

ECOWISE

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HUD Awards \$23 Million to Test New Energy-Saving Approaches

On March 8, 2012, HUD awarded \$23 million to several different organizations to explore energy efficiency models for the affordable multi-family housing market. The hope is that these models can be adopted by public housing agencies (PHAs) as part of their overall capital improvement programs. A separate goal is that these grants will encourage public and private partnerships.

“These energy-saving innovations will be driven by the private sector who will help lead the way in bringing down the costs in our older multi-family housing stock,” said Theodore Toon, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for HUD’s Office of Affordable Housing Preservation. “HUD’s new Energy Innovation Fund will become the model for others to follow in the national effort to bring a new generation of energy efficiency to older residential properties.”

Some of the energy efficiency projects which received funds include:

- The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (MDHCD) received \$1,250,000 for a demonstration. The funds will assist 10 MDHCD properties totaling 625 units. The HUD grant funds are being matched with money from the Maryland Multifamily Portfolio Energy Innovation Fund and these combined funds will be used to cover project soft costs such as energy assessments. The money will also go toward making loans to properties for energy conservation measures (ECMs). With an expected drop in utility consumption by 20 percent; the developments should be able to repay the loans with the utility savings.
- Columbus Property Management and Development, Inc. (CPM) in Philadelphia, PA, was awarded \$3,000,000 for applied research and development. CPM will retrofit 100 low-income units with energy display devices to show electricity consumption to housing tenants. CPM will research whether tenant awareness of energy consumption leads to changes within the household to reduce energy consumption. It is projected that there will be 20 percent energy savings.
- iCast, a nonprofit in Lakewood, CO, that provides sustainable energy solutions to multi-family housing properties, was awarded \$590,118 for applied research demonstration; the HUD grant is supported by local matching funds of \$590,657. iCast plans to increase energy efficiency through a combination of physical retrofits, and behavioral changes and educational strategies for owners, maintenance staff, and residents located at their multifamily properties.

These energy efficiency projects are dedicated to developing and testing energy- and cost-savings solutions that will directly address the needed capital improvements to public housing developments. Additional information on these and the other awardees is available at: <http://I.usa.gov/yik7Dk>.

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Upcoming Conferences

Energy Performance Contracting: Use Performance Contracting to Green Your Housing Authority
August 6 – 11, 2012
Chicago, IL
For more information regarding course registration, course agenda, or lodging, please visit: <http://www.event.com/d/wcqp3p/1Q>.

Green Kids Conference
<http://greenkidsconference.org/>
June 10, 2012
Mountain View, CA

Denver Housing Authority's Green Renovation

Last fall, the Denver Housing Authority (DHA) completed construction of the residential rental phase of its \$205.4 million Benedict Park Place. In each of the development's five-phases, the housing agency integrated the latest technologies to create a truly "green" environment. DHA introduced urban gardens and interactive play sites. Also, the housing agency converted land set aside for its homeownership units into a temporary urban farm and a dog park. Taking advantage of the development's proximity to a light rail station, the community is a participant in the city's bike share program.

When fully completed, Benedict Park Place will have more than 633 total units, including a few owner-occupied units. This project was funded through HUD Hope VI and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

"Benedict Park Place is groundbreaking model for a true New Urbanism community," said Ismael Guerrero, DHA Executive Director. "At Benedict Park Place, we recreated the old neighborhood street grid and established community gathering spaces with fresh-food gardens and courtyards."

The development also houses Common Roots – a 3,850 square foot commercial space that shared by two tenants: the Urban Land Conservancy and the Denver Preschool Program. The two organizations work together collaboratively on education issues. As a complement to the LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold sustainability rating that initial stages of Benedict Park Place have achieved, Common Roots has launched an initiative to promote sustainability. It has instituted a broad recycling plan and inspired occupants to make behavioral changes such as automatically turning off lights on leaving a room.

Formerly East Village Apartments, these units were originally built for the 1976 Winter Olympics to house journalists. In the early 1980s, the property was sold by the city of Denver to DHA and converted into Section 8 family housing. Over the past 30 years, through neglect and broader changes in the surrounding neighborhood, the property fell into a state of disrepair and degenerated into four square blocks of isolated and concentrated poverty.

The last phase of the development is scheduled for LEED Platinum certification which will incorporate various energy efficient measures projected to result in a 60 percent reduction in annual operating costs with an anticipated 7-year payback. The innovative and ambitious plan for redevelopment of the 15-acre site by the DHA produced a sustainable, mixed income, and successful community that is home to hundreds of residents. U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan called Benedict Park Place the poster child for energy efficient and sustainable public housing.

For more information on Benedict Park Place go to <http://www.denverhousing.org/Pages/default.aspx>.

Resident's Corner | Starting a Community Garden in Your Neighborhood



Community gardens are a great way to bring together residents and public housing agencies (PHAs) for the benefit of the entire neighborhood. A community garden is any piece of land that a group of people use for growing plants. Whether the garden is one large community plot or a collection of individual plots, a flower or vegetable garden – it is the community that decides how their garden will grow.

To begin the process of creating a garden, discuss the project with the local Resident Council and/or PHA. Either may be a good partner in providing startup resources such as a garden location and, possibly, basic gardening equipment. Also, interested residents should form a planning committee. The committee will identify the available resources and prepare the garden site – choosing its layout and the number of plots that will be available. Finally, the planning committee should establish rules for the community garden and put them in writing so they can be understood and enforced by its members. Once the garden is set up, all that remains is enjoying the fruits, flowers, or vegetables of everyone's labor.

The Geauga Metropolitan Housing Authority (GMHA) in Chardon, OH, had great success in developing community gardens. Five of GMHA's developments are home to community gardens and resident participation grows each year. Residents grow a variety of vegetables which supplement their household groceries. The GMHA's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program is supporting the garden by teaching the residents how to freeze and preserve the produce they grow. "It's a budgeting thing, and saving money," said Jeri Ray, GMHA's Public Housing FSS Coordinator. "Everyone is enthusiastic and we want to make it a really pleasurable experience for them."

GMHA's community gardens have other sources of support; local businesses donate plants, seeds, and gardening supplies as well as gardening expertise. Individuals from the community have also donated many valuable items such as pots and used gardening tools. Raised garden beds are available for residents in wheelchairs. Pat O'Conner, a GMHA resident, is learning to garden and offers other new gardeners this advice, "You start slow, and you work your way up."

More information on starting a community garden in your neighborhood is available at: <http://communitygarden.org/index.php>.

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