

# Award of Excellence Winners

Announced March 2022

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. This year we presented 18 award winning entries in the following categories, Administrative Innovation, Affordable Housing, Project Design and Resident and Client Services.

Congratulations to all our winners!

## Administrative Innovation

### Preserving Affordable Housing in the City of San Diego

Addressing affordable housing challenges requires a balance between constructing new housing and preserving existing affordable housing. The San Diego Housing Commission published a new report, "Preserving Affordable Housing in the City of San Diego," which provides a current housing inventory in the City of San Diego, including a first-of-its-kind inventory of naturally occurring affordable housing, cost estimates for preserving housing at risk of losing its affordability, and strategies to preserve affordability. The City Council on Oct. 27, 2020, approved seven actions based on this report to implement a strategy for affordable housing preservation in the City of San Diego.

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### Adams County COVID-19 Rental and Mortgage Assistance Relief Fund

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the U.S. housing crisis. Many Coloradans found themselves out of work and unable to keep up with necessary expenses - housing included. To keep Coloradans housed, Maiker Housing Partners, a progressive, socially conscious housing authority based in Adams County, Colo., partnered with Adams County to create the COVID-19 Rental and Mortgage Assistance Relief Fund. The fund provided rental and mortgage assistance for low-income Adams County residents experiencing economic stress due to the COVID-19 crisis. As of December 2020, the fund has distributed \$3,866,871 to 930 households serving 2,790 people.

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### 2020 Human Resources Accomplishments "2020 Seeing Things in a New Light – Cultural Diversity"

One of human resources' missions is to propose innovative team-building ideas and initiatives that increase agency morale. In 2019, the Human Resources Department administered a climate survey for the Houston Housing Authority (HHA). In response to the Employee Engagement portion of the survey, human resources identified an opportunity to increase agency morale. In 2020 they focused on "Cultural Diversity" by uplifting employees' differences, increasing cultural awareness and knowledge.

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## **Affordable Housing**

### **Golden Apartments - A Permanent Supportive Housing Development for Homeless and Chronically Homeless Individuals**

The Golden Apartments community is the first permanent supportive housing site for homeless and chronically homeless individuals developed by the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino (HACSB) in partnership with the County of San Bernardino Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP). The primary goal is to provide permanent housing and supportive services to help address the homelessness crisis. The site was redesigned and rehabilitated to convert 21 existing two-story units into 38 rental units, a unit for the on-site manager, a leasing office, community space, and offices for partners providing on-site supportive services to residents.

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### **Crossing Pointe North**

There is a critical need for affordable senior housing in the Denver metro area, and the city of Thornton is no exception. According to Thornton's Housing Needs Assessment, 75% of renters 65+ are rent burdened and many are below the poverty line. To combat this issue, Maiker Housing Partners, a progressive, socially conscious housing authority based in Adams County, Colo., constructed Crossing Pointe North, the first phase of a new, multi-generational, affordable housing model available to low-income seniors who wish to age in place. This "green" community, available to adults 62 years or older, promotes a healthy and supportive lifestyle for its active adult residents.

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### **Valor Pointe, PSH for Homeless Veterans**

Valor Pointe is a 27-unit permanent supportive housing development that serves vulnerable veterans in the City of Boise. Opened in August 2020, Valor Pointe uses the "housing first" model which creates sustainable positive outcomes for veterans experiencing chronic homelessness by providing a home first and then providing residents with healthcare, mental health counseling, and substance abuse treatment to help them live healthier lives. Valor Pointe is made possible through a public-private partnership

working to end homelessness in Ada County, leveraging funds totaling nearly \$6.3 million. The Boise Veterans Administration Medical Center provides the wrap-around services for residents.

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### **The Hub of Opportunity**

The Hub of Opportunity, a 157-unit mixed use development, set a new standard for how to combine community services, workforce development opportunities, and fully-accessible living. The Hub, a product of the long-standing partnership between Housing Connect and the Columbus Community Center, is an innovative commercial and residential development for accessible and affordable housing. The building is located adjacent to the UTA TRAX station in South Salt Lake City. Funded through a complex mix of 9%, 4% and New Market Tax Credits, the Hub was designed to enhance visitability where residents, families, and visitors have barrier-free access to the community and to each other.

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## **Project Design**

### **The Art of Urban Farming at Meacham Urban Farm, Encore Development**

The Encore project was formerly a decrepit public housing development within an underutilized 28-plus acre site. That anomaly was remedied by the new plan developed under a model public-private partnership between Tampa Housing Authority and Banc of America CDC. The partnership has dramatically transformed the site into an environmentally sound sustainable mixed-use, mixed-income, transit-oriented community development that links the existing downtown with historic Ybor City. Lot 1 is “The Meacham Urban Farm,” which utilizes the empty urban land for gardens, encourages the community to eat healthy, fosters entrepreneurship and tourism, inspires community involvement in the local food system, and embodies a commitment to organic, healthy, environmentally conscious farming.

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### **Capehart Playground and Splashpad**

Bangor Housing celebrated its 50th Anniversary by opening and dedicating a state-of-the-art playground and splashpad in its Capehart neighborhood, the largest public housing site north of Boston. Capehart has approximately 800 school age children representing about 20% of Bangor's total school population. The neighborhood was always busy, but had one major deficiency, no recreational space for kids. The playground and splash pad solved that problem and since opening, has been packed with families from the neighborhood, as well as surrounding towns. The pride it brought to the families made the investment worth every penny!

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### **An Innovative Approach to Philly's Urgent Housing Demand**

Recent homeless encampments underscore the need for affordable housing in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Housing Authority found a way to build more units, and meet the urgent demand. Blumberg 83 consists of 83 energy-efficient rental apartments spread across a mix of townhomes and multi-unit walk-up buildings. They were built on ground that once housed the Blumberg Apartments, where 1,500 people lived in a pocket of poverty and crime. The development features modular wood frame construction, a community center, green space, and a management office. Construction started in May 2019 and occupants moved-in in January 2020.

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### **Corpus Christi Housing Authority Thanksgiving Homes Affordable Housing**

Corpus Christi Housing Authority and Affiliates (CCHA), embarked on an ambitious plan to improve access to quality housing and improve neighborhoods through repurposing underutilized and often neglected infill lots. Thanksgiving Homes, an affiliated non-profit offers homeownership/affordable rentals for low- to moderate-income families that previously did not exist in the market.

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### **Artisan at Ruiz**

The Artisan at Ruiz is an entirely affordable 102-unit housing development, with a mix of two- and three-bedroom units developed by the San Antonio Housing Authority. This community is designed as walkable, sustainable, and inter-generational with improved connections to the surrounding neighborhood. A collaborative process with residents, community leaders, city partners, the San

Antonio Housing Authority and other stakeholders was key to developing a plan to provide the highest quality of life and long-term sustainability.

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### **East Meadows II**

East Meadows II is the third phase of development for an overall master plan community known as Wheatley Courts spearheaded by the San Antonio Housing Authority. Wheatley was a 248-unit public housing development built in 1940. Over time, the cinder block style development negatively impacted the neighborhood as its structure and unit design became obsolete and deteriorated beyond repair. East Meadows II added 119 multifamily units, with 23 of them being three-to-four bedroom townhomes. Thoughtful design consideration enhanced the streetscape and livability of the East Meadows community, but to further magnify the diversity of the streetscape, multiple color schemes were chosen to create the sense of an extension of the neighborhood.

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## **Resident and Client Services**

### **Maintaining and Increasing Resident Services During the Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic shut down the County of San Bernardino, much like the rest of the nation, in March 2020. Some of the hardest-hit families lived in the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino's (HACSB) affordable housing communities. Many rely on school lunches for nutritious meals for their children and often work in vulnerable sectors of the economy. HACSB was concerned about the pandemic having an amplified adverse impact on these families. Despite receiving no direct federal funding for resident services, HACSB had already implemented a Resident Services program for its affordable housing communities in 2019. Because of this existing program, instead of reducing resident services due to the pandemic, staff instead were able to enhance services for their vulnerable households.

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### **Section 3 Promotion and Resident Awareness**

The Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) developed a robust Section 3 training program. Focusing within their agency, they train Section 3 qualified individuals in day-to-day operations of the RHA. The participants can train in all PHA departments including finance, maintenance, human services, housing choice voucher, and property management. To promote this program and to allow for a greater audience reach, RHA developed a Section 3 portal. This portal has been vital to connecting Section 3 residents to jobs, education, and training opportunities, not only from RHA but also from contractors servicing their properties.

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### **Remote Learning Centers**

When COVID-19 brought the entire city to a halt, many children from lower-income families did not make the transition to virtual classes. The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) partnered with the School District of Philadelphia, the Boys and Girls Club, and the City to establish safe and secure remote learning centers, some of which were set up in community rooms of PHA's housing developments. The 10 remote learning centers provided a familiar place where students had access to reliable high-speed Internet and, at some locations, lab monitors to help with computer issues or other challenges. PHA also tracked down students to give them free Chromebooks and hotspots from the school district.

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### **The Big Blue Bike Barn**

Community collaboration is the heartbeat of The Big Blue Bike Barn. A previously empty lot on Newport Housing Authority land is now a public space for biking, hiking, gathering and growing. It is a place of pride for neighborhood residents and a place of fun for all who use it. Bike-happy kids love to visit it, arriving and departing with enthusiasm. A spirit of independence is provided in the newly created recreational space where young people can be curious, adventurous, healthy and safe.

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### **Breaking the Digital Divide in the Public Housing Program**

The Harlingen Housing Authority partnered with ConnectHomeUSA, T-Mobile and the Harlingen Affordable Housing Corporation to bridge the digital divide amongst their public housing residents. Together they provided each family with a hot spot, enabling affordable access to high speed internet.

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