

# Affordable Multifamily Housing Management Case Studies

2000–2003

**BEST PRACTICES REVIEW**



NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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**NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT  
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NAHMA is the leading advocate for multifamily property owners and managers whose mission is to provide quality affordable housing. NAHMA holds a unique position in the industry as the advocate for professional standards. It supports legislative and regulatory policy that promotes the development and preservation of affordable housing, is a vital resource for technical education and information, fosters strategic relations between government and industry and recognizes those who exemplify the best in affordable housing. Founded in 1990, NAHMA's membership today includes some of the industry's most distinguished multifamily owners and management companies.

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Residents at Berkshire Place Apartments

Acacia Lumbarton Manor's Community Center



## INTRODUCTION

EVERY YEAR, NAHMA PRESENTS AWARDS FOR THE most outstanding examples of multifamily housing management through its National Communities of Quality (COQ) competition. Nominations are submitted by each of the 20 state and regional AHMAs nationwide, which hold the first round of the competition. Entrants are judged on the physical and financial condition of the properties; the quality of life they offer to residents; the level of resident involvement in planning and problem solving; and the nature of collaborations with other organizations and agencies that contribute to the betterment of the lives of residents and the communities at large.

Awards are given in three categories:

- Outstanding Turnaround of a Troubled Property
- Exemplary Development for the Elderly or Disabled
- Exemplary Family Development

Winners in each of these categories consistently demonstrate new, thoughtful and insightful ways of accomplishing the difficult work of creating highly functioning communities for residents of modest means. This led NAHMA's Board of Directors and staff to ask, why not share this wealth of knowledge with the larger affordable housing community?

Thus was the genesis of this publication, *Best Practices Review: Affordable Multifamily Housing Management Case Studies*. Submissions of COQ winners from 2000 to 2003 were reviewed to see what strategies were employed at these outstanding sites that could be replicated by others. NAHMA would like to thank the property management companies, on-site staff and AHMAs listed at right for the excellent COQ submissions that resulted in what we hope is a useful and informative publication.

For more information on NAHMA's National Communities of Quality awards competition, please see [www.nahma.org](http://www.nahma.org).

*Kris Cook, CAE  
Executive Director*

# BEST

## 2003:

Corcoran Management Company, Inc., Braintree, Mass.  
Pelham Apartments, Framingham, Mass.  
New England Affordable Housing Management Association (NEAHMA)

First Cumberland Properties, Inc., Brentwood, Tenn.  
Berkshire Place Apartments, Nashville, Tenn.  
Southeastern Affordable Housing Management Association (SAHMA)

Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly, Inc., Braintree, Mass.  
Ulin House, Leventhal House and Genesis House, Brighton, Mass.  
New England Affordable Housing Management Association (NEAHMA)

PRD Management, Inc., Merchantville, N.J.  
Acacia Lumberton Manor, Lumberton, N.J.  
New Jersey Affordable Housing Management Association (JAHMA)

## 2002:

Community Housing Network, Columbus, Ohio  
Ashton Road Apartments, Columbus, Ohio  
Midwest Affordable Housing Management Association (MAHMA)

First Realty Management Corp., Boston, Mass.  
Battles Farm Village, Brockton, Mass.  
New England Affordable Housing Management Association (NEAHMA)

G&K Management Co., Inc., Culver City, Calif.  
Villa San Dimas Apartments, San Dimas, Calif.  
AHMA Pacific Southwest

Interstate Realty Management, Marlton, N.J.  
Park Plaza Apartments, Little Egg Harbor, N.J.  
New Jersey Affordable Housing Management Association (JAHMA)

## 2001:

Konover Residential Corporation, Windham, Conn.  
Windham Heights I & II, Windham, Conn.  
New England Affordable Housing Management Association (NEAHMA)

Lane Company, Atlanta, Ga.  
Villages of East Lake I & II, Atlanta, Ga.  
Southeastern Affordable Housing Management Association (SAHMA)

Beacon Residential Management, Richmond, Va.  
Dominion Place, Richmond, Va.  
Virginia Affordable Housing Management Association (VAHMA)

## 2000:

First Realty Management Corporation, Boston, Mass.  
Brandywyne Village, East Boston, Mass.  
New England Affordable Housing Management Association (NEAHMA)

Elderly Housing Development & Operations Corporation, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.  
Mayfield Manor, Canton, Ohio  
Midwest Affordable Housing Management Association (MAHMA)

Winn/Peabody/Cruz Management Company, Quincy, Mass.  
Mission Main, Boston, Mass.  
New England Affordable Housing Management Association (NEAHMA)

## BEST PRACTICE 1

# Create a Physical Environment That Supports a Sense of Community Within the Housing Development



**LEFT:** Children who reside in Pelham Apartments enjoy the recreation center.

**CENTER:** As part of the after-school program at Battles Farm Village, kids spend three afternoons a week in the Computer Learning Center with instructor Glenn Camilien.

**RIGHT:** Battles Farm Community Center.



One of the key features of successful housing developments is a sense of community among its residents. The physical environment of the development, including building design and landscaping, can foster this community feeling. Throughout the country, housing complexes have utilized design techniques including freestanding community centers, recreation areas, walking paths, gazebos and patios, and specially designed and equipped common areas within buildings to create a sense of fellowship among residents.

Here are some examples of how these were implemented and the effect they had.

### Community and Computer Centers

When Battles Farm Village (Brockton, Mass.) undertook a \$2.5 million capital improvement plan in 1995, a new freestanding Community Center was its centerpiece. In addition to the management and leasing offices, the Community Center building fea-

tures a large meeting and social facility; separate activity rooms for children, teens and elders; mentoring/homework rooms; a Computer Learning Center; and a central laundry facility.

The Community Center, opened in 1998, has allowed the business, educational and social functions of the community to come together under one roof. It has been the catalyst to strengthening the bonds between the staff, residents and the surrounding community.

As they develop new community buildings, many management companies are taking advantage of HUD's Neighborhood Networks Program to set up computer centers for residents. The



Pelham Apartments (Framingham, Mass.) Computer Center began as an offshoot of its Recreation Center and then, in 1996, it was approved for participation in the Neighborhood Networks Program. This enabled a former storage area to be refurbished and supplied

with computers, printers, software and related materials. Two volunteer interns staffed the project for the first year. Since then, the center has expanded into an adjacent apartment and is staffed by a computer coordinator and a part-time assistant. In addition to classes for typing, computer basics and resume preparation, there is an afternoon homework session for youth. The center is also open to other community residents. Recently, the Recreation Center was relocated next to the Computer Center to improve utilization of both facilities.

## Common Areas Within Buildings

Dominion Place (Richmond, Va.), designed and built to meet the needs of the elderly, handicapped and disabled, includes many places for residents to meet, mix and get to know each other. The common facilities include the main lobby, sitting area, library, craft room, roof garden, a solarium and second-floor terrace, a billiard room, exercise equipment, a laundry facility, and an activity room. The roof-top garden allows each resident to have a large box to grow vegetables or flowers.

**“It’s amazing. These kids want to do something different besides hanging around. The perception of the Heights has changed.”**

Lourdes Montalvo, a member of the Windham Board of Selectman





Residents garden on the roof at Dominion Place in Richmond, Va.

Mayfield Manor (Canton, Ohio) has a central dining area that serves as a Meals on Wheels congregate dining site. Participants share a freshly prepared noontime meal Monday through Friday. Every other month the program also provides an evening meal that is open to the Canton area community. The complex also has an on-site beauty shop.

## Landscaping and Recreational Areas

Walking paths, gardens, patios and gazebos—as well as more formal recreational areas such as swimming pools, tennis courts and basketball courts—offer residents areas to socialize in and help foster a sense of community.

Restoring the recreational areas and constructing new playscapes for children were very important in changing residents' perception of Windham Heights (Windham, Conn.). These projects were part of a major collaborative effort by the property's management company, residents, local businesses, and the Connecticut State Police to improve the quality of life for people living in the development.

Windham Heights' residents as well as the surrounding community view the refurbished basketball court, volleyball court and baseball field and the three new playscapes as proof that Windham Heights is once again a place where families want to live. The property now boasts a travel basketball team and holds parades and cookouts in the new recreation areas.

Town officials and educators now are regular visitors at the Saturday ballgames, where they cheer on the team and enjoy specialty foods such as Puerto Rican meat dumplings.



## BEST PRACTICE 2

# Create a Physical Environment That Integrates the Housing Development With the Surrounding Community



**LEFT AND RIGHT:** A public golf course and computer center were part of the revitalization of the Villages of East Lake.

**S**uccessful housing developments are not islands within their communities. Residents want to feel connected to the surrounding neighborhoods, both physically and emotionally. In addition to choosing a site that is convenient to public transportation, jobs, schools, stores and cultural activities, exemplary housing developments tailor the physical layout of the property in ways that increase the complex's ties to the surrounding community.

## Tearing Down Physical Barriers

Built in 1942, Mission Main (Boston) was a 1,023-unit public housing development located in the Mission Hill section of the Roxbury neighborhood. The original site included 38 cinder block and brick walk-up buildings. This “super-block” site plan created physical and psychological barriers between Mission Main residents and the surrounding community.

In 1993, the city of Boston, through the Boston Housing Authority, received a HOPE VI award totaling \$50 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to—among other things—change the physical shape of Mission Main.

The new Mission Main has 535 units, 90 of which are market-rate. Over three phases of development, the 38 cinder block buildings were replaced with 415 townhouse-style units and one mid-rise



building of 120 one-bedroom units. The developer used variety in site contours, materials, roof forms, façade elements, windows, bays, bows, stoops, and canopies to create visual interest and identity. The new site complements the architectural style of the existing Mission Hill community. The redeveloped community also contains a community building and computer learning center.

In addition, the streets were re-opened through the site, integrating the new Mission Main with the community and reflecting the typical residential street patterns of Boston.

These changes allow residents to take better advantage of the complex's excellent location close to major educational and health institutions, jobs, public transportation, schools, libraries, churches, parks and stores.

## Removing Economic and Perceptual Barriers

The goal in developing The Villages of East Lake (Atlanta) was to revitalize the entire community of East Lake, including the greatly distressed East Lake Meadows housing project. The plan called for major physical changes as well as the addition of a substantial number of social and educational programs.

Prior to its renewal, the 650-unit East Lake Meadows had become so crime-ridden that neighboring communities avoided it.

As part of the revitalization, the old 57-acre East Lake Meadows housing project was demolished and replaced by a larger, 185-acre planned community, "Villages of East Lake," complete with a public golf course, tennis courts and swimming pool.

The 560 new units are evenly split between market-rate and affordable housing units and blend in with the surrounding recreational areas. Residents are young and old, rich and poor, single and married.

There is no longer a division between "project" residents and the neighboring community. Moreover, there is significant evidence that the entire community of East Lake has been revitalized. The crime rate in the area has dropped more than 90 percent and real estate values have increased more than 100 percent. Residential and commercial development is booming in the area, and services and amenities that have not been available for many years are now being offered, including an 18-hole golf course and a new Publix grocery store.

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## BEST PRACTICE 3

# Provide Resident Services That Foster a Sense of Community



**B**ricks and mortar alone cannot create a sense of belonging among housing development residents. To complement physical improvements and amenities, housing developments throughout the country are offering an increasing array of resident services. These services range from assistance with day-to-day living needs, such as food service and day care, to recreational activities and educational opportunities.

### Services to Improve Day-to-Day Life

Mayfield Manor, a 144-unit housing complex for the elderly and disabled in Canton, Ohio, employs a full-time service coordinator to arrange home health and homemaker services for at-risk residents. This service allows residents to age in place and delays a move to an institutional setting for as long as possible. The service coordinator sets up blood pressure screenings, podiatry visits, flu shot and pneumonia vaccine clinics, and hearing tests. She also arranges for assistance with issues such as money management, insurance paperwork and applications for entitlement programs.

**LEFT:** A common area can bring exercise and fun to residents such as these at Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly who relax and exercise with tai chi.

**RIGHT:** Park Plaza Apartments brings together the young and the old in activities and programs for its residents.



**“Mayfield Manor is a community in every sense of the word, with neighbors helping neighbors, convenient services and a sense of pride.”**

Louis D. Chastain,  
Community Manager

Mayfield Manor also offers a PASSPORT program through which residents can have meals delivered to their apartments. It also serves as a site for a Meals on Wheels program that provides a noontime meal in Mayfield Manor’s dining area.

The service coordinator also manages weekly delivery of milk, butter and other dairy products to residents. For other shopping needs, Mayfield Manor has made arrangements with the county bus service for twice weekly “Community Coach” trips to a local grocery store and two large malls.

Residents check on one another via the “I’m OK” program. Each wing of the building has a floor monitor who is responsible for checking in on their area’s residents each morning. Each resident who participates places a small sign on the apartment door, which says “I’m OK.” If the floor monitor doesn’t see a sign on a door,



**LEFT:** The recreation center at Pelham Apartments features a pool table.

**CENTER:** Park Plaza Apartments brings together the young and the old in activities and programs for its residents. This photo shows a carnival.

**RIGHT:** Battles Farm teamwork is legendary at the First Realty Management Olympiad. With practices throughout the summer, children learn valuable teamwork and cooperation skills.



he or she will knock on the door or call the resident. If there is no response, staff members are called to check on that resident.

Park Plaza Apartments, a 51-unit assisted housing complex for the elderly in Little Egg Harbor, N.J., established a Social Service Department in 1995 to provide on-site supportive services for residents and to facilitate educational, intergenerational and recreational activities and programs. The service coordinator works with federal, local, state and county agencies to ensure that residents are receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled.

Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly (JCHE) in Braintree, Mass., offers resident services coordination, congregate housing services, and an adult day health program that enables the frailest residents to continue living independently.

The Congregate Housing Services Program (CHSP) provides scheduled care 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Eligible participants can obtain a daily noon meal, escorts to meals and medical appointments, assistance with personal care and house-keeping services.

In addition, the Hebrew Rehabilitation Center for Aged provides an on-site bilingual (English/Russian) adult day health program for frail residents who need nursing support and social engagement during the day.

Wellness programs, such as exercise programs, podiatry care, health screening and health education, help residents cope with their physical limitations.

Since the population of the complex is multi-lingual (English, Russian and Chinese), the JCHE has bilingual staff, translates written materials and has interpreters at resident gatherings.



Ashton Road Apartments (Columbus, Ohio) is home to 12 disabled men and women. Community Housing Network, Inc. (CHN), acting as the developer, owner and manager of the complex, collaborates with

four local community mental health centers to offer supportive services to residents disabled by chronic mental illness.

Although CHN does not provide clinical or case management services itself, it acts as a safety net, alerting the partnership agencies if there is a crisis and ensuring that residents receive needed services. The strong collaboration between CHN's housing coordinator and the mental health center's case manager allows residents to receive an array of supportive services. CHN also promotes a sense of community by hosting social gatherings for residents.



**“I have lived at Park Plaza Apartments for some time now. I enjoy living here. I love the social services department and having fun and activities. I like the helpful staff. The building and grounds are always neat and clean. I wouldn't like to live anywhere else but here.”**

E. Bronson, Resident

## Self-sufficiency, Job Training and Life Skills Programs

Ranging from instruction in basic life skills to computer training, housing developments are providing numerous educational and training opportunities to residents. These programs are often the backbone of what makes a community work.



Mission Main (Boston) serves one of the most disenfranchised populations in the city. Poverty in the complex is 45 percent greater than the City of Boston's average, only one-third of the residents are employed, and the majority of the population relies on entitlement programs for daily living.

Mission Main offers a self-sufficiency program through a non-profit organization located in its adjacent community building.

The Mission Main Self Sufficiency Program, funded by a HOPE VI Award received in 1993, is a collaborative effort among Mission Main Developers' limited partnership, the Mission Main Tenant Task Force, the Boston Housing Authority, and local service providers, agencies and institutions.



On-site staff includes an executive director, career specialist, economic development coordinator, education coordinator and resident service coordinators. Services include

**TOP:** At Battles Farm, younger adults and seniors often pair up for special craft sessions.

**BOTTOM:** Resident Michael Schott, Sr. takes time to wash his truck.

adult education, computer training, youth and family enrichment activities (including educational and cultural events, job readiness and job development assistance), on-site day care, and case management and service coordination.

For many families, finding convenient and affordable day care is a major hurdle. To address this need, Mission Main offers on-site day care for 100 infants and toddlers, as well as preschool and Head Start classes.

The Villages of East Lake (Atlanta) also offers a self-sufficiency program that helps residents with job training, life skills training and G.E.D. programs. Residents who require additional education and/or more job skills are placed in government-funded job training and placement programs. As a result of this program, 93 percent of its participants are employed or in a certified job training program. Unemployed residents are required to do 30-to-40 community service hours within the community.

The Family Center at the Berkshire Place Apartments (Nashville) was established as part of a turnaround strategy for the troubled Section 8 property. When Phil Owen and Robert Trent bought the property in 1999, they planned not only to improve the physical condition of the development but also to rebuild the spirit of the community. Believing that reviving the hopes of the residents would require a strong faith-based mission component, the new owners contracted with Family Affair Ministries, Inc. to establish and operate a Family Center on the property that supports and enriches residents' lives. A key component of the program is partnering with community agencies to ensure that residents receive needed services.

Services offered by the center include a Kids Café, Meals on Wheels, computer training and education, family fun nights, a series of classes on self-esteem building and life skills, a summer camp for children, housekeeping training, after-school tutoring, and a family tree Christmas program.

The Family Center also offers low-income residents a unique opportunity to obtain certification in commercial cooking and find jobs in the food service industry that pay starting salaries of \$8-\$10 per hour. While training, students prepare meals for the Kids Café program, Meals on Wheels, senior citizen center lunches, breakfast programs, and workshops and conferences for the ministry.

In addition, owners are working with the Dollar General Stores Corporation to provide an area of the property for building a Dollar General Store. Not only will this venture provide shopping convenience, it will also provide job training for residents in the retail business. Dollar General will partner with the Family Center to train residents and provide assistance with job placement. Residents will learn to become clerks, custodians, stocking staff and managers.

**Believing that reviving the hopes of the residents would require a strong faith-based mission component, the new owners contracted with Family Affair Ministries, Inc. to establish and operate a Family Center on the property that supports and enriches residents' lives.**



**Project IF mentors include a student of Chinese archaeology, a research associate on a national child care study at Wellesley College, a former principal of a Wisconsin charter school, a Director of Development at the Harvard Medical School, a Language and Literacy research associate, an aspiring Olympic track team athlete, the Assistant Director of Admissions at the School of Education, and a research biologist.**

From Brandywyne Village's COQ Application

Brandywyne Village (East Boston), in cooperation with the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, offers children and teens a unique mentoring program, Project IF. Harvard students and teaching staff from Project IF meet with a child in the program at least once a week for two hours over the course of a year. The mentoring activities provided are educational in nature but widely defined, and include learning to use public transportation to get to the Boston Public Library, visiting a judo class, working together on a science project and learning how to make stained glass windows. Mentors also visit children's schools and meet their teachers in order to understand their academic strengths as well as areas that need improvement or remedial work.

Project IF also provides after-school tutoring. The tutors work on organizational and problem-solving skills in addition to helping with specific assignments and tasks.

The mentors represent a wide range of academic, cultural and demographic experiences. The rich diversity of the mentor pool expands the children's understanding of the world and exposes them to possible futures they may not have considered.

## **Recreational Activities**

The number and variety of recreational activities offered by housing developments has exploded over the last decade. Programs range from bingo and arts and crafts to traveling basketball leagues and golf academies. While some developments hire staff specifically to oversee these activities, others utilize existing staff. Many partner with neighborhood organizations and agencies to both bring programs on-site and to connect residents to off-site opportunities.

The Recreation Center at Pelham Apartments (Framingham, Mass.), referred to as "Our House," is the congregation point for the Pelham Apartments' younger generation. With the emphasis on fun, the center offers a wide range of recreational, educational, social and spiritual programs. In addition, it sponsors outings and special events such as a whale watching excursion and camping trips at a nearby park. The center sponsors an afternoon homework hour during the school year and produces a youth newsletter filled with artwork and essays from residents.



## BEST PRACTICE 4

# Integrate the Housing Development With the Surrounding Community Through Partnerships With Other Organizations and Agencies



Residents take a class in English as a Second Language at Mission Main in Boston.

**P**artnering with other organizations and agencies in the community is an excellent way for a housing development to integrate with its surrounding community as well as to provide additional services to residents.

Many housing developments have strong relationships with local police and social services agencies to increase residents' safety and their ability to receive needed services. In addition, some housing complexes have joined together with nonprofit agencies and other community groups to offer recreational and educational services to residents.

## **Paying It Forward: The Partnerships Go Both Ways**

An important characteristic of many of these community partnerships is that residents have an opportunity not only to



A resale shop is run by the residents of Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly.

receive assistance from community organizations and agencies but also have the chance to contribute their skills and time to help others.

Residents of Acacia Lumberton Manor (Lumberton, N.J.), a 166-unit garden apartment complex for the elderly, play a key role in the community's annual Toys for Tots program, collecting and wrapping toys for disadvantaged children in the area. Residents also collect donations of eyeglasses, food for a local food pantry, and contributions to the American Red Cross. They knit blankets for the local hospital and have designed handmade angels in memory of the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly (Braintree, Mass.) operates the Generations Together program that brings students from preschool to college age into the lives of JCHE residents—enriching both young and old. Each intergenerational program is designed with three characteristics: They are mutually beneficial to all participants; they extend throughout the school year to foster meaningful, long-term relationships; and they involve tenants and young people from all the cultural groups represented at JCHE and in Greater Boston. Examples of the intergenerational program include residents assisting at a local preschool, participating in the history curriculum at a local elementary school, and writing monthly letters to fifth graders. They also participate in programs at local high schools and at nearby Brandeis University.

## Develop Effective Relationships With the Local Police Department



A sense of personal safety and security is essential for any successful housing development. If residents or the surrounding community lack confidence in their personal safety, the development is likely to begin a downward spiral that leads to vacancies, vandalism and financial problems that compound over time. Several property management companies have discovered that establishing special relationships with the local and state police departments greatly enhances their efforts to provide a safe environment for their residents.

Windham Heights I and II (Windham, Conn.) is a 57-acre community built in 1970 to provide affordable rental units for low- to middle-income families. By the mid-1980s, however, the community had a reputation for heroin and cocaine trafficking. Associated crimes such as assault, burglary, robbery and vandalism also plagued the property. Threats, fear of retaliation and a general lack of confidence in police and staff's ability to provide them with a safe environment intimidated residents.

For more than 10 years, the Connecticut State Police had maintained a two-person task force at the property, but the workload was overwhelming. Police investigation and arrest records determined that 95 percent of the persons involved in the illegal drug activity on the property—both dealers and their customers—were not legal residents of the community. Residents were accosted on a regular basis to buy drugs or to provide information on drug activity.

Escalating violence led to a shootout in July 1999. As a result, property managers worked with the police to develop a new strategy for addressing this chronic problem.



Villa San Dimas is among many communities to benefit from a stronger police presence.

First, a team composed of property owners, property management, state police and key residents was formed to develop the strategy. The resulting two-part plan called “weed and seed” sought to reduce drug activity and to strengthen community programs. Components included:

### Site improvements and increased police visibility

A review of the site revealed a number of problems with the physical environment that contributed to the crime problem. These included large areas of scrub brush and trees surrounding the property, inadequate outdoor lighting, lack of surveillance equipment and inadequate recreation facilities. In addition, the property lacked a continuous visible police presence and a system for monitoring visitors.



A new community center at Mission Main in Boston is a positive focal point in a once severely distressed development.

The existing police task force was expanded from two to six troopers trained in community-oriented policing. Office space for the larger police detail was relocated adjacent to the property’s administrative offices.

A daily maintenance schedule was established to pick up trash and drug paraphernalia and to remove graffiti, and more than

four acres of scrub brush and trees were removed. Vandal-proof lighting and closed-circuit surveillance cameras were installed.

Residents were issued parking permits, and unauthorized vehicles were towed. In addition, residents age 10 and older were issued photo IDs. Resident rules were revised to make the arrest for a drug-related offense or a major crime grounds for immediate eviction.

### New activities and supportive services

The task force realized that a more comprehensive approach to addressing the underlying causes of crime in the community was required to gain the trust and cooperation of the residents and to significantly reduce drug trafficking. Strict law enforcement measures would be effective only over the short term.

The task force developed programs to engage the community in more positive activities. New activities available to residents include computer classes, G.E.D. classes, after-school tutorial programs, movie nights, Girl Scouts and Saturday socials.

The reclaiming of a dilapidated basketball court was a symbolic initiative designed to attract the involvement of adults in the community, get media attention and garner the support of nearby businesses. The court was refurbished and a basketball program was formed. Nearly 50 children signed up for the first practice. Likewise, with the help of police, three playscapes were erected for younger children.

In October 2000 state police and property management sponsored a job fair with representatives from the military and local businesses. At least 20 of the more than 200 persons who attended the fair were hired immediately.

State police exceeded their goal of reducing drug dealing by 50 percent six months ahead of schedule. By the end of December 2000, overt drug dealing in The Windhams was completely eliminated. In addition, vandalism in the development and to nearby businesses and homes is virtually non-existent.

An exciting outcome is the increased confidence of residents that they can effect change in the community. For example, concerned about the problem of cars racing through the site, residents presented petitions signed by 300 residents to the City of Windham requesting speed bumps. The speed bumps were installed in November 2000.

Another troubled property that achieved a remarkable turnaround is Villa San Dimas Apartments (San Dimas, Calif.). Built in 1980, Villa San Dimas contains 50 two- and three-bedroom apartments assisted under the project-based Section 8 program.

Due to an increase in gang activity, crime and vandalism, the complex became known as a troubled property. Residents no longer felt safe. The situation reached a horrendous low in 1996 when the complex's manager came under attack and had to shoot his way out of the development in self-defense.

In 1998, the Villa San Dimas Apartments partnered with the Sheriff's Department's Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program. The pro-

**“This property has changed tremendously since the past two years. Absolutely no crime to think of. Very quiet, clean, and the people pleasant to live around. Different attitudes and harmony between neighbors. And the managers helped to bring this about.”**

Pamela Williams, Resident,  
Villa San Dimas



gram offered an eight-hour training session that included documentation and reporting procedures to be followed by the managers. These new procedures enabled management to evict tenants engaged in criminal activity and nuisance violations.

In addition, police attended monthly meetings with property staff and sent alert bulletins to the complex to keep the staff and residents aware of crime reported in the vicinity. As a result of this increased awareness and ability to act on criminal activity, residents developed a new trust in management and a renewed sense of security.

Even communities that do not suffer from such serious crime problems have found that working with local police on a closer basis can be beneficial.

Over the years Battles Farm (Brockton, Mass.) had contracted with several different security companies to monitor the site at nights and on weekends. However, residents complained that they did not always feel safe, and occasionally their cars were vandalized.

Management's decision to hire local police in lieu of private contractors made an enormous difference. Although it is more expensive, it has been much more effective. The same officers walk the property at staggered times, making a special effort to talk with residents about their concerns and become familiar with patterns of activity in the village. The officers have also begun to establish a positive relationship with local teens, who have more respect for a "real" police officer than for a security guard.

After many years of trial and error with various security companies and systems, the police detail is paying off, and not just in reduced vandalism. Residents see the positive results as proof that management and the police department care about what happens in the community. This has inspired residents to care more as well. Morale has improved, and residents are much more motivated to report suspicious activity and identify troublemakers than they were in the past.

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## BEST PRACTICE 6



# Transform Public Housing Projects With High Concentrations of Poverty Into Mixed-Income Communities Through Design Changes and Supportive Programming

Legislators, planners and government officials are becoming increasingly interested in improving the quality of life for residents in public housing developments by replacing the high concentration of low-income residents in large multi-unit buildings with less densely-populated townhouse and garden apartment developments that serve a mixed-income population.



HUD's HOPE VI grant program provides millions of dollars in housing redevelopment funds to the nation's housing authorities each year to raze deteriorating public housing projects and replace them with smaller, mixed-income developments. The grant also requires that the local housing authorities provide supportive services at these sites.

Mission Main was a 1,023-unit public housing development serving one of the most disenfranchised populations in Boston. Poverty in the complex was 45 percent greater than the City of Boston average, only one-third of the residents were employed, and the majority of the population relied on entitlement programs for daily living.

In 1993, the City of Boston, through the Boston Housing Authority, received a HOPE VI Award totaling \$50 million to

The crime rate has plummeted since Mission Main's well-planned renovations.

**“Mission Main might have seemed ugly to some people, but it was ours. Our neighborhood, our children, our problems. All we’ve done is let the rest of Boston in.”**

Adele Stallings, Co-chair of the Mission Main Tenant Task Force



improve the physical condition of Mission Main. In addition, the funds were to be used to transform the community and better the lives of the residents. A five-point program was developed to:

- Change the physical shape of the housing
- Reduce the concentration of poverty
- Provide comprehensive educational, job training and support services that would empower residents to move toward self-sufficiency
- Establish and enforce high standards of personal and community responsibility
- Forge broad-based partnerships with the neighboring community.

In addition to physical changes described in Strategy 2 (see page 7), Mission Main is the story of resident empowerment. Mission Main Tenant Task Force members were key players in all phases of the redevelopment, including choosing the developer, reviewing physical changes and creating supportive services that address residents’ educational and economic needs. The Mission Main Housing Corporation, an affiliate of the Mission Main Tenant Task Force, became part of the development entity, making Mission Main the only HOPE VI project in the country with a 50-50 resident/developer ownership structure.

Mission Main now offers a self-sufficiency program through a nonprofit organization located in its adjacent community building. The goal of the resident services program is to raise the standard of living for Mission Main households.

On-site staff includes an executive director, career specialist, economic development coordinator, education coordinator and resident service coordinators. Services include adult education, computer training, youth and family enrichment activities including educational and cultural events, job readiness and job development assistance, on-site day care, and case management and service coordination.

More than 90 percent of the original tenants have moved back into the newly renovated units and are enjoying the improved maintenance service, support services and ties with the surrounding community. In addition, the crime rate has plummeted by more than half, including a 64 percent decrease in drug arrests from 1996 to 1999.



## BEST PRACTICE 7

# Make Capital Investments That Lead to Long-term Results



**LEFT AND RIGHT:** The entrance sign, landscaping, and shutters added to windows (right) are some of the physical improvements that create curb appeal for Battles Farm.

**CENTER:** Acacia Lumberton Manor's main entrance is beautifully landscaped and inviting.

**A**lthough it may seem obvious that investing significant capital into properties will have long-term benefits in many areas, there are a number of interesting ways such substantial up-front investments have paid off in lasting savings.

## Energy Savings

As part of a major renovation plan, Battles Farm Village (Brockton, Mass.) instituted major energy and water-saving devices, resulting in annual utility cost savings of more than \$154,000. This was achieved by a combination of extensive physical improvements and conservation technology.

In addition, the project manager negotiated with utility companies to provide incentives that resulted in approximately \$178,000 in reimbursements for individual gas furnaces and water heaters, vinyl windows with low-E glass, storm doors, gas ranges with pilot-less ignition, low energy light fixtures, blown-in attic insulation, and more.





**“I want to thank you all for installing a ramp for me. This is very much appreciated. You are all wonderful in enabling the disabled to live comfortably in this community.”**

Polly Lincoln, Resident, Battles Farm Village

The owner also invested in the latest water conservation devices such as low-flow toilets, aerators and showerheads, resulting in a savings of more than \$60,000 annually in water and sewer expenses.

In addition to substantial savings in operating costs, the improvements have increased residents’ comfort and satisfaction with their homes.

Another significant improvement was the construction of a new well in 1998. Since the City of Brockton has the strictest water controls in Massachusetts, it became difficult to maintain the lawns and landscaping of the 22-acre Battles Farm development. The new well has allowed the property to expand its landscaping.

## **Golf with a Purpose**

Restoring a historic golf course to championship level was only a small piece of the overall revitalization plan for the Villages of East Lake in Atlanta. However, it brought substantial financial and social rewards to the property.

The biggest benefit comes from the charity donations raised by the PGA Tour Championship held on the restored course. Half of the donations are funneled to the East Lake Community Foundation and other community groups. As a result of the 1998 Tour, 125 youngsters lined up for an estimated \$40,000 of free dental work. Additionally, the East Lake Golf Club has committed to providing its annual excess cash flow from operations to help fund the East Lake Community Foundation’s educational and recreational programs. The programs include a golf academy, a welfare-to-work program, a charter school, a caddie program and a college scholarship fund. The junior golf academy offers year-round educational programs, golf instruction and job opportunities.

Five days a week, for three hours a day, students work after school with certified teachers to improve grades and test scores. Golf lessons complement the academic classes. In addition to academy staff, college students and community volunteers act as mentors to the students.

Equally significant, the golf course has brought positive publicity to a community that was once well known throughout the city for its high crime rate.

COMMUNITIES OF QUALITY for low- and moderate-income families exist all across the United States. Each one has some aspect about it that is unique and special and worth replicating. NAHMA is eager to identify and honor those affordable multifamily developments that exemplify the best in the industry, and share their successes with others. NAHMA hopes that this publication inspires management companies to participate in the prestigious annual Communities of Quality awards program. It is one way to ensure that best practices get shared—to the benefit of all.

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