



REGION 1 – NEW ENGLAND

2015 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The purpose of the NCDA Region 1 Community Development Achievement Award is to honor communities which exemplify outstanding achievement in service to low-moderate income individuals/families; addressing slum/blight; or addressing an urgent need through innovative and exemplary uses of CDBG (including Section 108); HOME; HOPWA; and ESG funds.

2015 AWARDEES

The following projects/communities have been selected to receive an award this year:

Liberty St. Revitalization - New Bedford, MA

Gatley Building - Pawtucket, RI

Silk Mill Apartments - Pittsfield, MA

525 Beach Street - Revere, MA

Restoration of Fogg Library - Weymouth, MA

Union Hill Revitalization Initiative – Worcester, MA

Project: Liberty St. Revitalization

Community: New Bedford, MA

Summary

In August, 2015 the City of New Bedford recently completed the rehabilitation of a problem property and upgrades to a local neighborhood park, Harrington Park, that is located directly across the street from the now completely renovated home that is for sale to a low income first time home buyer. The City of New Bedford has sought out new and innovative ways to address distressed properties, erase blight and reverse the destructive influence that these abandoned houses have on neighborhoods. The City has teamed up with the Attorney General's Office and utilized the "Receivership Program". The City's Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development, in collaboration with The Resource Inc. (TRI), a local non-profit housing developer that was named the Receiver of this abandoned property has recently completed the restoration of a single family home as part of an ongoing effort to promote new homeownership opportunities while restoring vacant, distressed properties. TRI has been a significant presence in the restoration of other properties in the City. TRI has completely renovated this home, and will place a priority lien on the property for the cost of the repairs. TRI held an auction to obtain ownership of the property and then is required to sell the property to a first time home buyer through a lottery process. The City insures that the HOME eligibility requirements are followed by recording an "Affordable Housing Rider" on the property that states the property must be sold to an income eligible first time home buyer. The property is a single family home (1 HOME assisted unit). The renovations included updating to energy efficient fixtures, appliances, electrical, and plumbing and heating systems, where needed. Exterior renovations included window replacement, replacing the exterior steps and porches, new siding and roof replacement. The property will also be de-lead and will receive a Certificate of Compliance. TRI's total development cost was \$332,335, which included HOME funds in the amount of \$157,190. The property will be sold through a lottery process to an income eligible first time home buyer at a purchase price of \$166,900 in accordance with the City's affordable housing lottery guidelines. Potential buyers can select from seven local lenders through the Fall River/ New Bedford Housing Partnership to get pre-approved through the MassHousing "Buy New Bedford" Program in order to be eligible for the Lottery to purchase the home.

Harrington Park, located directly across the street from 36 Liberty Street is a well utilized park that was in need of significant upgrades. The City applied for and received \$200,000 in grant funds through the "Our Common Backyards Program" from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and invested \$100,000 in Community Development Block (CDBG) funds to make substantial upgrades to Harrington Park. The park is located in New Bedford's west end behind Hathaway School and is bordered by Court, Liberty, Tremont and Morgan Streets. Upgrades include the installation of two new basketball courts, a water play area featuring a new splash pad, as well as many site amenities, such as new walkways, benches, fencing, trees, security cameras and lighting.

The park design was created through several community meetings at Hathaway School in the fall of 2014 coordinated by the Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches. Residents provided valuable important input for the park project including the water play design and features. Engineering services were provided by Thompson Farland, the general contractor PA Landers completed the construction required at the park. The City Department of Public Infrastructure worked on infrastructure improvements to the water and drainage systems.

Project: Gatley Building

Community: Pawtucket, RI

Summary

The Gatley Building at 2 Bayley Street had been vacant, boarded, and distressed for the past twenty years. This abandoned structure had been an eyesore in downtown Pawtucket and a detriment to economic development in the area. Since it was last occupied in 1993 the property had fallen into a state of disrepair. Water infiltrated the roof, significant amounts of mold were present in the basement, and the structural system was substantially compromised. Because of the negative impacts that an abandoned building have on a community, this building in each and every way met the standards of a “distressed” property. Pawtucket Central Falls Development has completely rehabilitated the structure; bringing back historic elements that reflect the property’s original early 20th Century architecture. The rehabilitated building now includes thirteen deed restricted affordable housing units. This development has revitalized a prominent corner on our Main Street, downtown Pawtucket.

These thirteen units are now being occupied by working class individuals and families. One of the residents in the building describes her apartment as “absolutely gorgeous”. She states that she had plans to hang curtains on the windows but now that she sees the windows’ trims and molding, there’s no need for curtains as she will complement the meticulous design to her home décor. She’s content to be able to live in a historical renovated building. She says, “I wouldn’t think I would have found a better place; it’s a wonderful place building with everything new and at an affordable price. I am lucky to have the apartment that I have and live in a secure place”.

Rents for the one bedroom units are between \$595 and \$662

The redevelopment of the Gately Building brings back its historic architectural elements and its thriving potential to revitalize a key corner of downtown Pawtucket. In addition, it echoes and helps meet the community’s need with safe affordable homes.

Total dollar amount of HOME funds used: \$500,000 in Rhode Island Housing HOME and \$640,100 in Pawtucket HOME funds throughout the BVG II Development, 41 total units. Approximately \$155,000 on the Gately Building.

Total project cost: \$11.9 Million for the BVG II Development; \$3.8 Million at the Gately.

Other federal sources of funding and the amounts used: LIHTC Equity, Federal Historic Tax Credits, State Historical Tax Credit, BHRI, and AHP.

Number of affordable units built: 13 at the Gately Building

Project: Silk Mill Apartments

Community: Pittsfield, MA

Summary

Located in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the A.H. Rice Silk Mill, a 139 year old historic property, was originally constructed in 1874 by George Wesley Burbank and was originally known as the Burbank Manufactory Building and as the Burbank Steam Power Building. In 1881, Farnham & Lathers purchased the property to house a woolen manufacturing operation. By 1886, the property was vacant, and it was sold to the A.H. Rice & Company, a manufacturer of silk thread and silk braid products especially for military style uniforms. Located at 55 Spring Street, in the heart of the City's Morningside neighborhood, the property served as the home of A.H. Rice & Company for 119 years. The A.H. Rice & Company served as a major employer and innovator in the textile industry, and it played a major role in Pittsfield's rise as a textile manufacturing center during the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. The company garnered many patents related to its silk manufacturing processes; and through the years the company's products played a role in various well-known historical events.

A.H. Rice & Company supplied the pure silk thread cords on the parachutes that fastened supplies to sleds during Commander Byrd's Second Antarctic Expedition. In 1938, the company produced the first parachute cord made of nylon. Decades later, the company was still innovating, as it produced an emergency order of braided, Teflon-coated cable, made from 1,200 feet of spun glass thread, for the Skylab space station.

For over a century, the Rice Silk Mill served as the economic engine for the City's Morningside neighborhood employing hundreds of people at a time. In December 2005, facing long-term structural changes in economy, the owner moved the manufacturing operation from the Spring Street mill to his plant in South Carolina.

The re-development of the A.H. Rice Silk Mill to 45 units of affordable workforce housing was spearheaded by Jon Rudzinski, principal of Rees-Larkin Development LLC. Using his experience in affordable housing development, Jon approached City and State officials in 2008 and began the long and painstaking task of assembling a complex \$15.573 million financing package comprised of federal and state historic tax credits; first mortgage debt shared by People's United Bank (construction lender) and the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund (permanent lender); DHCD/MassHousing funding from the Housing Stabilization Fund and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund; HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program 1 funds through DHCD to the City of Pittsfield; a Community Development Action Grant from DHCD to the City of Pittsfield; and CDBG funds from the City of Pittsfield.

The construction began with a groundbreaking ceremony in October 2011; tenant applications were accepted and occupancy started in July 2012; and the development was completely finished and the ribbon cutting held in October 2012. Now a home for 45 low-moderate income households, the complex features natural beams and brick walls; premium finishes; spacious interiors; an exercise room; community room; play area; playground equipment; wireless internet access; laundry room; a secure building; and resident parking.

Project: 525 Beach Street

Community: Revere, MA

Summary

The City of Revere partnered with The Neighborhood Developers (TND) at 525 Beach Street. The project involved demolishing a vacant, dilapidated warehouse and constructing a new four-story building in its place, with 30 affordable rental apartments and below-ground parking. All apartments house low-income individuals and families who will benefit from 525 Beach's proximity to subway and bus routes, neighborhood parks, local shopping, health care facilities and Revere Beach.

525 Beach builds on several recent investments in the area, including the redevelopment of the Walden Street fire station for seven new affordable apartments for seniors and the playground renovation at Costa Park. The Neighborhood Developers also broke ground last month on another new housing development in Revere: One Beach, which will include 39 affordable, independent apartments for seniors.

525 Beach's design is a fresh update on New England's traditional style. The building's design, featuring rhythmic bays and indentations, blends well with the established architectural vernacular of the area, and replaces the last industrial property on the block with a structure that is much more compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The property's landscaped courtyard will provide open space for residents and the healthy, environmentally responsible building pursued LEED for Homes Mid-Rise certification.

TND received more than 2,000 applications for the 30 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments – demonstrating the enormous demand for healthy, affordable housing in our communities.

Many financial partners contributed to the success of 525 Beach. The project was made possible through the support of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development's federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program, Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and Community Based Housing program; Massachusetts Housing Partnership; MassHousing; the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation; and the North Suburban HOME Consortium.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch was the project's equity investor through the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program and was the construction lender. 525 Beach is the fourth project that TND and Bank of America Merrill Lynch have worked on together to create new affordable housing in Revere and Chelsea. The partnership has been very fruitful, producing more than 140 new affordable homes.

Project: **Restoration of Fogg Library**

Community: **Weymouth, MA**

Summary

In April 2014, the Town of Weymouth completed major renovations to the exterior and interior of the Fogg Library, an historic building, built in 1897, listed on National Register of Historic Places, and located in one of the town's four Village Centers. The library had been closed since 2005. Restorations were designed by McKinnell, McKinnell and Taylor, an architectural and engineering firm, and executed by Northern Contracting.

Phase One of the renovation involved exterior work such as removal and replacement of over 60% of the exterior stone work, a new slate roof, and copper gutters. Phase Two involved restoration of the heavily damaged interior including restoration of plaster and wood paneling, historic windows and stained glass, installation of a new elevator, and accessible parking. The project involved restoration of the library's main floors, and basement including meeting rooms, restrooms, and staff areas.

Renovations entailed the cooperation of many individuals, organizations, and local and state agencies. These parties included: the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Weymouth Historical Commission, Trustees of Public Libraries, Columbian Square Business Association, Weymouth Commission on Disabilities, South Shore Hospital, Old South Union Church, Community Preservation Committee, the Office of the Mayor, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Planning and Community Development. Of course, funding and guidance on the project came from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In order to pay for the massive restoration project from many sources, including CDBG to remove barriers to disabled persons and seniors, and funds from the Department of Public Works, the Southfield Host Community Agreement, Community Preservation Act funds, and Massachusetts Historical Commission funds. The total cost of the project was about \$3.5 million dollars, including \$340,000 in CDBG funds representing 10% of the total project.

CDBG funds, directed towards the removal of physical barriers at the Fogg Library, have enabled Weymouth's seniors and disabled persons to access to this beautiful revitalized building. CDBG funds were used to install an elevator, renovate the bathrooms, create parking, and install a ramp. Weymouth's seniors make up 15% of the town's population, slightly higher than the percentage of seniors statewide according to Census data. Weymouth's disabled population (12% of all non-institutionalized persons) is also slightly higher than the state average.

Project: Union Hill Revitalization Initiative

Community: Worcester, MA

Summary

A once proud and stable neighborhood in the city of Worcester, Union Hill was historically home to first and second generation immigrants dating back to the late 19th century. The neighborhood began enduring setbacks in the 1980s as many residents moved to other areas or out of Worcester, the effects of which were compounded in the 1990s as St. Vincent Hospital, a large institutional presence in the community, moved their facilities out of the neighborhood. By the early 2000s, crime, gang violence, and arson were prevalent. The downturn in the national economy and subsequent foreclosure crisis in the 2000s also affected the neighborhood's older and deteriorating "triple-decker" style housing stock. By the late 2000s, the zip code in which the neighborhood is located was one of the top 5 for foreclosures in MA. In 2011, a Worcester firefighter was killed responding to a suspected arson fire at a triple-decker apartment building. This was a critical event that spurred the City Manager and the Mayor to align a vision for action and prompt the Union Hill Revitalization Initiative.

In 2013, the City successfully sought and obtained a HUD designation as a "Slum & Blight Area" to more effectively use CDBG funding in improving the neighborhood. It began implementing in earnest the Union Hill Revitalization Initiative as an inter-departmental pilot project that mobilized different departments and divisions within the City of Worcester to strategically address issues in the neighborhood. This approach will serve as a model for future City-initiated, neighborhood development efforts. For too many years, the City of Worcester had invested sporadically in neighborhoods and Community Development Corporations (CDCs) without a strategic or targeted approach to revitalization.

The City began engaging the community residents in identifying issues and concerns, particularly as they relate to changes and improvements that could help with public health and safety in Union Hill. This was facilitated through sessions sponsored by a grant-funded Comprehensive Health Impact Assessment that highlighted a need for improving sidewalks and intersections to promote walkability and decrease pedestrian accidents.

The strategy is to focus on key subsets of the neighborhood using an established "model block" approach which is intended to concentrate public investments and help stimulate third party, private investments in those same areas. The areas were chosen based on a comprehensive housing and public infrastructure conditions survey, along with the concept of improving the "gateway" to the community along two primary corridors. It is also believed that this approach will build synergy between proximity to the recent investments in the city's Canal District, as well as on-going efforts by Worcester Academy, a well-respected New England preparatory school that resides in the heart of the neighborhood, to improve the areas immediately in and around its campus. In 2014, working with the Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC), the City also developed an Action Plan to frame the preferred approach and strategies to help revitalize Union Hill.

Currently, \$4.9 million in investments have been completed, programmed or are underway to support public health and safety efforts, housing and code enforcement, and comprehensive street and sidewalk improvements. \$600,000 of CDBG is being invested in or programmed for owner-occupied building rehabilitation, \$154,954 is being invested in residential lead abatement, and \$1,810,000 of CDBG is being invested in street resurfacing, new and enhanced sidewalks, street trees, enhanced crosswalks, and curb extensions to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety. These investments are benefiting the approximately 6,650 residents of Union Hill.