CO has risen by 23.4%, adding an extra \$3,372 to annual housing costs for Lakewood's renters. For those struggling to keep up with the ever-increasing cost of living, affordable housing isn't just convenient, it's vital. When an opportunity arose to transform a vacant office tower into high-quality and affordable apartments and knit a long-ignored neighborhood back together, Metro West Housing Solutions (MWHS) saw a way to provide Lakewood's residents with a 152 units of attainable housing. After a challenging process, Fifty Eight Hundred is now providing a home to hundreds of tenants.

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The Lindley

In 2018, the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) of Montgomery County opened The Lindley in Chevy Chase, MD. It capitalized on the opportunity to increase affordable units near a future public transit hub. Using a creative financing structure, HOC is the only PHA in the nation to secure private equity in a transaction while retaining principal control and ownership of the property. Through critical public-private partnerships, HOC created a self-sustaining property and increased affordable units in one of the top communities in the country for low-income youth to achieve upward mobility while building a new public park for the community.

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New Hope Housing Harrisburg

Homelessness and substandard housing destroy lives, wrench families apart, and degrade communities. With more people living on the edge, New Hope Housing created a formula for alleviating homelessness by building healthy communities. For more than 25 years, New Hope has helped people mend their lives and recover their dignity by providing affordable, beautiful housing for adults living alone on very limited incomes. By working with collaborative partners, they developed a model of excellence in housing and supportive services, and the results have real human impact. Harrisburg is their eighth property in Houston, and their first mixed-use development.

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Community Revitalization

Olive Meadow

Olive Meadow, a beautiful 62-unit affordable housing community, benefits low-income families and fills a recognized and urgent need for affordable housing in the region. It is the first onsite phase in the revitalization of the larger Arrowhead Grove Neighborhood (formerly known as Waterman Gardens) and is part of a service-rich, master-planned community that supports educational attainment, economic mobility, and improved health through education, wellness, and social service programs. Beyond the construction of high-quality apartment homes, the redevelopment of Olive Meadow includes the revitalization of the surrounding neighborhood and the alignment of community partnerships that promote educational opportunity and improved health.

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Village on Shields Major Rehabilitation

Housing Catalyst preserved 285 affordable apartment homes by purchasing and rehabilitating a property in dire need of repairs and upgrades. The project required a complex funding structure that was almost derailed when the 2016 election caused a 16% drop in tax credit equity pricing, creating a funding gap over \$3 million. Then, days before closing, the investor unexpectedly required a \$1.6 million replacement of water supply lines. Despite those obstacles, the project came together because of the development team's monumental efforts to fill the funding gap and value engineer the project, resulting in a beautifully renewed 17-acre affordable community.

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Fifty Eight Hundred

Like the surrounding metro Denver area, Lakewood has seen an increased rate of development and economic growth in recent years. However, like any city, as parts of Lakewood developed, others fell further into decline. Such was the case at 5800 W. Alameda Avenue. When an opportunity arose to transform a vacant office tower into high-quality and affordable apartments and knit a long-ignored

neighborhood back together, Metro West Housing Solutions (MWHS) saw a way to provide Lakewood's residents with 152 units of affordable housing while leading the way in revitalizing a community.

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"See Something, Say Something" Safety Program

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA) collaborated with local partners to implement a viable crime prevention strategy called "See Something, Say Something." This initiative abates crime to allow tenants to feel safe and live comfortably, within their public housing communities. Public and private partnerships between the HHA, Resident Councils, management, Houston's Police Department, Harris County's Constables, and the Houston Apartment Association allows key stakeholders to organize local efforts to reduce crime through improvement in physical design and coordination of resources. As a result, traditionally vulnerable public housing tenants are able to feel safe and thrive within their community.

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Project Design

Liberty Community Plaza

Liberty Community Plaza opened to residents on June 20, 2015. Based on extensive community involvement, this 20,000 square-foot community center was designed to house multi-purpose rooms for community activities. The center includes an exercise room, event space, and an outdoor amphitheater. County offices and rooms reserved for military veterans' programs are managed by Helpline Youth Counseling, the non-profit organization located onsite and operates the center. The Plaza project also included the beautification of, and improvements to, the adjacent track and field area including a water demonstration garden built in collaboration with Orchard Dale Water District.

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Village at Westerly Creek 3

Nearly 15 years ago, the Aurora Housing Authority (AHA) began planning the replacement of their physically and functionally obsolete public housing development, Buckingham Gardens (BG). BG, constructed in 1975, provided ten family rental units and 120 walk-up apartments for seniors and the disabled. It became apparent that the cost of continuing to band-aid the units was no longer economically feasible nor was the walk-up design suitable for seniors or residents with disabilities. The culmination of the planning was the three phase development of Village at Westerly Creek (VWC) to replace BG. VWC I and VWC II are now complete and VWC3 is the final phase, which consists of fifty family rental units and 24 one-bedroom/one bath senior rental flats.

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The Lindley

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West Union Square

The Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) is driven to be a leader in the housing industry while promoting neighborhood stability. There is no better example of this than the West Union Square development in Colerain Township. This crime ridden area known as the Devil's Triangle was a plague on the neighborhood and public services. This area accounted for 79% of the crime in Colerain Township. CMHA and Colerain Township partnered to revitalize this blighted area and develop beautifully designed, innovative, senior housing with an abundance of amenities. Through this public/private partnership, 70 seniors now proudly call West Union Square home.

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Wheatley Park Senior Living

Wheatley Park Senior Living is the second phase of the third and final redevelopment phase of the Wheatley Courts. The Original Wheatley Courts, built in 1940, was comprised of 40 residential buildings containing 246 public housing units and one non-residential building. The development was obsolete and had deteriorated beyond repair. The Wheatley Park Senior Living Development consists of 80 units of public housing, project based vouchers, and affordable units. The new development is a single, three story, two color tone, U-shaped building that offers modern high -quality, energy -efficient, one and two bedroom apartments at an affordable price.

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9th E. Lofts at Bennion Plaza

The 9th East Lofts Apartments at Bennion Plaza is a 68-unit Housing Authority of Salt Lake City development with low income (54) and market rate (14) units located in the East Central Community Council District of Salt Lake City, UT. Adjacent to the 9th East Light Rail Trax station, it is considered a true Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). It also meets the “walkable community” criteria, with human-scale design elements like brick façades, street level retail spaces, and a community plaza. The 9th East Lofts development is the first building in Utah to receive the Energy Star Multi-Family High Rise Certification.

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Resident and Client Services

SHINE Mentor Program

The SHINE Mentor Program is a positive solution to otherwise unsupervised after-school hours where high school students are statistically prone to commit crime and violence. The Mentor Program provides free college credit, as well as mentor and leadership training in a community that was formally known as

a criminal hub. The award winning program not only serves its students, but focuses on the community and hosts an annual community project. The 2018 community project was the city's First International Peace Conference which prompted the Mayor's proclamation of May 12, 2018 as Yuma's "Day of Peace."

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NBHA Parenting Club Paint Night

To decrease the stigma of accessing mental health treatment, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice who accepts Medicaid visited the Housing Authority of the City of New Britain, and conducted a Paint Night for members of their Parenting Club. The housing authority provided babysitting and dinner to make it a family event. The therapist asked participants to paint a picture and then shared with them the various benefits of working with a licensed mental health counselor. As a result, four clients visited a therapist for the first time, and they are working through issues that have prevented them from increasing their self-sufficiency.

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Youth Advisory Council

The purpose of Thomaston Housing Authority-Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is to create partnerships between youth, communities, and youth serving organizations while at the same time developing life and leadership skills. The Thomaston Housing Authority-Youth Advisory Council carries out community-based initiatives and/or activities from a comprehensive youth development approach. The YAC is comprised of middle school and high school students that reside in the communities. The YAC is considered to be the youth leaders of the community and must honor the Code of Conduct (good behavior) of the program. The YAC meets with the ED each month.

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sayYes!/CHAMPS Youth Development Program

Beginning in 2016 the City of Wichita set out to further youth development and fight childhood hunger in Wichita by applying to be a Cities Combating Hunger through Summer and Afterschool Meals Programs (CHAMPS) city and creating the "say Yes!" program. CHAMPS aims to establish new afterschool and summer meals programs in cities throughout the country and is affiliated with "say Yes!" City of Wichita Housing Authority (WHA) who was selected by the National League of Cities to help lead this fight in the Wichita area. Since 2017 WHA has sponsored nine different meal sites in Wichita serving over 10,000 meals to area youth in need.

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SAHA Walking School Bus

There is a policy with all San Antonio school districts that stipulates if a student lives within a 2-mile radius of their school, bus services will not be available to that student. Unfortunately, this includes over 200 children living at Cassiano Homes who attend Sarah King Elementary. On any given day, one could see large amounts of children ranging in age from 4 to 10 years old, making their way to school without any adult supervision. In an effort to address this issue, the San Antonio Housing Authority created a Walking School Bus, which coordinates volunteers to walk with a group of children to and from school on a structured schedule or planned route.

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Framing Program-Persons Experiencing Homelessness

The Housing Authority of Salt Lake City partnered with state and local government and the local community college to create a construction framing program that would be offered to single individuals experiencing homelessness. Participants were given an apartment for six months, furniture, food and household items, and transportation to class. At the end of the six-week course, participants were given a certificate of proficiency in framing and interviewed by local construction companies. Twelve people were selected for the program, and eight graduated the course and obtained employment.

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