

2005 WINNERS

# MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing

Supportive Housing and Property and Asset Management



**MetLife Foundation**

in partnership with





MetLife Foundation  
Award For Excellence  
In Affordable Housing

# Award Winners in Supportive Housing and Property and Asset Management

**ROUND TEN**

**2005**

**MetLife Foundation**

in partnership with



## About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation, established by MetLife in 1976, supports various educational, health, civic and cultural organizations across the country. MetLife and MetLife Foundation have supported Enterprise's housing and neighborhood revitalization activities with grants and loans of more than \$34 million. For more information about the Foundation, visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).

## About Enterprise

Enterprise is the nation's leading provider of the expertise and development capital for building decent, affordable homes and revitalizing poor communities. Over the past two decades, Enterprise has privately raised and invested \$6 billion in equity, grants, and loans to produce over 175,000 affordable homes and provide opportunities for low-income families nationwide. Organizations working to rebuild their communities can find free resources and tools at [www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources](http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources).

Copyright ©2005, The Enterprise Foundation, Inc. All rights reserved.  
ISBN 1-932699-19-8

Questions and comments regarding use of these materials should go to:

Enterprise

Knowledge Management

10227 Wincopin Circle, Suite 500

Columbia, MD 21044

410.964.1230

[www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources](http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources)

# Table of Contents

- 2 Foreword
- 3 Acknowledgments
- 4 About the Awards Program
- 5 Executive Summary

## SUPPORTIVE HOUSING AWARD WINNERS

- 7 **First Place: Kerner-Scott House**  
Downtown Emergency Service Center  
Seattle, Washington
- 11 **Second Place: Hill House**  
Palladia, Inc.  
New York, New York
- 15 **Third Place: Decatur Place**  
Mercy Housing  
Denver, Colorado

## PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT AWARD WINNERS

- 18 **First Place: Bethany Hill School**  
Bethany Hill School, Inc.  
Framingham, Massachusetts
- 22 **Second Place: Rogers Avenue Homesteaders Housing  
Development Fund Cooperative**  
Urban Homesteading Assistance Board  
New York, New York
- 26 **Third Place: Winchester Greens**  
Better Housing Coalition  
Richmond, Virginia

# Foreword

MetLife Foundation and Enterprise share a commitment to building healthy communities. We recognize that a key component of healthy communities is affordable housing. When developed and managed with resident and community needs in mind, affordable housing can change lives and transform entire neighborhoods.

We are pleased to partner with Enterprise for this 10th anniversary year of the MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing. Launched in 1996, the awards recognize nonprofit groups for innovation and leadership in two areas: supportive housing and property and asset management. Award winners receive unrestricted financial support to expand their work, and Enterprise shares their exemplary work with other organizations across the country.

This publication includes case studies of the six award-winning projects for 2005. We hope they serve as an inspiration and model for other groups working to build housing and healthy communities.

Sibyl Jacobson  
President  
MetLife Foundation

# Acknowledgments

We extend our thanks to the executive directors and other staff of the nonprofit organizations that received the 2005 MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing for their exemplary housing projects.

We acknowledge the time and expertise provided by the members of the MetLife Foundation Awards Review Committee, which included Barbara Knecht, R.A.; Ernie Martin, Miami Supportive Housing Corporation; David Dorsey, Manna Inc.; and David Fromm and Diana A. Meyer of Enterprise.

Additionally, we thank the staff from Enterprise who helped throughout this process. They managed the program, conducted site visits, reviewed applications, selected finalists and choreographed the awards ceremony. Diana A. Meyer oversaw the selection of finalists for the Supportive Housing category, and David Fromm oversaw the selection of finalists for the Property and Asset Management category. Kathleen Rzemien coordinated the awards process. Catherine Hyde led the publication team. Ian Kennedy compiled information and edited the book, and Alicia Lindsey managed print distribution. Finally, Yianice Hernandez kept everyone focused and on deadline.

# About the Awards Program

## Recognizing Excellence and Sharing Best Practices In Affordable Housing

Enterprise launched the MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing in 1996. The awards recognize and share the important work being done by nonprofit organizations across the country that own, develop or operate affordable housing. Specifically, the goals of the awards are to:

- Showcase models of excellence in the management of affordable housing and the operation of supportive housing for special needs populations.
- Increase the understanding of how to achieve success in providing supportive housing for special needs populations.
- Increase the understanding of the role of the owner, asset manager, property manager and tenants in developing, maintaining and operating affordable housing.
- Provide unrestricted financial support for agencies that exhibit excellence in asset or property management and the provision of special needs housing.

- Disseminate information on model supportive housing, and property management programs through the Enterprise website, [www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources](http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources).

For additional information about the MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing program, including the online applications process, criteria, deadlines and copies of this and past winners' books, see the Enterprise website, [www.enterprisefoundation.org/metlife](http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/metlife). This book can be downloaded free, in PDF format. To order a free, print version, contact Alicia Lindsey of the Knowledge Management department, at 410.772.2417 or email [alindsey@enterprisefoundation.org](mailto:alindsey@enterprisefoundation.org).

Additional tools and resources to help nonprofits rebuild low-income communities are available at [www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources](http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources).

# Executive Summary

The MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing recognize winners in two categories: supportive housing and property and asset management. In addition to public recognition, winners receive an award of unrestricted funds to expand their work.

- 1st place: \$25,000
- 2nd place: \$15,000
- 3rd place: \$10,000

The 2005 MetLife Foundation awards mark the program's tenth year, and this year's winners continue to exemplify innovation in delivering supportive services to low-income individuals and superb management capabilities.

## 2005 Supportive Housing Award Winners

The first place award for supportive housing was won by the **Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC)** for the **Kerner-Scott House**. Nestled among trees on a quiet residential corner in Seattle, Wash., Kerner-Scott House is the fourth supportive housing project to be opened by DESC and offers 40 apartments for formerly homeless adults. The second and third floors provide 25 safe haven units for homeless mentally ill individuals, and the fourth floor has 15 clean and sober units for homeless chemically dependent adults in recovery. The low-barrier housing model that is so successfully executed at Kerner-Scott House calls for an extremely attentive but also flexible approach to serving the needs of this special population. DESC's unique continuum of services allows residents the most comfort and safety as they transition into this low-barrier housing, and then

on to more independent situations, as many former Kerner-Scott House tenants have done.

**Palladia Inc.** of New York, N.Y., was awarded second place for **Hill House**, where it has been providing permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals in substance abuse recovery since 1999. Located in the Bronx along a mostly residential street and adjacent to Starhill, one of Palladia's residential treatment facilities, the six-story building was constructed by Palladia with funding from the HUD HOME program and Low Income Housing Tax Credits. The fully ADA-compliant building was designed to ensure a comforting, non-institutional setting and provides several necessary amenities, such as a cafeteria with a commercial kitchen, offices for social services and support staff, a community meeting room, resident lounges, a music room, on-site laundry facility, an exercise room and an outdoor patio and garden area. There is 24-hour, on-site security.

The third place award went to **Mercy Housing Inc.** for **Decatur Place**. Decatur Place is a four-story, multi-family apartment building, containing 82 two-bedroom and 24 three-bedroom apartments in Denver, Colo. The first floor contains a variety of office, classroom, child care, maintenance, and community and storage spaces, including a Denver Police Department community substation. Apartments range from 750 square feet for a two-bedroom to 1,000 square feet for a three-bedroom. Decatur Place seeks its residents through an elaborate outreach referral system throughout the Denver area. It has an ongoing program to inform local shelters, domestic violence programs and safe houses of its residential transitional program.

## 2005 Property and Asset Management Award Winners

**Bethany Hill School, Inc.** won the first place award for the Bethany Hill School, a 42-unit rental property in Framingham, Mass., for low-income individuals and families of diverse backgrounds. Developed by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Boston and the South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Bethany Hill is a rehabilitated 1920s schoolhouse on 100 acres of semi-rural land west of Boston. The property is currently managed by Maloney Properties, which has staff on site 12 hours a day and a resident trained to handle incidents after hours. Residents of the facility are offered a variety of programs to address their particular needs—whether substance abuse, emergency shelter, or developmental disabilities—and are encouraged to participate in other formal programs, such as resident committees.

The **Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB)** was awarded second place for the **Rogers Avenue Homesteading Housing Development Fund Cooperative (HDFC)**. This 18-unit cooperative building in Brooklyn, N.Y. had been vacant for two decades before the UHAB conducted major renovations and opened it to families in 1994. With a strong belief in a self-help model of resident involvement, UHAB established the cooperative model

of ownership for residents, resulting in a Board of Directors that is directly responsible for managing the facility, collecting rent, selecting new residents, and keeping track of finances. The resident-based organization has matured over the last 10 years, and now has hired a property management company to oversee day-to-day operations. Residents are primarily families with low to moderate incomes.

The **Better Housing Coalition** of Richmond, Va., won the third place award for **Winchester Greens**, a community consisting of 240 newly constructed town homes and two senior housing buildings on 80 acres that were formerly home to the blighted Park Lee apartments. Developed in partnership with many former Park Lee residents, who now live in the new neighborhood, Winchester Greens is home to a variety of residents with a variety of incomes. BHC continues to manage the property and has performed well over the last three years, with high occupancy rates and quick turn around on work orders. Moreover, the future remains bright for the development, as planned retail spaces and more senior housing are in the works.

# Kerner-Scott House

Downtown Emergency Service Center, Seattle, Washington

Developed by the Downtown Emergency Service Center, the Kerner-Scott House in Seattle, Wash., is an example of how stable housing can serve as the crucial first step in the long journey out of homelessness, debilitating mental illness and substance abuse. With a diverse resident population, on- and off-site staff offer a wide array of services, assisting residents as they move towards stable, independent living.

## The Organization

The Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) has been offering innovative, effective and meaningful solutions to homelessness since 1979. Through housing and intensive services, DESC addresses the spectrum of needs faced by these individuals, whether mental illness, substance abuse, physical disabilities or other significant challenges. Its mission is carried out by over 200 specially-trained employees at seven locations throughout the city, which include shelters, clinics and supportive housing facilities. Instead of waiting for clients to find them, DESC reaches out to homeless individuals still living on the street and resisting treatment. Also key to achieving its goals are the strong community alliances it has formed and the integrated approach to services that it offers. On an annual basis, nearly 5,000 individuals receive care from DESC, and with over 200 units of supportive housing currently in its development pipeline, its capacity is growing.

## The Project

Located in Seattle's mixed-income Cascade neighborhood—the self-proclaimed “Heart of Seattle”—the Kerner-Scott House is a four-story, 40-unit

building that blends with the surrounding condominiums, apartments and retail shops. The building was newly constructed in 1997 using city loans and Low Income Housing Tax Credits. Residents pay rent with Section 8 subsidies and other forms of assistance, while the operating costs and services are funded with money from HUD's Supportive Housing Program and private fundraising. It was named in memory of two deceased DESC clients, Alice Kerner and Fred Scott, both of whom would have benefited greatly if such a facility existed during their lifetimes.

Kerner-Scott is home to a mixed population of homeless individuals, with the second and third floor consisting of Safe Haven housing for those with mental illness and the fourth floor devoted to individuals in substance abuse recovery. A number of physical and programmatic measures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of these different populations, including separate entrances and custom elevator operations.

## Supportive Housing Summary

The unique continuum of care offered at Kerner-Scott affords residents the comfort and safety they need as they move from homelessness to independent, self-sufficient living. Using the "Housing First" concept, the Kerner-Scott program is based on the premise that treatment is more likely to be successful if individuals are in stable housing. Accordingly, DESC offers its residents a respite from the chaos of homelessness and a chance to address the other difficulties they face through intensive yet flexible support services. Finally, Kerner-Scott is also unique in that it offers two different housing programs, the Clean and Sober Program for residents in substance abuse recovery and the Safe Haven Program for chronically-homeless, mentally ill, treatment-resistant individuals.

The first point of contact for residents in the Safe Haven Program is DESC's Homeless Outreach Stabilization and Treatment program (HOST). Mobile HOST caseworkers engage homeless individuals in the city who are suffering from severe mental illness and work to move them into supportive housing. Sometimes, engaging clients and earning their trust can take caseworkers several years. Prospective

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Project Type

Transitional, rental housing

#### Resident Profile

Homeless, single, special needs

#### Rent Structure (monthly)

Studio (333 s.f.): \$0 - \$138

#### Occupancy Rate

FY 2003: 94 percent

FY 2004: 94 percent

#### Key Features

40 studio apartments, community rooms, courtyard

#### Key Services

Case management, mental health care, substance abuse recovery, daily meals and living assistance

#### Project Cost

Total project: \$4,232,797

Per unit: \$105,819

#### Contact Information

Downtown Emergency Service Center

515 Third Avenue

Seattle, WA 98104

206.464.1570

Fax: 206.624.4196

Email: info@desc.org

Kerner-Scott residents are highly disorganized and therefore unable to self-advocate for housing placement.

To help facilitate the engagement process, referrals to Kerner-Scott are made early in the relationship. Once placed in Kerner-Scott, the HOST case manager and on-site Kerner-Scott staff try to work with the resident to develop a service plan that details goals in several areas, such as mental and physical health, education, daily activities and independent housing. Participation in such plans is fully voluntary for clients, but staff make every effort to make their services attractive enough that clients will choose to participate. Once clients have begun to actively participate in carrying out their individualized plans, Safe Haven participants meet with their case managers weekly, while on-site clinical support coordina-



Opened in 1997, the Kerner-Scott House in Seattle's Cascade neighborhood provides housing and a path to self-sufficiency for homeless individuals.

tors and residential counselors are available to help residents follow their service plans daily. Kerner-Scott House is intended to provide intensive transitional support, but does not subscribe to the strict time limits associated with most transitional housing. As clients become more engaged and stabilized, care is transferred from HOST to DESC's Support, Advocacy and Growth Enhancement (SAGE) program, which offers ongoing comprehensive case management and helps residents obtain permanent supportive housing, improve social stability and increase self-sufficiency.

Most of the 15 residents in the Clean and Sober Program at Kerner-Scott (on the fourth floor) are referred by one of DESC's mental health programs, including SAGE, or from the REACH program, an outside provider of outreach service to seriously addicted homeless individuals. Clean and Sober program services are conducted in a similar way to those in the Safe Haven program, but in addition to a SAGE case manager, Clean and Sober residents also visit with a chemical dependency case worker weekly. Moreover, they are free to attend weekly support group meetings with other tenants. While this particular program within the Kerner-Scott project is for clients who have made a commitment to abstinence from alcohol and other drugs, residents are not evicted in the event of a relapse during treatment, but instead are given support and re-engaged in services.

The primary sources of income for the project are contracts with King County and funds through HUD's Supportive Housing Program. Additionally, private fundraising is conducted and residents pay

30 percent of their income in rent, though most of their income is from disability benefits and other forms of government assistance. The 11 on-site staff members assist and monitor residents and include a project manager, two clinical service coordinators, one HOST case manager and seven residential counselors, who work at the front desk and conduct property management activities.

## Physical Features

The Kerner-Scott House sits in a medium-density neighborhood of diverse buildings and residents. With shade trees in front and flower-filled planting boxes in the back courtyard, touches of greenery add to the building's aesthetic. There are two entrances at Kerner-Scott—one for Safe Haven and one for Clean and Sober tenants; keeping the populations segregated helps residents recovering from substance abuse addiction avoid potential exposure to triggers for a relapse. Other measures are also in place to separate the two populations, such as different community rooms, laundry rooms, and an elevator that only serves specific floors, based on which entrance you use.

The first floor community room for the Safe Haven program includes couches, a television, tables and chairs, and is where residents are served breakfast and dinner daily. Next to this room are the social services offices, complete with windows that look into the community room. Also, from these offices staff members look out into the lobby and track the comings and goings of all Safe Haven residents. The smaller Clean and Sober community room is located on the second floor in an area completely separated from the Safe Haven apartments on that floor.

All of Kerner-Scott's 40 apartments have their own bathroom and kitchenette, features that help bridge the gap from homelessness to self-sufficiency. Included with these features, however, are safety measures, such as automatic timers that turn off ovens after 30 minutes. Moreover, each unit comes with an intercom to communicate with DESC staff as needed.

## Resident Involvement

To the extent possible, Kerner-Scott residents are involved in several structured and non-structured



The outdoor patio at Kerner-Scott House is but one of several common areas offering residents the opportunity to socialize and relax in a peaceful setting.

activities. For instance, they socialize daily at meals and in common areas, where staff can observe and interact with them. It is during these interactions and the weekly meetings with case managers that residents provide feedback to DESC staff about the building and programs. Tenants also have helped decorate the common areas, the community rooms and courtyard. Because of the severity of the problems many residents face or have overcome, however, the formation of a tenants' association has not been pursued.

## Community Impact and Neighborhood Relations

With each new development proposal, DESC presents a concept plan to local neighborhood councils and community members. When presenting plans for Kerner-Scott, DESC created an open forum for residents, who in turn welcomed the project. The Cascade neighborhood has long been home to a mixed-income population, and many of the neighbors took pride in their acceptance of this unique project. DESC staff continue to keep lines of communication open with residents, offering office space to the local neighborhood council in the building and creating opportuni-

ties for tenants to be involved in neighborhood activities. Finally, DESC has partnered with the Seattle Police Department in a program that trains officers in managing situations involving homeless people to mitigate any potential problems.

Kerner-Scott has seemingly opened the door for more affordable and supportive housing projects in the neighborhood. Since it opened in 1997 on the site of a former parking lot, several affordable housing projects have been constructed in the neighborhood. Built in 1999, the Pete Gross House is a 69-unit apartment building that serves patients of the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance. In addition, the David Colwell Building, Lakeview Apartments and the Casa Pacifica, all opened after Kerner-Scott House, provide the neighborhood with another 250 affordable apartments within a few blocks.

## Summary

With its mix of populations and dedication to providing housing as the first step in the long-term recovery from various vulnerabilities, the Kerner-Scott House and DESC demonstrate the positive changes that caring and supportive treatment can have on people who are often considered the most difficult to help. DESC's continued dedication to the homeless individuals in the Seattle area is unparalleled and worthy of recognition, and the Kerner-Scott House is simply another means through which DESC offers its assistance. Moreover, the success of the program is evidenced by the fact that almost all of the new participants who stay at least six months find and stay in permanent housing in the following two years after leaving Kerner-Scott. By focusing on the specific needs of each individual in their program, DESC has created a workable system for overcoming one of the biggest problems faced by cities.

# Hill House

Palladia, Inc., New York, New York

With comprehensive support services available on- and off-site, Hill House offers single adults with a history of homelessness and substance abuse a chance to overcome the setbacks of their past and improve the outlook for their future. Operated by Palladia Inc., a New York-based organization that provides a full spectrum of services to individuals and families with various needs, the apartment building has been a stable home to many since 1999.

## The Organization

Founded in 1970, Palladia Inc. is one of the largest nonprofit, multi-services organizations in New York City. It owns and runs the service programs at several permanent and transitional housing locations as part of its continuum of care for individuals and families facing a range of problems, such as domestic violence, substance abuse, homelessness, HIV/AIDS, mental illness, and criminality. The organization's 519 full-time staff and 27 part-time staff administer 28 human service programs that serve more than 1,500 individuals and families each day. These programs address the range of problems faced by Palladia's constituents, and include: residential, transitional and outpatient substance abuse treatment programs; an HIV services unit; one homeless and two domestic violence shelters; alternative-to-incarceration programs; supportive housing facilities; and several other special projects. Since the early 1990s, when Palladia began to provide housing, it has developed or taken ownership of seven multi-unit apartment buildings and other scattered-site units for a total of 234 units of permanent supportive housing for low-income, previously-homeless individuals and families.

## The Project

With 43 efficiency apartments in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx, Hill House has offered permanent housing for homeless individuals in substance abuse recovery since 1999. Located along a mostly residential street and adjacent to Starhill, one of Palladia's residential treatment facilities, the six-story building was constructed by Palladia with funding from the HUD HOME program and Low Income Housing Tax Credits. Fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and fully accessible, the building was designed to ensure a comforting, non-institutional setting. It provides several necessary amenities, such as a cafeteria with a commercial kitchen, offices for social services and support staff, a



Every day, Hill House residents are treated to a professionally prepared dinner made in the building's industrial kitchen and served in its spacious dining room.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Project Type

Permanent, single-site, rental housing

#### Resident Profile

Homeless individuals recovering from substance abuse including some living with HIV/AIDS

#### Rent Structure (monthly)

Efficiency (240 s.f.): \$848

#### Occupancy Rate

FY03: 98 percent

FY04: 94 percent

#### Key Features

43-unit building in the South Bronx, New York.  
Community rooms, courtyard, exercise equipment, dining facility

#### Key Services

Case management, mental health care, substance abuse recovery, daily meals

#### Project Cost

Total project: \$5,690,000

Per unit: \$132,325

#### Contact Information

Palladia, Inc.  
2006 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10035  
212.979.8800  
Fax: 212.979.0100  
Email: jane.velez@palladiainc.org

community meeting room, resident lounges, a music room, on-site laundry facility, an exercise room and an outdoor patio and garden area. There is 24-hour, on-site security.

## Supportive Housing Summary

As part of their rental agreement, residents of Hill House are required to participate in its service program, which is administered by an on-site social worker and two case managers. Targeted to the specific needs of residents, the package of services offered is extensive and includes substance abuse counseling, educational services, legal advocacy, nutritional services, crisis intervention and recreational activities. While many services are available at Hill House, residents also participate in programs offered by Palladia at other locations. The goals of the service program are to provide program stability, to increase skill and income levels and to support greater self-determination. Because of the diversity of its tenants' needs and abilities, Hill House case managers work with residents to develop individualized service plans that specify the individual's activities and expected outcomes. These plans are reviewed every 90 days and are updated according to the resident's progress.

While all tenants must engage in case management as part of their rental agreement, Hill House has historically met its goals for resident participation in non-mandatory service programs and activities. All of the residents with HIV/AIDS participate in workshops, training, and educational programs focused on medical and nutritional wellness. Over

75 percent of residents participate in substance abuse counseling and are successfully maintaining sobriety, and most of the 10 residents who relapsed in the last year sought treatment. Furthermore, almost every Hill House tenant is engaged in constructive use of free time—either through work, participation in programs, or social skills development.

Because operating support for Hill House comes from a variety of sources, new residents are referred and accepted based on their program of origin. New York City's HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) funds 23 units specifically for individuals with HIV, while another 12 are funded by the city's Department of Homeless Services and house homeless individuals. Finally, eight beds are paid for by New York's Department of Housing and Preservation Development, and these units are open to individuals from the community. Hill House is regularly audited by these agencies and has received very good or competent ratings each time.

## Physical Features

Constructed in the late 1990s, Hill House is a six-story brick building that stands out on its block primarily because of its attractive design. With the assistance of an environmental psychologist, internal design was intended to add value to the services. Consequently, special attention was paid to the colors, layout, artwork and features of the 43 studio apartments and common areas in order to foster an environment that is comforting but not institutional. Each of the 43 studio apartments has a bathroom, kitchenette and individualized touches, such as different colored and sized tiles. Furthermore, all of the units come furnished with a bed, chair, table and dresser, as well as necessary kitchen appliances, including a refrigerator.

There are several common rooms throughout the building. Resident lounges with televisions are available on two of the floors, and one has computers. In the basement, residents have access to a laundry room, a music room, an exercise room and a patio where they can socialize at barbecues and other events or help maintain the garden as part of an organized club. A large community room used for meetings and other resident functions is just off of the

main lobby, as are the social services offices and an industrial kitchen and dining facility where dinner is served nightly. Access to the building is controlled by a front desk staff person, offering residents a chance to deny visitation with someone they don't want to see face-to-face.

## Resident Involvement

Residents of Hill House are highly involved in both structured and non-structured activities. The tenants' association, which is comprised exclusively of residents, regularly draws almost half of the residents to its meetings, and sponsors several events throughout the year. There are also clubs, such as the gardening and art clubs, with significant membership. Hill House sponsors trips and recreational activities that almost every resident participates in—for instance,



Constructed in the late 1990s, Palladia's Hill House, a six-story brick building in the Bronx, N.Y., is home to 42 formerly-homeless individuals recovering from substance abuse, who utilize the services and spaces offered on-site to change their lives for the better.

trips to art museums, musical performances and amusement parks. Furthermore, residents are offered the opportunity to volunteer in the community and serve as mentors to other individuals with special needs.

Outside of the structured activities and associations created by Hill House staff, residents have formed their own networks and support systems. Colorful stars adorn several doors on each floor, signaling other residents that these are safe places where they can go when they need assistance and staff is not available. On their own, residents have also adopted an honor system and confess when they break something, and many participate in an HIV medicine-recycling program, where tenants' left over medicine is collected and sent to Africa.

### **Community Impact and Neighborhood Relations**

Built on an empty lot, Hill House is one of the newest buildings on its block and often lures visitors, unaware of its purpose, off the street to ask about

getting on the waiting list. In the six years since it was completed, some of the surrounding properties have undergone significant renovations. Aside from the building's contribution to the neighborhood, many residents help to strengthen the community by running toy and clothing drives and participating in the yearly block party.

### **Summary**

Hill House offers its residents a truly comprehensive set of services. Indeed, whatever services are not available in-house are readily available from one of Palladia's other 28 programs or from one of its numerous partners within New York City. In developing Hill House, Palladia created a large building that is meant to feel small, an independent environment that fosters a family-like atmosphere, and a set of support services designed to create autonomy. It is a testament to the program that almost 20 percent of the residents have been there since Hill House opened, and the overwhelming majority that left did so because their life situation had improved.

# Decatur Place

Mercy Housing, Denver, Colorado

Many of Decatur Place's single-parent families come seeking a home as much as they do a refuge from homelessness, domestic violence and other persistent needs. The project's two-year, supportive program, developed and administered by Mercy Housing, has proven that the transition from just surviving to thriving is indeed achievable.

## The Organization

Created by the Sisters of Mercy of Omaha, Neb., and co-sponsored by 13 groups of Catholic sisters, Mercy Housing is a national developer of affordable housing, and in its more than 20 years of existence has developed over 17,000 units that are home to more than 50,000 people. The majority of Mercy Housing residents are low-income families, though it provides housing for seniors and others with special needs as well. Active in 37 states, the organization's development and management divisions combined employ nearly 1,000 people. Mercy Housing also runs homeownership and loan fund programs and a strategic partnership with seven Catholic healthcare systems to further its goal of creating healthy, stable communities.

## The Project

Decatur Place is a four-story, multi-family apartment building with a total of 106 units in the Sun Valley neighborhood of Denver. The majority of the apartments, 82, are two-bedroom units with 750 square feet of space, while the remaining 24 have three bedrooms and 1,000 square feet of space. With the apartments on the top three floors, the ground floor houses a variety of office, classroom, child care, maintenance and community spaces, including a Denver Police Department community substation. There are playgrounds and landscaping on the grounds, and the entire property is surrounded by a fence that lends a sense of security.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Project Type

Single-site, transitional, rental

### Resident Profile

Single parent families who are formerly homeless, primarily survivors of domestic violence

### Rent Structure (monthly)

2 BR (750 s.f.): \$925

3 BR (1000 s.f.): \$1084

### Occupancy Rate

FY 2003: 98 percent

FY 2004: 97 percent

### Key Features

Child care facility, after-school programs, playground, computer learning center, Police Department substation.

### Key Services

Educational/vocational training, financial literacy, parenting classes, violence prevention, kick boxing, homeownership counseling, computer literacy, child care, after-school programs and others

### Project Cost

Total project: \$1,981,078

Per unit: \$18,689

### Contact Information

Mercy Housing

1999 Broadway, Suite 1000

Denver, CO 80202

303.830.3300

Fax: 303.830.3301

Email: [jpecaut@mercyhousing.org](mailto:jpecaut@mercyhousing.org)

Mercy Housing acquired Decatur Place in 1987 from another nonprofit agency to preserve it from bankruptcy, and has worked since then to manage and maintain the property for the residents and community. Decatur Place was preserved again in 2001 with its participation in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Mark to Market program, allowing for refinancing of the property and an approximately \$2.5 million rehabilitation completed in 2003.

## Supportive Housing Summary

Mercy Housing attracts residents through an outreach program that operates throughout the Denver area by contacting local shelters, domestic violence programs and safe houses. It also relies on word-of-mouth referrals from existing residents. Potential residents can take part in a general orientation meeting, where Resident Service Coordinators (RSCs) explain the program and its goals and outline the responsibilities and expectations of residents. Following interviews with program staff, residents are assessed for suitability, and once accepted, their two-year individual service plans are developed and incorporated into leases.

Each resident is assigned an RSC, with whom they meet twice a month. RSCs ensure residents are progressing toward goals and that they have access to necessary off-site services. There is a wide array of services available to residents, and what they take part in depends on their specific needs. Educational offerings provide the basis for the bulk of the service program and include classes in financial literacy, parenting, violence prevention, homeownership, computer literacy and other subjects, including kick boxing. These classes are offered during the evenings—so residents can work during the day—in the classrooms and computer lab, and free child care is provided. Decatur Place also offers residents comprehensive health, dental and behavioral care and job opportunities on an off-site, referral basis. Finally, contained within the project is a licensed child care facility for children ages 6 months to 12 years that offers residents a slight preference in admissions while serving the community at large.

Decatur Place pays the salaries of the two RSC positions, while after-school program staff, the computer lab coordinator, computer lab equipment, life skills classes and other programs are funded by a variety of private and public sources. Decatur Place collaborates with numerous community partners, including banks, community organizations, and local congregations, who also make in-kind contributions for specific programs.



Mercy Housing offers single-parent families safe, stable housing at Decatur Place, which is also home to an array of spaces for community purposes, such as classrooms, child care and a police substation.

## Physical Features

Decatur Place is in one of Denver's very low-income neighborhoods, Sun Valley. However, located nearby are several city facilities that provide services to residents, including a recreational complex, a public school and the offices of the Denver Department of Human Services. Designed with an emphasis on security, access to Decatur Place's 106 apartments is restricted to one, main entrance, which is staffed 24 hours a day. Residents have an electronic key to enter the building. Moreover, lobby staff have the names and pictures of domestic violence perpetrators to prevent their entry, and a police substation on-site helps deter problems.

The single-parent families that live in Decatur Place occupy apartments of modest size that include fully-equipped kitchens. Each floor has two laundry rooms, and the hallways are well lit and monitored by video surveillance. On the first floor, families have access to an array of community spaces for recreation, education and other program offerings. The landscaped exterior also features a playground for children in the day care facility. Finally, the building is fully wheelchair accessible.

## Resident Involvement

As part of their contract, residents all participate in volunteer activities with Decatur Place and the surrounding community. Many help with the evening child care program, while others set up community events or work on cleaning projects. Each year, residents, staff and outside volunteers plant, fertil-

ize and maintain the landscaping, creating a sense of ownership in the property for many residents. Furthermore, Decatur Place has forged partnerships with several community institutions, such as the local school and neighborhood coalition, and many residents participate in volunteer activities with these groups. Although there is no longer a resident council, residents provide feedback to Decatur Place staff formally and informally, and Mercy Housing is working to reestablish a resident council.

## Community Impact and Neighborhood Relations

Before Mercy Housing took control of Decatur Place, the surrounding neighborhood suffered from many of the problems associated with very low-income communities. However, since then, Decatur Place has helped bring about significant positive changes to the Sun Valley neighborhood. Having a police substation located on-site increased the security and safety for Decatur Place residents, while also doing the same for the surrounding neighborhood, as evidenced by the reduction in crime rates following the facility's opening. Furthermore, Catholic Charities' on-site day care facility has filled a persistent community need. And, Mercy Housing's investment helped spur reinvestment in a nearby public housing complex. Finally, after opening Decatur Place, Mercy Housing was a founding member of the Sun Valley Coalition to advocate for positive changes in the community, and residents and staff alike play active roles in this organization.

## Summary

The approach taken at Decatur Place demonstrates the importance of education and training to help families improve their economic condition and self-reliance. Within the safe quarters of the building—something that many of the residents desperately need as a foundation—the resident services staff balance the need for intensive programs with the flexibility each family demands. Furthermore, Mercy Housing's unique emphasis on volunteerism is a way of contributing to and strengthening the community, while at the same time benefiting the personal well-being of residents. Finally, the extensive network of partner organizations and Mercy Housing's wide influence make Decatur Place a successful operation worthy of acclaim.

# Bethany Hill School

Bethany Hill School, Inc., Framingham, Massachusetts

On a 100-acre semi-rural campus in Framingham, Mass., the Bethany Hill School provides affordable housing and educational opportunities for 42 low-income families and individuals. The natural surroundings and preserved 1920s-style architecture of the building combine to create a unique and supportive environment where residents with diverse backgrounds and needs can progress toward their individual life goals.

## The Organization

Jointly developed in the early 1990s by the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Boston, the South Middlesex Opportunity Council, and other sponsors in the metro area, Bethany Hill School, Inc. was established specifically to oversee the rehabilitation and operations of the housing project. Through its work at Bethany Hill School, the organization is fulfilling its mission of providing affordable independent housing with educational opportunities as a means of empowering residents. Overseen by a Board of Trustees made up of members of the Sisters of Saint Joseph and individuals from the community, Bethany Hill School acts as the asset manager of property, while Maloney Properties, Inc., a well-known and well-regarded manager of 65 Boston-area housing developments comprising 7,500 units, manages the building and grounds.

Committed to fostering the personal development of its residents, Bethany Hill School provides educational, social and community-building programs on-site through the work of a full-time program director and a part-time assistant program director. The services staff takes direction regarding program offerings from the Board of Trustees and resident committees. On-site management staff



Originally constructed in the 1920s, the Bethany Hill School is a unique building that provides housing for low-income families and individuals in the Boston area.

includes a part-time property manager, a part-time assistant property manager and a full-time maintenance superintendent, all of whom are supervised by Maloney Properties.

The Sisters of Saint Joseph sponsor nine ministries in the Boston area, and the Bethany Hill School is its only rental property providing housing to individuals outside of its membership. Founded in the late 1800s, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Boston have been working for more than 70 years to provide educational and health services to the community.

## The Project

Bethany Hill School's 42 housing units are wholly contained in the 1920s-era rehabilitated school building and are available in a range of sizes, from single rooms for individuals to four-bedroom apartments for families. Originally built by the Sisters of Saint Joseph as an educational residence, the school's architecture was largely preserved during rehabilitation and is consistent with the other buildings on the property, which are used as convent housing, a

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Project Type

Multifamily rental, permanent housing, some transitional units.

### Resident Profile

Low-income, variety of disabilities and special needs

### Rent Structure (monthly)

Sleeping Units (240 s.f.): \$390

Single Room Occupancy (287 s.f.): \$180

Efficiency (390 s.f.): \$988

1 BR (598 s.f.): \$1,100

2 BR (696 s.f.): \$1,299

3 BR (1066 s.f.): \$1,476

4 BR (1283 s.f.): \$1,792

### Occupancy Rate

FY 2003: 93 percent

FY 2004: 92 percent

### Key Features

42-unit converted school building on 100-acre campus, playground, basketball court, community garden, computer learning lab, children's room, community room.

### Key Services

Educational opportunities and other supportive services suited to residents' needs and goals

### Project Cost

Total project: \$1,758,000

Per unit: \$41,857

### Contact Information

Bethany Hill School, Inc.

89 Bethany Road

Framingham, MA 01702

508.875.1117, Fax: 508.875.2288

Email: bethanyhill2@maloneyproperties.com

health care center and a retirement facility. Although it is located on a sprawling 100-acre campus, Bethany Hill School is a short walk from the urban center of Framingham, providing residents with a connection to the larger community without the typical congestion and noise associated with city life.

## Property Management Summary

Property management of Bethany Hill School is provided under contract by Maloney Properties through three staff members, who report to a regional supervisor and the Finance Committee of the Bethany Hill School Board of Trustees. The property management staff are responsible for marketing rental units, selecting and approving qualified applicants, collecting rents, enforcing leases, conducting preventive maintenance, processing vendor invoices, monitoring the budget and ensuring that the property complies with all housing laws. Drawing on its broad experience managing other affordable rental housing properties, Maloney Properties has developed systems to ensure successful operations and high satisfaction from both residents and asset managers.

Bethany Hill School's finances are managed by the Maloney Properties central office, though the transactions themselves, such as rent collection and vendor invoice vouchering, occur at the facility. Following on-site financial transactions, invoices and deposit records are sent to the central office, where they are entered into an online general ledger accounting system. The central office produces monthly finan-



Home to many families, the Bethany Hill School offers several amenities that cater to the specific needs of its residents, such as this playground for children.

cial reports with budget narratives for review by the Board of Trustees and the Board's Finance Committee. Finally, annual independent audits are conducted with the cooperation of on-site staff, Maloney Properties accounting department and the Sisters of Saint Joseph finance department.

A well-defined maintenance delivery system is in place to ensure that problems are expeditiously fixed and preventive maintenance and capital improvements are completed on schedule. The property manager conducts a general inspection at least once a week, and resident apartments are inspected annually. On their own, these procedures result in a list of necessary work orders and other longer-term maintenance issues. In addition to problems found during inspections, residents are encouraged to report maintenance needs within their units promptly, and management pledges to respond the same day to requests received before 2 p.m. Larger property improvements are conducted according to a plan that was developed following a 20-year facility evaluation in 2000; this evaluation also serves as a capital budgeting tool, helping the property managers determine necessary replacement reserve contributions.

## Asset Management Summary

Bethany Hill School's asset management responsibility falls on the Board of Trustees, which sets goals and objectives and ensures that outcomes are met. The primary goals are to maintain affordable rents, provide educational programs that are responsive to resident need assessments, implement security procedures and risk and crisis management policies, and promote resident accountability. The project's main sources of income are rental payments, grants, donations and mobile Section 8 vouchers, which have been limited in recent years because of state cutbacks, resulting in unforeseen vacancies. However, on the whole, the goals of Bethany Hill School have been met—including financial stability—without the necessity of large rent increases. With respect to crisis management, Maloney Properties staff has instituted several protocols to ensure crises are averted or minimized, including an on-site staff presence for 12 hours each day and a "resident responder," who is charged with handling incidents during non-business hours.

## Physical Features

The unique facility and grounds of Bethany Hill School provide a peaceful, welcoming environment seldom found in affordable housing developments. Containing a fairly even mix of variously sized housing units, the building maintains much of its original features, including more than 400 large windows, marble staircases, high ceilings, and spacious corridors. In addition to more than 20 single room units, Bethany Hill School provides ample space for families in its nine four-bedroom and 10 two-bedroom units. Ramps at two entrances, wide apartment doorways and an elevator allow for the majority of the building's housing units to be accessible by wheelchair. To ensure resident safety, all apartments and common areas are equipped with sprinklers and alarms, and a keyless entry system is in place to control access.

Office and community spaces for programs and staff are in the basement. Also in the basement are a playroom for children, a laundry room, a computer lab and a community room. Because staff is situated away from the entrance, security cameras are posted around the property.

One of the more notable features of Bethany Hill School is its campus. Throughout the 100 acres of land, there are several spaces for socializing, play and quiet reflection. The campus includes a community garden where residents can plant and maintain plots, picnic benches in a shaded grove, a playground and basketball courts.

## Resident Involvement

There are several avenues for both formal and informal resident involvement and interaction at Bethany Hill School. Many residents participate in program advisory committees, which offer recommendations on improvements to the educational and parenting programs. Furthermore, there are formal groups established to welcome new residents and plan community events, such as dinners, Earth Day celebrations and the Education Fair. Finally, all residents are encouraged to take part in quarterly meetings with the program and management staff to review policies and offer feedback on programs and building issues.

There are also numerous on- and off-site activities with varying degrees of structure available to residents, all of whom must participate in at least one program. These offerings include life skills and computer education, vocational training, parenting classes and other programs designed for special needs residents, such as those with HIV/AIDS or developmental disabilities. Finally, because of the strong presence of families at Bethany Hill School, there are several programs targeted to these residents—such as parenting classes, tutoring for children, summer camps and youth groups.

## Community Impact and Neighborhood Relations

Due to its large campus, Bethany Hill School is somewhat isolated from its surrounding community. However, this has not precluded it from forming partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and cultural institutions. To be sure, Bethany Hill School has several formal and informal linkages to other organizations and uses these contacts to improve the lives of its current residents. Some of its partners include the Danforth Art Museum, Banknorth, the TJX Corporate Foundation, the Mass Bay Community College, Keefe Technical High School and Regis College.

## Summary

Bethany Hill School is unique in many ways. Its mixed population, served by a wide array of housing choices and program offerings, draws strength from its diversity. The organization's financial stability, in the face of stagnating funding streams, demonstrates the effectiveness of a measured commitment to affordable housing, as well as the benefits of developing partnerships with other like-minded organizations. Finally, situated on its large, natural campus, Bethany Hill School is a fine example of the positive influence of aesthetically pleasing surroundings and keenly preserved architecture on the lives of residents and the performance of programs.

# Rogers Avenue Homesteaders Housing Development Fund Cooperative

Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, New York, New York

By offering low-income residents the opportunity to purchase equity in their homes, Rogers Avenue Homesteaders Housing Development Fund Cooperative (HDFC) demonstrates the ability of homeownership to improve the lives of families and the conditions of the surrounding neighborhood. Though developed by the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, the Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC buildings now truly belong to their residents, who are doing a commendable job overseeing property management.

## The Organization

The Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB) was created in 1973 to bring about productive solutions to New York City's housing problems. Challenged by rampant housing abandonment and neighborhood disinvestment, UHAB sought ways to create cooperative homeownership opportunities for low-income residents, and at the same time transform thousands of deteriorating buildings into safe, affordable homes. Its 41 staff members offer training and support to residents seeking to establish limited-equity cooperatives, and to date, this self-help housing approach has placed 30,000 families in homes of their own. UHAB believes that homeownership provides low-income families the stable foundation they need to increase their educational attainment, pursue business opportunities, act as leaders in their community and generally improve their overall economic condition.

## The Project

The Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC consists of 18 units in three contiguous buildings in Brooklyn. Prior to the creation of the cooperative, these buildings had been vacant for nearly 20 years and had become the responsibility of the city. Through the New York City Housing Preservation and Development department's Urban Homesteading program and other sources, money was provided to help pay for rehabilitation of the buildings, and new residents were also required to contribute "sweat equity" of \$7,000 per unit before they could move in. The project was completed in September 1994, and 18 families moved into the six two-bedroom and 12 three-bedroom units. Also during the renovations, community rooms were added in the basements and three ground-level commercial spaces were improved, but the exteriors of the buildings remained virtually unchanged to keep with the style of the surrounding neighborhood.

## Property Management Summary

UHAB's emphasis on self-help dictates that upon establishment of the cooperative and a Board of Directors, residents become directly responsible for the maintenance of their buildings. To that end, the Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC Board of Directors, once created, began collecting rent, screening potential residents, maintaining a resident waiting list, managing the property and keeping track of the co-op's finances. Over the years, as the Board of Directors matured, oversight of the day-to-day operations was handed over to a property manage-

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

**Project Type**

Three multifamily buildings, cooperatively owned

**Resident Profile**

Low-income families and senior citizens

**Rent Structure (monthly)**

2 BR (870 s.f.): \$522

3 BR (1,000 s.f.): \$634

**Occupancy Rate**

FY 2003: 100 percent

FY 2004: 100 percent

**Key Features**

Three, six-unit buildings with a laundry and community room in each, outdoor courtyard

**Project Cost**

Total project: \$1,908,968

Per unit: \$106,053

**Contact Information**

Urban Homesteading Assistance Board

120 Wall Street, 20th Floor

New York, NY 10005

212.479.3316

Fax: 212.344.6457

E-mail: [alarcon@uhab.org](mailto:alarcon@uhab.org)

ment company, MHR Management, which does not receive a lot of work orders from the property, but is nonetheless prompt when such requests occur.

Because the buildings were recently rehabilitated, they remain in good physical condition, without

need for significant repair. Moreover, the maintenance costs are kept in check by self-reliant residents, who conduct many repairs themselves. However, to ensure proper maintenance, the Board of Directors created a checklist of necessary activities through which it monitors conditions monthly. Furthermore, every unit and all common areas are inspected annually by UHAB as part of the operating agreement. This annual inspection provides information to the Board of Directors regarding necessary repairs and capital improvement, which are reflected in the capital and operating budgets.

The Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC is also responsible for creating monthly and quarterly reports, and sending the latter to UHAB for review. An annual report conducted by a certified accountant provides further guidance to the Board of Directors regarding budgetary and reserve fund requirements and is also reviewed by UHAB.

### Asset Management Summary

UHAB plays a significant role on the asset management side of the Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC, but it is working to improve the capabilities of the Board of Directors to assume control of this aspect as well. Primarily, UHAB assists the Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC in multi-year budgeting, setting maintenance fees, building reserves, implementing a capital improvement plan, governance issues and establishing procedures for vacancies, among other things. As a result of UHAB's assistance



Prior to the creation of the cooperative, these buildings had been vacant for nearly 20 years.

and the work of the residents and Board of Directors, Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC remains current on loan payments, generates an annual operating cushion of five percent per year, contributes \$500 per unit, per year to a capital reserve, and holds annual elections for its Board of Directors.

Turnover and vacancy have been nonexistent at Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC. However, in the event a resident sells his or her unit, the Board of Directors maintains a waiting list of qualified buyers, all of whom earn below 80 percent of area median. Because there has never been a situation that resembles a crisis, Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC does not have crisis management procedures. However, in the event of a dispute, the Board of Directors or UHAB are available to intervene.

### Physical Features

The three multifamily buildings sit on a prominent thoroughfare in Brooklyn and standing in front are the only trees on the block. The 18 two- and three-bedroom units include energy efficiency upgrades—such as low-flow toilets and double paned windows—to decrease home energy bills; gas boilers and pipe insulation were used wherever feasible to further improve the buildings' energy efficiency. Finally, during the buildings' rehabilitation, all asbestos and lead was removed and fences, lights, doors and an intercom were installed to increase safety.

The basement of each building houses a laundry room and a space for community gatherings. The fact that these rooms are located in the basement encourages resident socialization without interrupting the quiet and privacy others deserve when in their own units. In the back is a community courtyard that is large enough for recreational purposes. Furthermore, the common areas of the building are well lit and kept clean.

### Resident Involvement

Residents have been involved in several facets of the Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC since the very beginning. They provided valuable input into the design of their apartments and community spaces. And, once complete, the management oversight of the buildings was placed into their able hands.

Through the Board of Directors, residents have direct oversight of the property. When issues require votes, such as board membership, all residents are entitled to their say, and such decisions are made with approval of a majority. Residents also meet annually as an association, and it has been proposed that they meet more regularly to foster greater participation. However, aside from the Board of Directors, there are no tenant committees, but given the small number of units in this development, each resident is aware of the day-to-day conditions and operations.

## Community Impact and Neighborhood Relations

Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC began with a story in a local community newsletter about a need for families to join in the effort to redevelop the buildings that now comprise the project. From this auspicious beginning, the community watched as the old buildings were renewed and families with a stake in their property and neighborhood took up residence. Today, these buildings are the only ones with trees in front, and this is but one symbol of the positive impact brought to the neighborhood. The co-op has been a source of stable homeowners and community members, and has even helped alleviate some of the loitering problems previously endemic on its block.



The three multifamily buildings sit on a prominent thoroughfare in Brooklyn and standing in front are the only trees on the block.

## Summary

Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC is a model program because of its commitment to resident-based neighborhood change. From the early planning stages to rehabilitation to occupancy to management, grass-roots is perhaps the best word to describe the focus of this project. The stability this project has created for the neighborhood and its tenants—no residents have left in the 10 years it has existed—is a testament to its success. The care placed on the upkeep and maintenance demonstrates the pride and willingness to contribute that everyday citizens develop when they take ownership of their homes. UHAB has found a formula that works for homeownership, and Rogers Avenue Homesteaders HDFC is the proof.

# Winchester Greens

Better Housing Coalition, Richmond, Virginia

During just a few years in the late 1990s, the neighborhood now known as Winchester Greens went from being a blighted, last-resort housing option to a mixed-income community of new, distinctive homes, walkable streets, and inviting public spaces, without causing the displacement of any tenants. The Better Housing Coalition's new development continues to have a resoundingly positive influence on neighboring residents.

## The Organization

Since its creation in 1988, the Better Housing Coalition (BHC) of Richmond, Va., has been directly involved in the development of nearly 800 units of affordable housing. Together with its affiliate, Integrated Property Management Systems (IPMS), BHC develops and manages housing for low-income families and seniors throughout the metropolitan Richmond area. With a focus on holistic community development, which includes involving residents throughout the process and providing services based on community needs, BHC seeks not only to increase new and redeveloped affordable housing opportunities, but also comprehensive neighborhood renewal. A staff of 39 works in tandem with local governments, churches, businesses and community leaders to ensure that BHC's goals are met and communities that have long been forgotten or ignored are served.

## The Project

In the mid-1990s, Winchester Greens was known as Park Lee Apartments. Viewed by many as housing of last resort, Park Lee's combination of concentrated, extremely low-income households, high vacancy, dilapidated buildings

and absentee ownership led to a neighborhood that was a center for criminal activity, resulting in frequent police calls and a lack of safety and stability for tenants. With the help of existing residents, BHC sought to change the property from one of despair to a community of help and hope.

In place of the run-down apartment complex, hundreds of attractive, affordable town homes and senior apartments have been constructed. Based on the wants of the former Park Lee residents, BHC created a community for residents of various incomes and ages. Streets and community spaces were developed to encourage safety and socialization, and a retail complex was included as a way of providing employment opportunities and responding to existing neighborhood deficiencies. To further residents' pride in their homes and community, Winchester Greens features 240 housing units that differ in exterior appearance and include private outdoor spaces. Furthermore, a community center, clubhouse, pool, library and other recreational facilities were constructed on-site, allowing residents to participate in programs and activities that increase their personal well-being and the strength of their community.

### Property Management Summary

Winchester Greens is managed by a subsidiary of BHC, Integrated Property Management Systems (IPMS). Six staff members work on the property—a manager, two assistant managers and three maintenance workers. The managers supervise all activities in the community, including qualifying residents, maintaining compliance files, lease renewals, rent collection, budgeting and financial reporting. With the use of the One Site property management software, information is entered at Winchester Greens and is

#### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

##### Project Type

Permanent, rental housing

##### Resident Profile

Low-income senior citizens, single-parent households, families, single adults

##### Rent Structure (monthly)

1 BR (575 s.f.) \$440  
2 BR (875 s.f.) \$590  
2 BR (870 s.f.): \$650  
2 BR (965 s.f.): \$665  
3 BR (1295 s.f.): \$775

##### Occupancy Rate

FY 2003: 99 percent  
FY 2004: 95 percent

##### Key Features

240 distinctive town homes, 105 senior apartments in two buildings, clubhouse, pool, day care, commercial center

##### Key Services

Community social work program provides education and vocational services, youth programs, senior health initiative

##### Project Cost

Total project: \$28,883,000  
Per unit: \$86,957

##### Contact Information

Better Housing Coalition  
T. K. Somanath, Executive Director  
100 W. Franklin St.  
Richmond, VA 23241  
804.644.0546  
Fax: 804.644.1057  
Email: [better.house@betterhousingcoalition.org](mailto:better.house@betterhousingcoalition.org)



Designed using principles of New Urbanism, Winchester Greens is a newly developed community with distinctive houses and walkable streets for low-income families and seniors.

available to BHC's finance department and senior management, who generate monthly financial summaries. At bi-monthly meetings, financial reports are provided to members of the BHC Board of Directors, and quarterly reports are generated for investors.

Because of the more distinctive features of the homes in Winchester Greens—specifically, porches, fenced yards, extensive landscaping and exterior woodwork—the neighborhood must be rigorously maintained. Indeed, the three on-site IPMS maintenance workers spend much of their time conducting routine maintenance, but nonetheless are quick to respond to the specific needs of residents, with work-order response times averaging one to two days. Annual property inspections ensure that problems are addressed and necessary capital improvements are planned according to need.

BHC describes Winchester Greens as “service enhanced housing,” and though it does not offer a full range of supportive housing programs, those services it does offer are geared to the specific and expressed needs of the community. For instance, during the development of the project, residents made clear their desire for local child care facilities, a desire BHC accommodated by opening a day care center in the commercial area of the neighborhood that now serves more than 100 children. Furthermore, residents can take part in vocational and education programs, youth-focused activities, and senior health programs, all of which have had high participation and demonstrable successes.

## Asset Management Summary

Under the guidance of BHC, Winchester Greens has performed well since its opening. The rent collection rate is high, and occupancy rates have been stable between 94 percent and 99 percent, despite a number of residents leaving to purchase their own home. Acceptance into Winchester Greens is predicated on extensive criminal and financial background checks, and BHC has not had difficulty filling vacant units, averaging only five-day turnarounds. Funded primarily through bond financing, Winchester Greens lacks operating subsidies but is in good financial standing, with healthy operating and capital reserves and debt service coverage. On-site staff ensure that incidents involving residents are quickly resolved and have minimal impact. When not present at the development, staff is on call 24 hours a day, while all senior apartment units have emergency pull cords for immediate attention.

## Physical Features

Designed using New Urbanist principles, Winchester Green resembles many other neighborhoods in the Richmond metropolitan area. Its 240 two- and three-bedroom town homes feature varying architectural styles and siding materials. Exterior wood trim, front porches and fenced yards also contribute to the community atmosphere and sense of pride residents have in their homes. Inside, the homes were designed to meet Five-Star energy ratings, with energy efficient appliances, insulated windows, low VOC (volatile organic compound) paints and high performance HVAC systems. The senior apartment buildings, which house 105 one- and two-bedroom units, take styling cues from the townhouses, contributing to the overall theme of the neighborhood. Furthermore, the senior buildings have inviting common spaces, and are fully equipped with sprinklers and controlled access for safety.

To discourage high-speed traffic and encourage walking, the roads are narrow and on-street parking is allowed, although emergency vehicles still have sufficient access width. Along the sidewalks and outdoor public spaces, there is extensive landscaping to enhance the attractiveness and character of the area, while the lighting of the street and outdoor common areas is markedly improved from the days of Park

Lee Apartments. The community facilities are within walking distance for all residents, as is the neighborhood commercial center, home to the child care facility and a retail outlet, both of which provide jobs as well as services for Winchester Greens residents.

## Resident Involvement

From the beginning of the Winchester Greens project, BHC has actively promoted resident involvement. After acquiring the former apartment complex, BHC spent six months soliciting input from existing residents regarding the design and program plans for the new community. During this process, residents identified their desire to live in an economically and ethnically diverse community with quality child care, youth activities and employment opportunities. In response, BHC ensured these needs were met when developing Winchester Greens. With high rates of participation in the service programs and attendance at semi-annual community meetings, BHC has helped strengthen the community and the lives of its residents.

## Community Impact and Neighborhood Relations

During the days of Park Lee apartments, the 80-acre property was a blight on the entire area. Despite a strong desire for change, local residents were wary of BHC's plans to redevelop the site, especially the focus on providing housing in the new development for all existing Park Lee residents. Members of the surrounding community were in favor of completely demolishing the buildings and dispersing all of the



The Better Housing Coalition solicited input from residents when designing Winchester Greens, and one of most requested attributes of the new community was that it have diversity. The senior apartment buildings in the community take many styling cues from the neighboring town homes.

existing tenants. This opposition, however, did not dissuade BHC, which had a quality master plan and a resolute willingness to see the plan completed. Today, with the plan a reality and the community renewed, local residents provide letters of support to BHC for funding and zoning requests.

In addition to providing much-needed commercial spaces in the area, BHC is constructing market-rate, for-sale housing on neighboring parcels, proof of its commitment to the neighborhood. Ten years ago, when Park Lee was at its lowest, such developments would not have been possible. But, the neighborhood's improvement is now clearly evident in its physical appearance as well as safety statistics. For example, community police calls are down from 300 per quarter in 1997 to less than 40 per quarter today, with the majority of the calls related to incidents of a more benign nature.

## Summary

Winchester Greens is a model of the type of neighborhood transformation that doesn't leave existing residents behind. Going from one of the area's poorest, least safe apartment complexes to a community that now resembles many market-rate neighborhoods in the Richmond area was truly a fine accomplishment for Winchester Green's residents and its developer, the Better Housing Coalition. Furthermore, by including the expressed needs of the community in the redevelopment package, this project shows the importance of resident input and participation. A final measure of Winchester Green's worthiness for this award is the fact that neighbors who opposed the project in the beginning are now some of its most steadfast supporters. Sometimes neighborhood change can have unforeseen negative impacts on existing residents; this development, however, was created specifically to avoid such situations.



10227 Wincopin Circle, Suite 500  
Columbia, MD 21044  
410.964.1230  
[www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources](http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources)