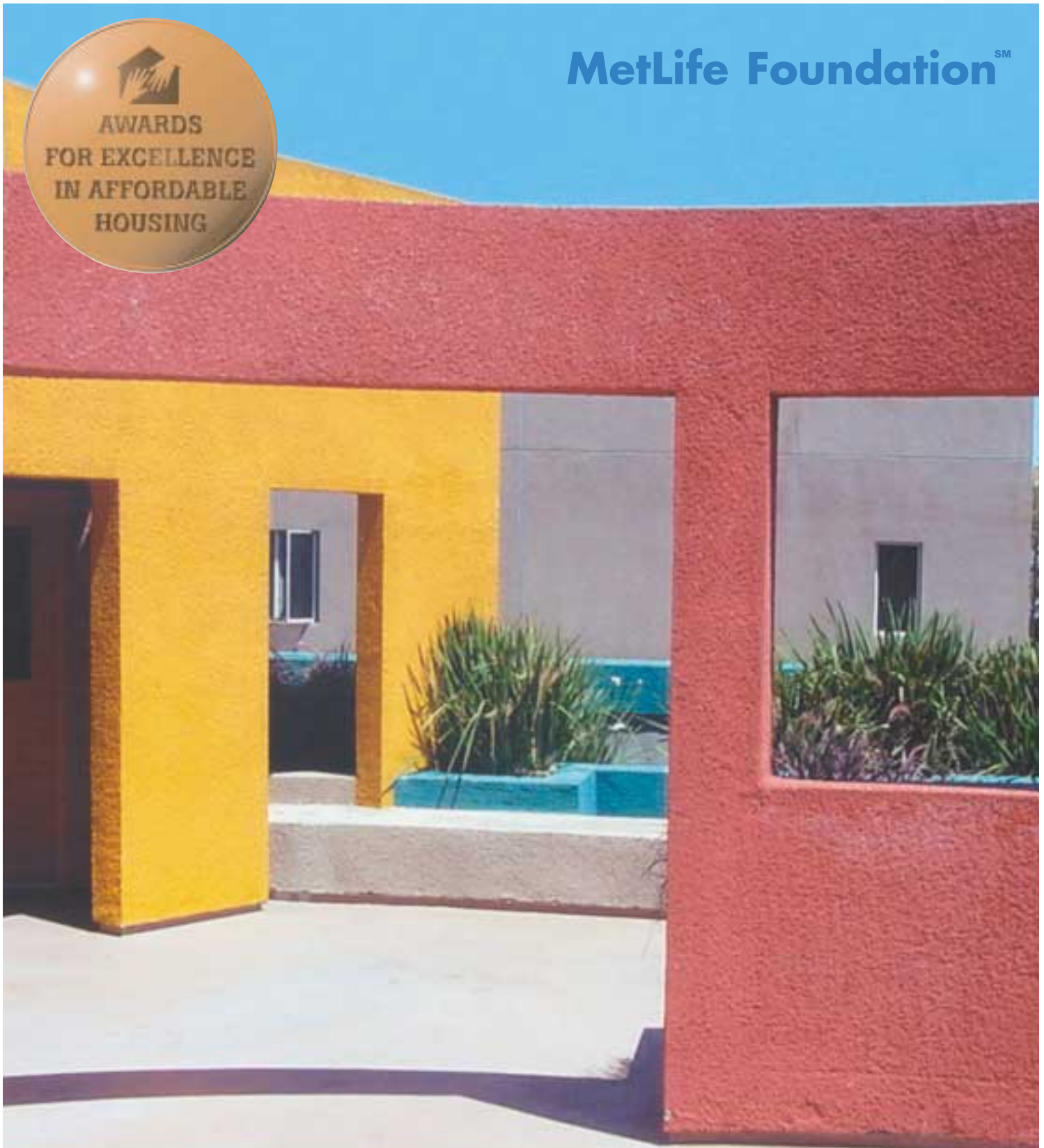


MetLife FoundationSM



**2003 AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING:
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING AND PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

in partnership with



THE ENTERPRISE FOUNDATION



**AWARD WINNERS IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
AND PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

Round Eight 2003

MetLife FoundationSM

About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation, established by MetLife in 1976, supports various educational, health, civic and cultural organizations across the country. Its goals are to strengthen communities, promote good health and improve education. MetLife and MetLife Foundation have supported The Enterprise Foundation's housing and neighborhood revitalization activities over the years with grants and loans of nearly \$31 million. For more information about MetLife Foundation, visit www.metlife.org.

About The Enterprise Foundation

The Enterprise Foundation is dedicated to rebuilding distressed neighborhoods and helping people with low and very low incomes move into the mainstream of American life. Working with partners, Enterprise provides struggling families and individuals with access to affordable homes, jobs, quality child care and other avenues of improving their life opportunities. The Enterprise Network includes 2,400 community-based organizations, public housing authorities and Native American tribes in 860 locations. Enterprise has raised and invested

more than \$4.4 billion in loans, grants and equity to build or renovate 144,000 affordable homes. Jim and Patty Rouse launched The Enterprise Foundation, a national nonprofit organization headquartered in Columbia, Md., in 1982. We rely on contributions and support from individual donors, corporations, foundations and the government to help rebuild America's low-income communities.

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Homeward Bound homes are scattered throughout Boise, Idaho, in safe, clean neighborhoods. They afford families the opportunity to recover from the trauma of homelessness without the stigma of shelter-based housing. Photo courtesy of Neighborhood Housing Services Inc. of Boise.

FOREWORD

Decent, affordable housing is a basic need and a key element of healthy communities. Nonprofit organizations nationwide are working to address the affordable housing shortage, with positive results. This housing has helped the homeless, people with disabilities and others with special needs live independently, and it has transformed the surrounding communities.

MetLife Foundation and The Enterprise Foundation launched the Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing in 1996 to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing. In the program's eight years, we have recognized 60 nonprofit groups for leadership and innovation in two areas: supportive housing and property and asset management. Award winners receive unrestricted financial support to further their work, and Enterprise shares their successes and lessons learned with other organizations across the country.

This publication includes case studies of the six award-winning projects for 2003. We hope that the projects serve as a model for other organizations working to build housing, opportunity and community.

Sibyl Jacobson
President and Chief Executive Officer
MetLife Foundation



Vista Nueva Apartments is distinguished by its striking architecture, which integrates well into the surrounding Los Angeles neighborhood. Photo courtesy of A Community of Friends.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our thanks to the executive directors and other staff of the nonprofit organizations that received the 2003 MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing for their exemplary housing projects. They include: Dora Leong Gallo of A Community of Friends; Thomas M. Lay of Neighborhood Housing Services Inc. of Boise; Zoe LeBeau of Women's Transitional Housing Coalition Inc.; Joy Aruguete of Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation; Jeff Kositsky of Community Housing Partnership; and Mossik Hacobian of Urban Edge.

We also acknowledge the time and expertise provided by the members of the MetLife Foundation Awards Review Committee, which included April Hawkins, MetLife Foundation; Barbara Knecht, Barbara Knecht Inc.; Ernie Martin, Miami Supportive Housing Corporation; David Dorsey, Manna Inc.;

and David Fromm and Diana A. Meyer of The Enterprise Foundation.

Additionally, we thank the staff from The Enterprise Foundation who conducted site visits, wrote the case studies and managed the application review process and awards ceremony. Staff from The Enterprise Social Investment Corporation, the Housing and Community Development Workgroup and Enterprise local offices conducted the site visits. Sabina Cardenas managed the awards program and application reviews. Diana A. Meyer managed the selection of finalists for the Supportive Housing category, and David Fromm managed the selection of finalists for the Property and Asset Management category. Catherine Hyde led the publication team. Beth Williams Pryor collected and compiled information and edited the book. Alicia Lindsey managed print distribution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing was developed in 1996 by The Enterprise Foundation to recognize the outstanding work of nonprofit organizations in developing and effectively managing housing for low-income individuals and families. The competition is open to community-based or regional nonprofits as well as tribes or Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs). Competition is in two categories: supportive housing, and property and asset management. In addition to public recognition, winners receive an award of unrestricted funds.

◆ 1st place winners receive \$25,000.

◆ 2nd place winners receive \$15,000.

◆ 3rd place winners receive \$10,000.

The 2003 MetLife Foundation awards mark the program's eighth consecutive year, and this year's winners continue to exemplify innovation in delivering supportive services to low-income individuals and superb management capabilities.

2003 SUPPORTIVE HOUSING AWARD WINNERS

First Place: A Community of Friends, of Los Angeles, was acknowledged for its property, Vista Nueva Apartments. Stabilizing formerly homeless families, specifically those in which one adult

member has a mental disability, is the primary mission of Vista Nueva Apartments. The project is physically distinguished by its striking architecture; however, its affordability and its comprehensive array of supportive services are what set it apart from other models. The majority of tenants are women who have been professionally diagnosed as mentally ill but who also have families to support. The services provided were carefully designed to support not just the mentally ill individual, but also the family unit as a whole. Consequently, residents of this 30-unit multifamily rental, permanent housing development work with case management staff to coordinate services for themselves and their families alike. In addition to the residential units, there is a computer classroom, a community room, property management and case management offices and a child care center, all of which are artfully designed to fit within the one-half acre site. The project blends well within the architectural context of its surrounding community and houses residents who are active participants in the community, making Vista Nueva a prominent landmark in the neighborhood.

Second Place: Neighborhood Housing Services Inc. of Boise, Idaho, won for its Homeward Bound program, a scattered-site transitional housing program designed to provide housing and a stable living environment to homeless and at-risk families with children. Homeward Bound



In Deluth, Minn., the Women in Construction Training Project affords low-income women the opportunity to learn non-traditional skills that will help them earn a livable wage. Photo courtesy of Women's Transitional Housing Coalition Inc.

is the only program in Boise serving homeless families, providing the time and services they need to begin the process of social, economic and emotional recovery. Homeward Bound families live in a variety of housing types – detached houses, duplexes and apartment units – scattered among safe neighborhoods throughout the city. They participate in counseling, workshops and other training specifically designed to promote self-sufficiency and independent living. Homeward Bound places great emphasis on both leadership and homeownership – a unique combination for a transitional housing program – with impressive results: Over the last five years 20 percent of its “graduates” have purchased homes upon leaving the program. While the management of scattered-site housing is more difficult, the benefits to the families far outweigh the extra effort and expense. Not only do families avoid the stigma of shelter-based housing, they learn to take care of a home while developing connections with a stable

neighborhood on their road to recovery and self-sufficiency.

Third Place: Women's Transitional Housing Coalition Inc. (WTHC), Duluth, Minn., was recognized for its Transitional Housing program, which presents a unique combination of safe, affordable housing to at-risk women and their families. It incorporates programs that promote socio-political awareness and personal empowerment along with job training in the higher-paying construction trades. WTHC works to create an environment that strengthens each woman's self-confidence and belief in her ability to influence the direction of her life. To this end, program participants are afforded an array of support services ranging from the traditional education or employment training and child care, to the non-traditional, which includes an awareness of and involvement in political and social causes. This socio-political component helps set this supportive housing model

apart. WTHC believes fervently that women are best able to make and sustain positive change in their lives when they are educated about societal issues that affect women, children and families and then become active in political processes that effect change on a larger scale. Consequently, participants attend rallies, political candidate forums and educational forums on oppression and systemic change, and they also learn how to access their local leaders and take part in statewide issues of concern to women such as homelessness, domestic abuse and more. The other unique aspect of this program is its focus on training women in the construction trades as a direct means of helping them secure a livable wage. This training can lead directly to employment with WTHC's affiliated construction company.

2003 PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT AWARD WINNERS

First Place: Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, Chicago, was recognized for the successful and efficient operations of its West Town Housing Partners project, a group of affordable housing structures scattered among five sites throughout the near Northwest neighborhood of Chicago. The project is characterized by well-maintained properties and satisfied tenants, as evidenced by low turnover rates and low turnover time. Units are clustered as townhouses, mostly with three or four bedrooms to accommodate the number of large families in the area. All units have front yards and many have back yards.

Two additional vacant lots were acquired for the project and are used as community garden space. The project-based Section 8 subsidies guarantee affordability to households paying 30 percent of their incomes for rent. Affirmative marketing efforts begin months in advance of regular marketing. Tenant selection has been carefully honed over the years, and is based upon a 17-page tenant selection plan and a specially trained committee authorized to make final tenant selection decisions. West Town Housing Partners has also had a tremendous effect throughout its community, having jumpstarted the local economy and spurred investment in other area properties, helping to lead revitalization of the local housing stock that saw a net gain of nearly 5,000 units in West Town during the 1990s.

Second Place: Community Housing Partnership (CHP), San Francisco, received an award for the Iroquois Residence, which provides permanent, affordable housing for formerly homeless people with mental or physical disabilities. Originally built in 1913, the Iroquois Residence was rehabilitated in 1996 into a mix of one-bedroom, efficiencies and SRO apartment units. By providing permanent, supportive housing solutions, CHP not only helps the chronically homeless remain off the street, but it also helps to significantly alleviate their use of costly emergency interventions, such as emergency medical, mental health and jail systems, thereby saving the city hundreds of thousands of dollars. Financial performance for the building has been extremely solid in recent years, with high rates of occupancy, rent

collection and retention. Healthy cash flow and operating reserves put the project in fine financial position as well. Routine repairs are tracked through a work order tracking system, documenting the repair history of each unit, and CHP uses a 15-year capital improvement schedule that projects for the replacement or repair of major building systems. At a cost of less than \$40 per day, the Iroquois Residence has proven that supportive housing can be a viable, cost-effective and lasting solution to homelessness. With clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for the exchange of information, the Iroquois Residence's property management staff and its tenant services staff help to foster a high rate of resident satisfaction and a remarkably high housing retention rate, given the population served. Additionally, CHP's property management manual has been selected by the Corporation for Supportive Housing as the basis for a national model for supportive housing operations.

Third Place: Urban Edge, Roxbury, Mass., won for its property, Westminster Court Apartments. Originally constructed in the late 1960s, it underwent moderate rehabilitation in 1995 and is now comprised of three three-story buildings clustered around a large courtyard at the interior of the site – a central focal point for residents and the community with several clustered seating and play areas. Westminster Court also features a small community room available to residents to hold meetings or social events. The property serves low-income singles, families, senior citizens and the physically

disabled. Residents of Westminster Court were closely involved in the planning and oversight of the redevelopment of the property, and they continue to be closely tied to its ongoing management. Strong financial performance and an equally strong management team have helped Westminster Court serve as a catalyst for local neighborhood revitalization efforts over the years. An unusually high level of resident involvement in the daily activities and services offered, as well as in the long-term planning for the project's continued viability, make Westminster Court a fine example of how residents can rise above economic barriers and make a difference in the revitalization of their community and ensure a stable future for their children.

It is our hope that the six winners of the MetLife Foundation awards program will serve as models for developing high-quality affordable housing and services in your own community.

ABOUT THE AWARDS PROGRAM

For additional information on the MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing program, including the online application process, criteria, deadlines and links to case studies of past winners, see The Enterprise Foundation website, www.enterprisefoundation.org/metlife.

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE AND SHARING BEST PRACTICES IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Enterprise Foundation, with funding from MetLife Foundation, 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. The competition is open to community-based and regional nonprofits, as well as tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs). 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.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for an award, your nonprofit must be a community-based or regional organization or a tribe or Tribally Designated Housing Entity (TDHE), and it must be a member of The Enterprise Foundation's Network. If you are interested in applying for free membership or to learn more about membership benefits, please email memberservices@enterprisefoundation.org, or call the Member Services department at 410.772.5295.

2003 AWARD WINNERS



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING, FIRST PLACE

VISTA NUEVA APARTMENTS

A COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Vista Nueva Apartments, developed by the Los Angeles-based nonprofit, A Community of Friends, works to stabilize formerly homeless families, specifically those in which one adult member has a mental disability.

Vista Nueva is distinguished by its striking architecture, its affordability and its comprehensive array of services designed to support the needs of the families who reside there. The majority of tenants are women who have been professionally diagnosed as mentally ill but who also have families to support. The services provided at Vista Nueva were carefully designed to support the family unit as a whole.

THE ORGANIZATION

A Community of Friends (ACOF) was founded in 1988 to address the needs of a growing, chronically mentally ill homeless population in Los Angeles. Its mission is to provide permanent, affordable housing for individuals and families with special needs. Already with extensive experience developing SROs, Vista Nueva represents ACOF's first family apartment complex and, by all accounts, it is a resounding success.

THE PROJECT

Vista Nueva is a 30-unit multifamily rental housing development comprised of two buildings – one with four stories, and the other with two. Both structures are sited on one-half acre and blend well architecturally into the surrounding neighborhood. The units range in size from one to four bedrooms. Mentally ill residents work with residential services coordinators to

Project Type

- ▲ New construction, multifamily rental, permanent housing

Resident Profile

- ▲ Homeless and severely or persistently mentally ill, single-parent households and families

Rent Structure (monthly)

- ▲ 1 BR (636 s.f.): \$675
- ▲ 2 BR (850 s.f.): \$850
- ▲ 3 BR (1,030-1,083 s.f.): \$1,154
- ▲ 4 BR (1,361 s.f.): \$1,300

Occupancy Rate

- ▲ FY 2002: 97 percent
- ▲ FY 2001: 97 percent

Key Features

- ▲ Extraordinary architectural design and site planning

Key Services

- ▲ Comprehensive support services for mentally ill residents and their families; counseling, employment, education, socialization, child care, medical and dental services

Project Cost

- ▲ Total project: \$5.24 million
- ▲ Per unit: \$174,781

Contact Information

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coordinate a number of support services for themselves and their families. An on-site child care facility occupies space on the ground floor, along with a computer classroom, a community room and office space for property management and case management personnel. Common areas and outdoor areas were thoughtfully designed to provide residents with a sense of community and security.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES SUMMARY

The project is unique in its approach to treating the family as a unit. At Vista Nueva, ACOF strives to provide a service-enriched environment not only to the adult member of the family with the mental disability, but to his or her children as well, in order to stabilize the entire family. Vista Nueva provides residents with an essential network of psychological and life services to support them in their quest to live independently. By keeping rents affordable (residents pay 30 percent of their income for rent, which ranges from \$150 to \$450 per month) and by providing free child care, adult residents can focus on rehabilitation and self-sufficiency, without the worry of homelessness.

ACOF has formed important partnerships with appropriate agencies to bring resources to parents. For example, Portals Mental Health Rehabilitation Services provides supplemental counseling, employment, education and socialization services to residents three times per week; Los Angeles Shanti conducts classes on

AIDS and the prevention of sexually-transmitted diseases; Planned Parenthood provides free medical services to women annually; and Balboa Dental provides dental care. Children's Institute International is a licensed child care provider and another key partner, providing on-site child care free for residents. Other partnerships serve to expose resident children to different opportunities, including Toddler Time, a play and educational program for toddlers; on-site workshops for teen girls conducted by Girls Inc.; along with a summer camp and a mobile zoo.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Vista Nueva Apartments successfully met the design challenge of fitting 30 family apartments, a computer classroom, a community room, property manager and case management offices, and a child care center on a half-acre of land while successfully integrating it within the context of the surrounding community. The units are housed in two separate buildings. The larger building fronts busy La Fayette Place and is adjacent to existing four-story buildings. The smaller building faces a street with single residences. First floor apartments include front porches and open directly onto the street.

In the center of the building is a shady, bamboo-lined courtyard. To facilitate a sense of community within the project, kitchen and living spaces face the courtyard. A series of openings in the upper floors allows direct sunlight to reach the lowest story and also allows visual contact from level to level, which increases social



Kitchen and living spaces are arranged to face a shady, bamboo-lined courtyard. Direct sunlight peers through a series of openings on the upper floors to reach the child care play area below. Photo courtesy of A Community of Friends.

interaction and the residents' sense of personal security. All apartments have direct access to open public areas, such as decks and terraces, where children can play and adults can interact. The project's child care center is on the first floor of the corner building, which also houses community areas and classrooms, creating a focal point for the whole building. The upper floors access public balconies that open to the child care play area below, allowing parents to monitor their children.

Special care was given to the notion of defensible space, with all outdoor areas designed to link to a specific apartment or to the building's community room, which accommodates multiple uses. The community and computer rooms host resident and community meetings, neighborhood watch meetings, art classes, tutoring sessions, ACOF board meetings, and is a designated polling facility. Common areas are located so that the site manager can monitor access. Individual apartments

have open kitchens and breakfast counters to promote family interaction, and each unit has at least two solar orientations to ensure cross-ventilation, and includes either a private balcony or access to a deck. All units are handicapped-accessible.

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

To encourage open communication and further improvement, tenant community meetings are held monthly. ACOF's asset management staff, property management staff and the residential service coordinators all participate with residents in discussions about resident programming and property management issues and concerns. A suggestion box is also located outside the case management office. Specific issues raised by residents about the project's design are reviewed by asset management and project management staff and will serve to improve the design of future family buildings.

From March 1, 2002, to February 28, 2003, all Vista Nueva residents were working, attending school or volunteering on-site or with local organizations. Some served as polling agents, greeting voters and processing ballots; others volunteered for activities at their children's schools or their own schools; some volunteered with churches, shelters and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

One Vista Nueva resident accompanied ACOF staff to the annual "Housing California" conference, to present the resident perspective in a workshop by sharing his views with other conference attendees about on-site case management and living within a special needs community. An additional measure of ACOF's success is the full-time resident manager hired at Vista Nueva, who was once a former resident at another ACOF building.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

Vista Nueva has had a profound physical and social impact on the community. ACOF overcame site constraints to construct a functional family building that has won design awards, including the Gold Nugget award in 2000 for Best Apartment over four stories. Construction of this project has revitalized and activated the corner on which it resides. The exterior of the building is bright and lively, blending in scale with the surrounding community. The creation of a neighborhood watch program by residents has enhanced the safety of the

apartment community itself along with that of the immediate area, including the business next door.

All adult residents are active participants in the community; they are working full-time or part-time, attending school or volunteering in the building or in the community. Residents take pride in participating in community activities, such as volunteering as poll workers at elections.

SUMMARY

Vista Nueva Apartments is a prominent landmark in the neighborhood. The direct links to local neighborhood organizations are integral to meeting Vista Nueva's objectives, and serve to strengthen the social networks necessary to enhance the residents' quality of life. Those links also contribute to Vista Nueva's reputation as an active, positive participant in the community. The child care center, its designation as an official polling facility and its excellent relationship with the Los Angeles Police Department give residents the chance to assume leadership roles within their immediate community and with their surrounding neighbors. For these reasons, Vista Nueva exemplifies the best of affordable, supportive housing developments. It is visually pleasing, it houses residents who are active participants in the community, and it increases economic and educational opportunities for adults with special needs and their children.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING, SECOND PLACE

HOMeward BOUND

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES INC. OF BOISE BOISE, IDAHO

Homeward Bound incorporates a unique approach to housing homeless and at-risk families via a mixture of scattered-site housing and a comprehensive array of support services. Homeward Bound offers homeless families a rare opportunity to live in safe neighborhoods without the stigma of shelter-based housing.

THE ORGANIZATION

Located in Boise, Idaho, Homeward Bound is operated by Neighborhood Housing Services Inc. of Boise, a nonprofit partnership of neighborhood residents, private business and government that works to encourage, create and sustain vital neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Housing Services Inc. of Boise (NHS/B) was incorporated in 1982 as a private, nonprofit organization with the help of the congressionally chartered Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and its secondary market, Neighborhood Housing Services of America. Its mission is to stimulate neighborhood revitalization and provide decent, affordable housing for low and moderate-income families. By helping to develop self-reliance in the people and neighborhoods it assists, it serves as a catalyst to regenerate neighborhood pride and confidence.

THE PROJECT

Begun in 1987, the Homeward Bound program currently uses 31 units to house homeless families during their transition to self-sufficiency. The housing is a mixture of detached, semi-detached (duplexes) and multifamily units, scattered throughout neighborhoods in Boise. Residents

Project Type

- ▲ Moderate rehabilitation, scattered-site rental, single family, transitional housing

Resident Profile

- ▲ Homeless, new Americans/immigrants

Rent Structure (monthly)

- ▲ 2 BR (922 s.f.): \$525
- ▲ 3 BR (1,113 s.f.): \$718
- ▲ 4 BR (1,350 s.f.): \$844
- ▲ 5 BR (1,578 s.f.): \$1,050

Occupancy Rate

- ▲ FY 2002: 99 percent
- ▲ FY 2001: 99 percent

Key Features

- ▲ Scattered-site housing integrated into stable neighborhoods

Key Services

- ▲ Personal finance, employment, education, training, mental health, nutrition, family planning, parenting skills, child care, home maintenance and housekeeping

Project Cost

- ▲ Total project: \$1,319,054
- ▲ Per unit: \$42,550

Contact Information

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participate in counseling, workshops and other training specifically designed to promote self-sufficiency and independent living. Additionally, residents are taught basic home maintenance tasks and skills, which assists NHS/B with property maintenance while teaching families good habits for maintaining their own homes someday.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES SUMMARY

Homeward Bound is a scattered-site transitional housing program – the only one of its kind in Boise. It seeks to provide housing to homeless and at-risk families with children by offering a stable living environment, giving families the time and services they need to begin the process of social, economic and emotional recovery. Homeward Bound families live in detached houses, duplexes and apartment units spread throughout different neighborhoods in the city. Families pay 30 percent of their income toward rent.

Referrals to Homeward Bound come primarily through the Boise City/Ada County Housing Authority and area homeless shelters. Case management staff performs an extensive intake to discover key problem areas in their lives, and then helps each family prepare its own Family Planner, a tool which helps them assess their current status and set goals in areas such as finance, employment, education and training, mental health, nutrition, family planning, relationships, parenting

skills, child care and housekeeping. Steps to accomplish their goals are planned and resources are identified to help them along their way. In 2002, 71 adults and 141 children received case management services.

Homeward Bound also offers a comprehensive schedule of workshops. It places great emphasis on leadership and on homeownership as well – a unique combination for a transitional housing program. Its impact is easy to see: Over the last five years, 20 percent of Homeward Bound “graduates” have purchased a home upon leaving the program – a resounding endorsement of the effectiveness of this program.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Homeward Bound homes are in neighborhoods throughout Boise. They are usually in blue-collar neighborhoods that are clean and have low crime rates. While the management of scattered-site housing is more difficult, the benefits to the families far outweigh the extra effort and expense. Families learn how to take care of a home, and they develop connections with a stable neighborhood. The duplexes, in particular, present lower maintenance costs and increased efficiency with regard to property management and service delivery, and they also provide families with built-in support and, to a certain extent, an element of peer pressure in property maintenance activities and in other areas of self-improvement and self-sufficiency.



Residents are encouraged to maintain – and even beautify – their yards. Local nurseries donate plants and flowers, and prizes are awarded to families with the prettiest yards. Photo courtesy of Neighborhood Housing Services Inc. of Boise.

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Homeward Bound residents participate in the Leadership Development program in which volunteers take part in activities that serve the community. Residents also have input into the programming of Homeward Bound through three means: an annual evaluation distributed to all residents; an exit summary upon leaving the program; and by serving on the Homeward Bound Advisory Committee. Three residents serve on this committee, which meets several times each year to set policy for the program.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

All Homeward Bound families are encouraged to engage in neighborhood and community activities. They partner with the Boise Police Department, serving on “Paint the Town” and “Rake Up Boise” teams. They serve on boards of other organizations, work for the local food bank, volunteer at their children’s schools, and coach their school’s athletic activities.

Homeward Bound has had other positive impacts on the local neighborhoods of their scattered properties. Some of the original

Homeward Bound homes were once blighted properties that were purchased and rehabilitated for this program. Not only did this provide housing units for this homeless program, but it also served as a catalyst for revitalizing local neighborhoods.

Additionally, resident participants are encouraged to maintain – and even beautify – their yards. Local nurseries donate plants and flowers each spring, and prizes are even awarded to those families with the prettiest yards, helping to beautify the neighborhoods in which these families reside and also helping to change neighborhood perceptions of transitional housing.

SUMMARY

The Homeward Bound scattered-site transitional housing program offers families a unique opportunity to live in safe neighborhoods without the stigma of shelter-based housing. The program seeks to “normalize” a family’s living situation, allowing children to remain in the same school for an extended time, for example, and encouraging family members to develop relationships with neighbors, churches and schools. While the challenges of managing a scattered site are tremendous, the payoffs for families are just as great. (To date, 80 percent of families exiting the program have achieved self-sufficiency.) To make the program work, a strong social service component is needed, in combination with a strong

property management component.

Homeward Bound provides families with the tools to achieve self-sufficiency, but it is the families themselves that commit to implementing these tools and applying what they learn. As NHS/B likes to say, “We provide the tools, but they have to pound the nails.”

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING, THIRD PLACE

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

WOMEN'S TRANSITIONAL HOUSING COALITION INC. DULUTH, MINNESOTA

Going beyond traditional supportive housing service offerings is what sets the Women's Transitional Housing Coalition Inc. apart from other supportive housing providers.

THE ORGANIZATION

Established in 1986, Women's Transitional Housing Coalition (WTHC) is a nonprofit organization that addresses domestic violence, homelessness and chronic poverty. It is committed to developing a range of long-term, safe and affordable housing options for low-income women, and helping those women improve their self-confidence and sense of self-direction.

WTHC was only the second organization in Minnesota to offer transitional housing, and the first outside the Twin Cities region. It is the largest program in greater Minnesota, and thus has had a significant impact on the homeless in its region.

WTHC developed and 49 units of housing: 21 transitional; 15 permanent efficiencies for single women (comprising nine units in a triplex, a five-plex and a single family home); a six-unit permanent supportive housing project (in development), a five-unit row house and a single family home. A new construction duplex, still in development, is scheduled to be sold to a low-income family. And the caretaker occupies one unit.

THE PROJECT

The Transitional Housing program began in 1988 with the explicit goal of developing a range of long-term, safe, affordable

Project Type

- ▲ Moderate rehabilitation, multifamily rental, transitional housing

Resident Profile

- ▲ Singles and families, homeless, chemically dependent and severely or persistently mentally ill

Rent Structure (monthly)

- ▲ Efficiency (426 s.f.): \$354
- ▲ 1 BR (501 s.f.): \$457
- ▲ 2 BR (714 s.f.): \$586
- ▲ 3 BR (1,011 s.f.): \$782

Occupancy Rate

- ▲ FY 2002: 95 percent
- ▲ FY 2001: 93 percent

Key Features

- ▲ Transitional housing for women and families

Key Services

- ▲ Traditional support services coupled with non-traditional focus on socio-political involvement and a women-in-construction employment-training program

Project Cost

- ▲ Total project: \$779,108
- ▲ Per unit: \$37,100

Contact Information

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housing options for low-income women. WTHC works to create an environment that strengthens each woman's self-confidence and belief in her ability to influence the direction of her life. To accomplish these goals, program participants are afforded an array of support services along with their housing, ranging from the traditional education or employment training and child care, to the non-traditional, which includes an awareness of and involvement in political and social causes. This socio-political component of the program is one aspect that sets this supportive housing model apart from others. WTHC believes fervently that women are best able to make and sustain positive change in their lives when they are educated about societal issues that affect women, children and families and then become active in political processes that effect change on a much larger scale. The other unique aspect of this program is its focus on training women in construction as a direct means of helping them secure a livable wage. The training and support that participants receive can lead directly to employment with WTHC's affiliated construction company.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES SUMMARY

In addition to developing and maintaining quality affordable housing, WTHC provides a full complement of support services to women and children. The Women's Program, for example, provides intensive support services, including case management, advocacy, education, community building and social justice. Participants

also attend rallies, education groups on oppression and systemic change and annual candidate forums, and they learn how to access their local leaders and take part in statewide forums on issues of concern to women such as homelessness, domestic abuse and more.

The Children's Program focuses on family advocacy and case management and includes reunification support, parenting, legal and child support advocacy. Intensive work is conducted inside the home, with focus on healthy family functioning. Children's activities include a daily homework club, computer labs and weekly, age-specific support groups. Children are connected to the community-at-large through volunteerism and participation in community-wide events.

A highlight of the Transitional Housing program is its employment component, assisting women with training and securing livable-wage employment. Staff works intensively with participants to provide employment training, case management and advocacy. Training is provided in computer skills, driver education and on-site GED instruction. Upon exiting the program, women receive on-going employment support to help sustain their families. Women also receive six months of overall housing and community support upon leaving the program.

An interesting extension of the employment program is the Women in Construction Training Project, affording low-income women the opportunity to learn non-traditional skills that permit them to readily access living-wage jobs.



At Transitional Housing, homeless women receive the tools to strengthen their self-confidence and develop a belief in their ability to influence the direction of their lives, in addition to decent and safe affordable housing. Photo courtesy of Women's Transitional Housing Coalition Inc.

The program enables them to work in the construction trades to secure apprenticeship positions, full-time employment and perhaps even to start their own woman-owned construction company. Paid training, both classroom and hands-on, takes place 30 to 40 hours per week. Directly related to this construction program for women is the WTHC-affiliated nonprofit business, Women in Construction LLC, a licensed contractor that hires women specifically from the training project. It does construction for affordable housing projects in the community, and its employees earn \$11 to \$13 per hour plus benefits. A natural complement to the Women in Construction Training Project is the Home Girls program, which provides outreach, education, training and mentoring to young women and girls in the community who are interested in the construction trades.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

The Transitional Housing program at WTHC is housed among three buildings, three stories each, located on one site in Duluth. Two of the buildings are connected, with offices and programming space located on the first and second floors. The third building is directly next door, making all programming easily accessible.

There are 20 rental units, one caretaker unit and three offices. Common space is plentiful and is used for programming. It includes a dedicated children's space indoors, a child care center and a homework lab/group area, along with an employment resource room with a computer lab, laundry facilities and two rooms that house donations from community members of household goods for the residents. A large community space – equipped with a kitchen, a television

and a meeting table – is located directly next door to the other two buildings. At the rear of the site is a large yard and playground area, complete with picnic tables and benches. Families often spend time grilling and picnicking there during the summer months.

The apartments themselves were designed and rehabilitated with resident input. Kitchen and bathroom counters have been sized for women, and items such as durable flooring and ceramic tile were added, not only to improve aesthetics, but also to reduce future maintenance costs. All three buildings have security systems that notify residents of visitors. Visitors may enter the building only when a resident physically opens the building's entry door.

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

WTHC ensures that residents are directly involved with decision-making and management of the organization in a number of ways. Former residents are recruited to the board of directors and sit on staffing committees that make decisions about program hiring and evaluation of staff and the program itself. Leadership development occurs through resident involvement in volunteer activities, some of which include mentoring, tutoring and maintenance services at WTHC, along with community benefits, neighborhood clean-ups, rallies and other nonprofit ventures, such as working with Habitat for Humanity.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

Current residents participate in the local Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) process via the Affordable Housing Committee, a group of housing providers that make funding decisions about homeless programs. They also attend rallies at the state capital and meet with legislative representatives about issues of importance to them. Residents are also actively involved in neighborhood groups, attending monthly meetings of various neighborhood associations. In addition, residents work with the neighborhood business community and volunteer regularly with a variety of civic causes.

SUMMARY

The WTHC model of supportive housing presents a unique approach to helping homeless women create positive and sustainable, long-term changes in their lives. To WTHC, traditional supportive housing services are not enough. It is only by integrating women into the larger public, socio-political arena that women who have often been battered and abused will begin to believe they too have a voice. And similarly, by teaching them a hard skill, such as those of the construction trades, they will be able to earn a livable wage, support their families and become self-sufficient. The Minnesota Department of Workforce Development is working to replicate this project among other existing transitional programs throughout the state.

PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT, FIRST PLACE

WEST TOWN HOUSING PARTNERS

BICKERDIKE REDEVELOPMENT CORPORATION CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Strong property management, resident involvement and thoughtful design are a winning combination for the West Town Housing Partners project. Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, which developed West Town, has developed affordable housing in low-income neighborhoods of Chicago for more than 35 years.

THE ORGANIZATION

Bickerdike was originally formed in 1967. Its current mission is to redevelop the West Town, Humboldt Park and Logan

Square communities for the benefit and control of low and moderate-income residents. Bickerdike has produced 919 affordable units, manages 889 units, trained and placed 50 local residents in skilled union jobs, provided technical assistance and contract opportunities to more than 20 local subcontractors, developed a local shopping center that employs 30 local residents and has fostered the development of numerous community leaders from low and moderate-income backgrounds, including two elected aldermen and one who serves in the U.S. Congress.

THE PROJECT

The West Town Housing Partners project is a group of structures scattered among five sites throughout the near Northwest Chicago neighborhood. All units are reserved for people earning below 50

Project Type

- ▲ New construction, scattered-site rental townhouses, permanent housing

Resident Profile

- ▲ Singles, families, senior citizens and physically disabled

Rent Structure (monthly)

- ▲ 1 BR (685 s.f.): \$1,004-\$1,070
- ▲ 2 BR (800 s.f.): \$1,117-\$1,190
- ▲ 3 BR (975 s.f.): \$1,285-\$1,378
- ▲ 4 BR (1,150 s.f.): \$1,497-\$1,517

Occupancy Rate

- ▲ FY 2002: 97.8 percent
- ▲ FY 2001: 96.8 percent

Key Features

- ▲ Spacious, affordable housing, mostly three and four-bedroom townhouse units

Key Services

- ▲ Very active tenant involvement in property and in community

Project Cost

- ▲ Total project: \$12,254,000
- ▲ Per unit: \$87,529

Contact Information

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percent of area median income, and are eligible for HUD Section 8 housing payments. The units are clustered as townhouses. To accommodate the many large families served, 73 percent of the units have three or four bedrooms. The project is characterized by well-maintained properties and satisfied tenants, as evidenced by low turnover rates and low turnover time.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

West Town Housing holds a project-based Section 8 contract for all units, requiring annual reporting by HUD and monitoring by the Chicago Housing Authority Corporation (CHAC). Bickerdike performs an annual inspection of all of the units as a part of the lease renewal process, far exceeding HUD's inspection requirement of 20 percent of the units.

Residents report maintenance issues in their units with a work order system. Janitorial and maintenance staff regularly monitor building systems, in accordance with the preventive maintenance plan, which lists monthly routine maintenance tasks and inspections designed to maximize the life cycle of building systems and maintain a high quality environment. For example, the plan includes painting one-third of a building's units each year, so that each unit is newly painted a minimum of every three years.

Tenant selection is guided by a 17-page plan that follows fair housing principles, laws and practices. A Tenant Selection

Committee, comprised of tenants and other area residents who are trained in fair housing laws, reviews applicant information and makes final decisions. Affirmative marketing, through a predetermined list of community groups, begins months in advance of the regular marketing of available units. A waiting list is compiled until the project is completely rented and the wait list has more than 250 names. It is interesting to note that the waiting list opens only every three to four years and usually closes within hours due to high demand for these units.

ASSET MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The project-based Section 8 subsidies guarantee affordability to households paying 30 percent of their incomes for rent. Turnover and vacancy rates are typically less than five percent. Communications among property manager, asset manager and Bickerdike's executive director are facilitated by the distinct but interrelated roles that each plays, with one generating reports that others must review for performance and compliance. The management team has formed a close relationship, and the proximity of their work areas allows for daily face-to-face communication. Crisis management is effectively handled via the property management staff, who is on-call at all hours for emergencies. Problems are usually resolved within 24 hours. A security consultant handles any security problems and reports them to property management.



At West Town Housing Partners, five clusters of well-maintained townhouses are scattered throughout the West Town and Logan Square communities of Chicago. Satisfied tenants mean the wait list opens only once every three to four years. Photo courtesy of Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

West Town Housing Partners was built on vacant lots. The project consists of townhouse style developments arranged in five major clusters in the West Town and Logan Square communities. Each cluster consists of 10 to 30 units typically contained within a three-block radius, in contiguous townhouse structures of four to seven units. The project's varying brickwork and color palettes, along with differing roof pitches, make each unit seem unique while they all work within an overarching design, fitting well into the surrounding diverse mix of single family homes, townhouses, and apartment buildings.

Three- and four-bedroom units of two-story townhouse design dominate the project. One-bedroom units are on the first floor, while two-bedroom units are situated on top. From the exterior, the units are nearly indistinguishable by unit size. All units have front yards and many have back yards. Two additional vacant lots were acquired for the project and are used as community garden space. Named the "Harold Washington Victory Garden" in 1988, the garden consists of a variety of annual and perennial flowers, vegetables and trees, along with picnic tables and benches that are often used for community meetings and informal socializing. Wrought iron fencing and special lighting enhance security around the properties, and Bickerdike's public safety organizing and Chicago's community alternative

policing strategy (CAPS) have also worked to reduce crime in the area.

The units are spacious, providing adequate square footage to prevent overcrowding. Double thermal paned windows help with energy efficiency, and windows were deliberately placed to take full advantage of southern exposure. Exterior walls were framed with 2-by-6 inch boards (rather than the standard 2-by-4) to allow for two extra inches of insulation.

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

In total, Bickerdike's residential properties are grouped into 15 clusters, each of which elects a site representative to sit on the Residents' Council to address tenant concerns, plan tenant activities and disseminate information. West Town Housing Partners comprises five of those clusters. Tenant leaders usually evolve their leadership abilities as they move to more and more complex volunteer activities. They may begin with a gardening activity and grow to participate in much larger issues affecting the entire community. Bickerdike tenants frequently play an active role in numerous organizations, committees, coalitions and associations that are focused on community or citywide issues.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

Over the past 20 years, Bickerdike's West Town Housing Partners project has had a major impact on numerous area

households, the local community and even the community development movement itself. Not only has the project provided low-income families with 140 quality affordable units and helped spark the revitalization of a severely disinvested community; the project was also a trailblazer in integrating affordable housing development with job opportunities for local residents while also creating a model for a developer's involvement in all aspects of project development and property management. West Town Housing Partners jumpstarted the local economy and spurred investment in other area properties, helping to lead revitalization of the local housing stock that saw a net gain of nearly 5,000 units in West Town during the 1990s.

SUMMARY

The successful management of West Town Housing Partners is due to the integration of community involvement with strong property and asset management practices. By carrying out preventive maintenance and adhering to capital improvement and replacement schedules, the project's buildings look as beautiful today as they did 20 years ago when the project opened. Thoughtful design, strong asset and property management and significant resident involvement are a winning combination for sustaining long-term, quality affordable housing.

PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT, SECOND PLACE

IROQUOIS RESIDENCE

COMMUNITY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Iroquois Residence, developed by the Community Housing Partnership of San Francisco, is devoted to providing high-quality and well-maintained housing for formerly homeless people with mental or physical disabilities.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Community Housing Partnership (CHP) was established in 1990 by the Coalition on Homelessness and the Council of Community Housing Organizations. Since that time, it has pioneered a model of service delivery to homeless people that provides a

combination of permanent, affordable housing and comprehensive onsite support services, along with job training and placement. While many homeless providers focus on crisis intervention, emergency shelter or other temporary measures, CHP's holistic model is designed to result in lasting outcomes that help people overcome homelessness.

CHP is the only organization in San Francisco devoted specifically to providing permanent, affordable housing for the homeless. CHP owns and manages four supportive housing sites, providing 243 apartments for formerly homeless families in the city. Its newest development, Island Bay Homes, is located on Treasure Island and features 24 units of family housing.

CHP firmly believes that homeless and formerly homeless individuals have a critical role to play in designing and implementing effective solutions to

Project Type

- ▲ Moderate rehabilitation, multifamily rental, SRO, efficiencies and family units

Resident Profile

- ▲ Homeless singles and families

Rent Structure (monthly)

- ▲ SRO (230 s.f.): \$734
- ▲ Efficiency (420 s.f.): \$937
- ▲ 1 BR (575 s.f.): \$1,222

Occupancy Rate

- ▲ FY 2002: 96 percent
- ▲ FY 2001: 94 percent

Key Features

- ▲ Permanent, affordable housing

Key Services

- ▲ Comprehensive onsite support services, job training and placement

Project Cost

- ▲ Total project: \$5,415,400
- ▲ Per unit: \$73,181

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The Iroquois Residence was formerly a Merchant Marine hotel located in San Francisco's Tenderloin district. Rehabilitated in 1996, it now helps the chronically homeless remain off the street. Photo courtesy of Community Housing Partnership.

homelessness. As such, more than 50 percent of CHP's 65-person staff were, at one time, homeless themselves – a significant contributor to its success, CHP believes.

THE PROJECT

Built in 1913, the Iroquois Residence was formerly a residential hotel for Merchant Marines, located in San Francisco's Tenderloin district. It was rehabilitated in 1996 into a mix of residential units – 11 one-bedroom, 35 efficiencies and 28 SRO (single room occupancy) apartments. Its target population comprises some of the most disadvantaged individuals and families in the city, all of which are

extremely low income and have experienced chronic homelessness. In addition, many Iroquois residents have significant mental or physical disabilities, and some struggle with alcohol or substance abuse as well. By providing permanent, supportive housing solutions to this population, CHP not only helps the chronically homeless remain off the street, but it also helps to significantly alleviate their use of costly emergency interventions, such as emergency medical, mental health and jail systems, thereby saving the city hundreds of thousands of dollars.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Financial performance for the building has been extremely solid, with a high occupancy rate (96.1 percent), rent collection rate (96.8 percent) and retention rate (90 percent) for FY 2002. Healthy cash flow and operating reserves put the project in enviable financial position.

The building has remained in exceptional physical condition since its renovation in 1996, due in large part to excellent rehabilitation design. Preventive maintenance involves a daily walk-through by the building manager and a weekly walk-through by the operations manager. All units are inspected monthly, with annual inspections conducted by the local housing authority. Routine repairs are tracked through a work order tracking system that documents the repair history of each unit. CHP uses a 15-year capital improvement schedule that projects for the replacement or repair of major building systems. CHP's

property management manual has been selected by the Corporation for Supportive Housing as the basis for a national model for supportive housing operations.

ASSET MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The director of property management shares asset management responsibilities with the executive director, who provides supervisory oversight biweekly. Building managers compile and submit a weekly report to the property management director providing data on maintenance workloads and response, occupancy and vacancy statistics, rent collection data and other activities or factors affecting the building or tenants. An emergency response binder clarifies how to respond during a crisis, ranging from mental health emergencies and criminal activity, to fire, flood and earthquakes. It identifies staff person roles and responsibilities during such crises. The building is staffed 24 hours per day by desk clerks who have received extensive training in crisis management. Building managers and tenant services staff are always available to respond as needed.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Constructed in 1913, the Iroquois Residence was a former Merchant Marine hotel that was acquired by CHP in 1994. Located in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, the building was rehabilitated to provide 11 units of affordable housing for families and 63 units (35 efficiency and 28 SRO units) for formerly homeless single individuals. All one-

bedroom and efficiency units include private baths and cooking facilities. Residents of SRO units also have private baths, as well as access to community kitchens. Common spaces include on-site laundry facilities, a rooftop garden, a front desk reception area and a community lounge. As part of the rehabilitation, a neighboring parking lot was converted into a two-story structure that houses a community lounge and a private tenant services space.

The Iroquois Residence is located on an established block in the Tenderloin neighborhood that includes mixed retail and income, and the structure was seismically upgraded in 1996 to meet requirements of the San Francisco building code. In addition to resident managers and around-the-clock desk clerks, CHP has implemented video surveillance in common areas and at the building perimeter, which has helped to keep the incidence of crime low.

The Iroquois is in full compliance with ADA requirements. Four units are fully accessible to tenants with mobility impairments, and all units are adaptable to the needs of disabled individuals. Furthermore, the building design allows those with mobility impairments easy access to common areas, such as building entrances, lounges and community kitchens.

The Iroquois Residence is located in close proximity to numerous treatment, health and senior centers, senior services, a grocery store, the main branch of the San Francisco Public Library, two city college

campuses, training programs, exercise facilities, dining halls and an insular children's playground. The residence is located on a major bus line and is only a block away from two other bus lines that offer easy access to other areas of the city.

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

CHP relies on existing tenants to provide input and recommendations to each of its new projects, through tenant surveys regarding site selection, building features and service offerings. Tenants are also encouraged to participate in the tenant council of the Iroquois Residence, which meets regularly with building management staff to make joint decisions about operations. The council elects one resident representative to serve on CHP's board of directors and plans activities at the building. Tenants of all CHP properties are also invited to participate in community meetings, which are attended by the director of property management and the director of tenant services. Open to the entire community, residents are encouraged to voice their opinions about issues such as safety, security and building improvements.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

CHP encourages community involvement by both tenants and staff alike. Tenants and staff are actively involved with neighborhood associations such as the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative and the Lower Eddy Street Task Force. By maintaining a regular presence at community forums, tenants

ensure that their concerns are heard in the greater Tenderloin community.

CHP has worked hard to develop a good reputation among its neighbors. It works with the local police department, attending community meetings that address crime, and the police are always invited to speak at CHP's desk clerk trainings. Local businesses provide support for events and hire Iroquois residents for internships. Additionally, the 1996 renovation of the property has helped to substantially improve the physical condition and safety of the immediate area. As a good neighbor, CHP also participated in the neighborhood initiative to upgrade a park and playground area across the street.

SUMMARY

With a 90-percent retention rate and at a cost of less than \$40 per day for housing and social services, the Iroquois Residence has proven that supportive housing can be a viable, cost-effective and lasting solution to homelessness. CHP houses the homeless, not by just providing a safe and secure dwelling; it takes housing a step further by helping residents achieve stability, increase their self-sufficiency, and move beyond homelessness to provide lasting solutions. With clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for the exchange of information, the Iroquois Residence's property management staff and its tenant services staff help to foster a high rate of resident satisfaction and a remarkably high housing retention rate, given the population served.

PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT, THIRD PLACE

WESTMINSTER COURT APARTMENTS

URBAN EDGE ROXBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

A strong management team and an unusually high level of tenant involvement with the management team are the hallmarks of the Westminster Court Apartments.

THE ORGANIZATION

Westminster Court Apartments was redeveloped by Urban Edge, a nonprofit community development organization founded in 1974 by community leaders in the Jamaica Plain community of Boston. Its primary focus is the development and preservation of affordable housing. With a staff of 83, it is one of the most active

community development corporations (CDCs) in the Boston area, having developed 1,030 units of affordable housing to date, including 158 homes for ownership and 872 multifamily rental units. Urban Edge Property Management manages 1,015 units, 822 of which it owns or co-owns, and 193 that it manages on behalf of the Boston Housing Authority.

Urban Edge also develops and manages commercial property, and it provides technical assistance, loans and equity investments to small and mid-sized local businesses.

THE PROJECT

Westminster Court Apartments was originally built in the late 1960s and subsequently rehabilitated in 1995 by a partnership of the Tenant Association, Urban Edge and Massachusetts Housing

Project Type

- ▲ Moderate rehabilitation, multifamily rental and co-op; permanent housing

Resident Profile

- ▲ Singles, families, senior citizens and physically disabled

Rent Structure (monthly)

- ▲ 1 BR (750 s.f.): \$471 and \$545
- ▲ 2 BR (900 s.f.): \$567 and \$655

Occupancy Rate

- ▲ FY 2002: 99.6 percent
- ▲ FY 2001: 99.8 percent

Key Features

- ▲ Affordable housing, resident co-ownership with tenant services

Key Services

- ▲ Tenant organizing/self-empowerment, nutrition assistance, asthma management, public safety, youth programs

Project Cost

- ▲ Total project: \$7,146,204
- ▲ Per unit: \$102,089

Contact Information

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Investment Corp. (MHIC). Prior to renovation, residents faced both physical deterioration of the property along with the risk of displacement due to appreciating real estate values in the area. It was the tenant association's collaboration with a strong property and asset management team at Urban Edge that helped to address each of these risks.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Westminster Court Apartments has exhibited strong performance for the past two fiscal years, with an occupancy rate of 99.6 percent, a rent collection rate of 99 percent and turnover time of less than 30 days for FY2002, with similar performance in the year before. To stay on top of upcoming repair and replacement needs, Urban Edge conducts monthly preventive maintenance inspections of the building and grounds. Urban Edge's Property Management division uses its Management Indicator Report to conduct a thorough review of performance monthly. The report allows them to quickly assess performance and make adjustments where necessary. For example, when a recent analysis reflected that capital reserves were insufficient, reserve contributions were increased to meet the property's long-term capital needs.

Westminster Court employs a written tenant selection plan that abides by all federal fair housing rules and regulations. Its philosophy is that all applicants are eligible unless any of the evaluation criteria prove otherwise (e.g., poor credit history, poor landlord history). The

Westminster Court board of directors is active in all facets of the apartment community, including taking part in the selection and orientation of new residents.

Westminster Court has procedures in place for crisis management. They include a 24-hour on-call system for maintenance emergencies, and because most Urban Edge staff live nearby, emergency calls are usually answered within an hour. The offices of both Westminster Court and Urban Edge are located within one block of each other, providing for immediate awareness of security issues and risk management. Urban Edge employs a full-time manager who is concerned with public safety and crime prevention.

ASSET MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Westminster Court is co-owned by Urban Edge Housing Corporation and Tenant Association. The goals of the owner partnership have been to maintain the long-term viability of Westminster Court Apartments, to ensure meaningful resident participation in its operation, and to ensure that the acquisition and operation of the property provide a positive benefit to the community. As a result of a number of management policies and procedures, legal fees (i.e., evictions) are lower than at comparable properties, occupancy is stable, program requirements are being met and the property is financially sound.

Communications among key staff is key to successful operations. The directors of property management and asset manage-



Built in the late 1960s and rehabilitated in 1995, Westminster Court Apartments is comprised of three, three-story buildings clustered around a large courtyard. Photo courtesy Urban Edge.

ment meet daily, and the asset management director conducts quarterly financial performance reviews that involve property management staff. Additionally, property management staff attend resident board meetings and involve asset management on issues affecting ownership, finances or overall viability of the property.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Westminster Court Apartments was originally constructed in the late 1960s and underwent moderate rehabilitation in 1995. It is comprised of three, three-story buildings clustered around a large courtyard at the interior of the site. This courtyard is a central focal point for residents and the community, as it is very well landscaped and consists of several clustered seating and play areas, popular with children and parents. Westminster Court also features a small community

room available to residents to hold meetings or social events. The development is within walking distance of public transportation, an elementary school (adjacent to the property) and various shops. The proximity of Urban Edge offices to Westminster Court promotes constant interaction between residents and management. Features that promote safety include an attractive iron fence, stone retaining wall and plants that surround the property and a centralized main entrance that enables residents to monitor visitor entry.

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Residents of Westminster Court were closely involved in the planning and oversight of the redevelopment of the property, and they continue to be closely tied to its ongoing management. The Westminster Court Apartment Tenant

Association (WCATA) was formed by resident leaders prior to the rehabilitation and has provided 10 years of independent, consistent resident control of the property. Westminster residents reviewed and approved development plans and budgets, and they met regularly with contractors and project managers during the rehabilitation. Today, residents remain closely involved in the property's management planning and oversight. In addition, three WCATA leaders sit on the Urban Edge board of directors offering input into its governance.

WCATA is also active in a number of neighborhood organizations and businesses, and it receives technical support from Urban Edge's community services department with respect to special activities, events and resident services, such as nutrition assistance, asthma management, public safety, home-buyer education, leadership training and youth programs.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

Westminster Court, in keeping with other Urban Edge properties at other locations, has served as a catalyst for local neighborhood revitalization efforts, which serve to improve living conditions in the neighborhood. Physical improvements, better resident screening, strengthened lease enforcement, joint and shared management and a strengthened partnership between the community, the police and other neighborhood institutions has made Westminster Court an appealing place to live for residents of Roxbury.

SUMMARY

With strong operational performance, a strong management team and strong tenant leadership and involvement, Urban Edge represents an affordable housing model to be emulated. Urban Edge has dedicated itself tirelessly to its community for nearly 30 years. They have provided an abundance of housing opportunities for low and moderate-income residents of their neighborhood, providing a sense of stability and empowerment to individuals and families in the process. Strong and dedicated property management enables residents to take pride in their apartment community, encouraging an unusually high level of resident involvement in the daily activities and services offered as well as in the long-term planning for the project's continued viability. Westminster Court is a primary example of how residents can rise above barriers and make a difference in the revitalization of their community and ensure a stable future for their children.



At West Town Housing Partners in Chicago, two vacant lots were acquired for a community garden, formally named the Harold Washington Victory Garden, after the city's former mayor. Photo courtesy of Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation.



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