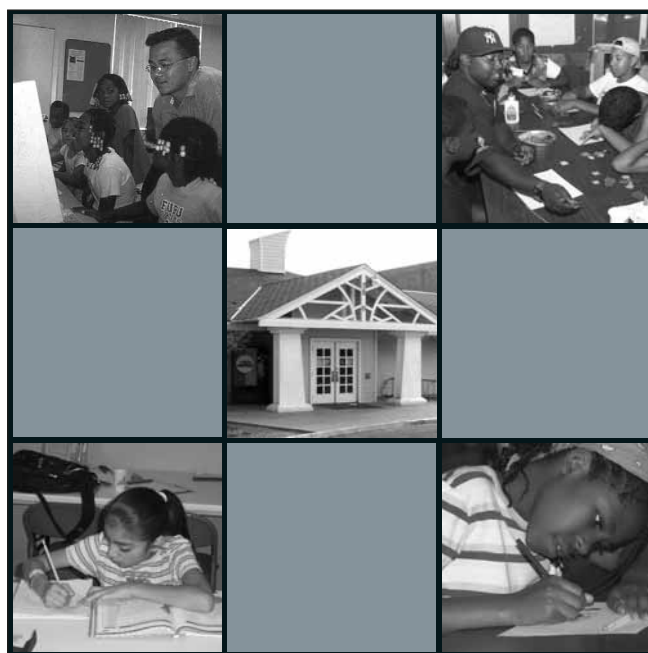




Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation

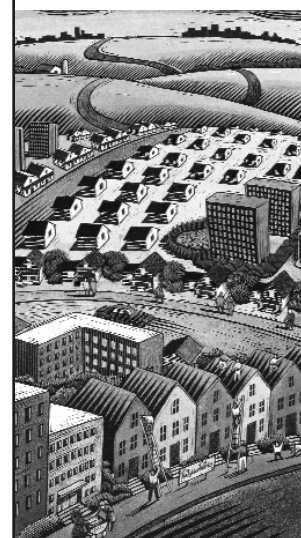
# Learning Center Consortium



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Partnerships in America's Dreams

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**A**s a part of a continuing effort to support community development corporations to deliver high quality resident services, the NeighborWorks® Multifamily Initiative is pleased to share with you the Learning Center Consortium 2003 Report.

Learning Centers are central facilities, frequently located with an apartment community, where programs are available that support residents in attaining their American dreams - children succeeding in school, adults increasing their earning power, families holding savings accounts and moving into homeownership.

This report presents the results of the first two years of the Multifamily Initiative's effort to study the question, "What impact do housing-based learning centers have on property operations, low-income households and their communities?" The long-term goals of this initiative effort are to set benchmarks for outcomes, standardize effective programs, document and optimize the impact of learning centers on property performance, and to build collaborative funding sources.

Thanks to the participation of the nine founding housing organizations who have made learning centers part of their operations, and to consultants Fred Alsup and Janet Maccubbin, this report presents a detailed picture of the initial work to define and improve the impact of learning centers, share best practices and build efficient, replicable standards. It also provides information on the characteristics of learning centers, such as types of programs, capacity, areas of success and challenges.

The Learning Center Consortium welcomed four additional members in early 2004 and we, the Multifamily Initiative, will continue expanding the study to include a broader network of communities.



Frances Ferguson  
Manager, NeighborWorks® Multifamily Initiative



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## THE LEARNING CENTER CONSORTIUM

### BACKGROUND

The Neighborhood Reinvestment Learning Center Consortium (NRLCC) is sponsored by Neighborhood Reinvestment's Multifamily Initiative, which supports nonprofit owners in providing apartment homes that are cornerstones of neighborhood health. Neighborhood health is fostered through sustained excellence of apartment properties – physically, financially and socially. These properties:

- Are attractive assets in their communities
- Perform financially, yielding cash flow adequate to meet their long-term costs
- Strengthen families and
- Contribute to neighborhoods where residents are involved and active.

The members of the Multifamily Initiative currently include 68 community development corporations from across the NeighborWorks® network, who own more than 35,000 rental homes.

Many of these organizations – as well as others that are not part of the NeighborWorks® network – offer a variety of service amenities through learning centers located on their properties. These centers support families in pursuit of their American dreams – children succeeding in school, adults increasing their employment options, families saving for and preparing to buy their first home, and neighbors acting together to improve and enjoy their neighborhoods. The learning centers provide access to computers and other technology, remove barriers to continuing education, and build pathways to broad networks of resources in the external community. NeighborWorks® Multifamily Initiative members are interested in maximizing the effectiveness of their learning centers.

At the same time, “computer centers” as a vehicle for advancing educational and employment opportunities in low-income communities have been promoted and supported by private and public institutions such as the Ford Foundation, the Departments of Education, Commerce,



Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). To date, there are more than 2,000 computer centers across the country, many aligned with national efforts such as HUD's Neighborhood Networks, CTCNet and America Connects. These funding sources agree that too little information exists that documents the impact of computer centers or supports the development of best practices. The NRLCC will help fill this gap.

## CREATION OF THE LEARNING CENTER CONSORTIUM

Neighborhood Reinvestment created the NRLCC as a way to share best practices and develop standards so that learning centers become as effective as possible. Through the Consortium, Neighborhood Reinvestment also plans to develop research which can advance the impact that housing-based learning centers have on property operations, low-income households and on low-income communities.

There are nine original members of the Learning Center Consortium (some are part of the NeighborWorks® network and some not), and together they own about 20,000 units of housing. The Consortium was formed in March 2002 with the following members:

### NeighborWorks® Members

AHC Inc.,  
Arlington, Virginia

Mutual Housing Association of Hawaii,  
Lihue, Hawaii

Alamo Area Mutual Housing Association,  
San Antonio, Texas

Rocky Mountain Mutual Housing Association,  
Denver, Colorado

Foundation Communities,  
Austin, Texas

Sacramento Mutual Housing Association,  
Sacramento, California

### Independent Members

The Community Builders,  
Boston, Massachusetts

Mercy Housing Inc.,  
Denver, Colorado

CommonBond Communities,  
Minneapolis, Minneapolis

*(Detailed information on each Consortium member and its Learning Center program can be found in Appendix A.)*

The NRLCC's four long-term functions are to:

1. Achieve excellence in outcomes through outcomes-based benchmarking;
2. Create efficiency in production by working with Consortium members to recognize effective programs that maximize the impact on personal assets of families in an affordable-housing setting;
3. Optimize learning center impact on property performance by studying their effect on the physical and financial stability of the property and on the neighborhood, and by developing best practices in the management of learning centers; and
4. Build sustainable funding sources by creating a better connection between learning centers and property operations, and by more effectively linking them to education and technology-center funding.

## ROLE OF NEIGHBORHOOD REINVESTMENT IN THE CONSORTIUM

Neighborhood Reinvestment plays an important role in the coordination and facilitation of the Consortium. The Corporation invests in the program through grants to support the participation of NeighborWorks® organizations and provides technical assistance and training to all Consortium members. Neighborhood Reinvestment also works to identify ongoing grant opportunities for member organizations.

**Support from Neighborhood Reinvestment has enabled the Consortium to:**

**Build a Web site** – To share information among members. Posted resources include a data dictionary, forms for data collection, quarterly data reports, and member profiles that recognize achievements of the centers.

**Participate in quarterly conference calls** – To discuss design and implementation issues raised by the members. Themes emerge based upon comparisons of data that have been submitted.

**Participate in semi-annual meetings** – To continue systems development and to exchange successful methodologies. Members share tools and resources, such as budget frameworks, job descriptions, specific data collection procedures and tools, ideas about how to align resident services with property management, and fundraising strategies.

**Engage consultants** – And provide access to experts in impact measurement systems.

**Identify fundraising opportunities** – The aggregated strength of the Consortium may leverage funding opportunities. One such opportunity occurred in 2003 when Alamo Area MHA was among the organizations that the Ford Foundation funded as a demonstration program to show how community technology centers could be catalysts for community asset building in mixed income/mixed race neighborhoods.

**Conduct research** – To document the importance of well-run centers and their relationship to property performance. As the consortium database expands, a rich resource is being created.



## ROLE OF MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CONSORTIUM

Member organizations develop and implement programming at local Learning Centers. They develop and test systems, share best practices and integrate the evaluation process into the centers' system of operations.

These organizations also submit quarterly data on at least one Learning Center during the first year of membership, and expand submission to include additional centers as systems and procedures evolve. Member organizations submit a property profile on participating properties and attend semi-annual meetings to further the development of the Consortium.

To lay the groundwork for the creation of best practices and standards, the Consortium has established a shared system for measuring and documenting outcomes, to which all members contribute quarterly. (*For further details on Strategic Asset Areas and Corresponding Measures assessed by the Consortium, see Appendix B.*) The Consortium hopes to contribute this knowledge to the broader field, and to collaborate over time with other interested institutions.

## KINDS OF DATA BEING COMPILED

Among the “social assets” being examined are:

Youth assets	Early childhood school readiness, elementary-school aged and teen academic attendance and success, and teen post-secondary school readiness
Adult/family assets	Greater employment options, financial savings and homebuyer readiness
Seniors and health	Access to health services, insurance, and computer literacy that increases access to resources
Community assets	Resident leadership development, neighborhood security and neighborhood improvement initiatives
Center sustainability	Efficiency and sustainability of financial, staffing, physical plant, technology and program-partnership resources for the centers

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CONSORTIUM

The NRLCC has accomplished many of its core objectives in the first 18 months of operation. These include:

**Creation of a Measures Dictionary** – This dictionary outlines definitions for how every evaluation measure is calculated. This assures consistency in measurement among the nine member organizations. Terms include:

*Leading indicators* – Measures that illustrate the initial success of a specific program. For example, the target population that would take advantage of a particular program and the number of people in that population who actually enrolled in and attended the program.

*Ultimate outcome measures* – Measures that illustrate the ultimate success of a program or group of programs on the residents or the property. For example, measur-

ing whether an after-school tutoring program results in children maintaining or improving their grades, or whether a job training program results in residents obtaining and keeping jobs.

**Implementation of standardized quarterly reporting** – Consortium members identified leading and lagging measures and then worked to develop a standardized reporting form, which would document not only the ultimate outcomes but also the success of the programs that lead to those ultimate outcomes.

Developed from forms already in use by members, a reporting format was created that illustrates both leading and ultimate outcomes measures. The leading measures focus on the success of the individual programs operated by the center, and answer questions such as: What was the target audience for the program? Did residents enroll in the program, and how did actual attendance compare to the number of residents in the target audience? These leading measures are designed to help on-site and supervisory resident services staff determine if the programs are well attended or if additional marketing or program refinements are needed.

Ultimate outcome or lagging measures are also reported on this standardized reporting form. When linked with the programs that supported the measure, these help to illustrate whether or not the program is meeting its ultimate goal. This data can then be used by resident service staff to determine if modifications to the program are needed to improve its effectiveness.

**Utilization of annual property profiles** – This form provides a way for member organizations to submit property, demographic, budgetary and measures information on the property being profiled. For the Consortium, this property profile data is a source of information that can be used to identify benchmarks and best practices of importance to the entire learning center industry. (See Appendix C for a summary of current demographic data.)

*[Participation in the Consortium has helped us]...“identify specific areas requiring attention in the existing measurement system (i.e., segmenting youth age groupings) as well as new areas (i.e., coordinator competencies that change as the measurement system advances.) It has introduced data collection efficiencies. The discussion of budgeting model was important and helpful.”*

*Mercy Housing Inc.*

**Development of a standardized budget form** – The goal of collecting budget data is to establish standards and benchmarks for Learning Center costs and to help the Consortium as a whole understand each organization’s funding needs. Currently, member organizations submit a property profile and Learning Center budget for each center on which they report data to the Consortium. However, each group provides income and expense data in a variety of ways, making it difficult to compare data or develop a range of costs for items such as staffing and programs. The Consortium developed a standardized budget form that can be used for reporting annual budget data. The standardized budget form is being tested and will be used in the 2004 reporting cycle.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Over the first 18 months of the NRLCC, some clear lessons have emerged. These are grouped into the following categories:

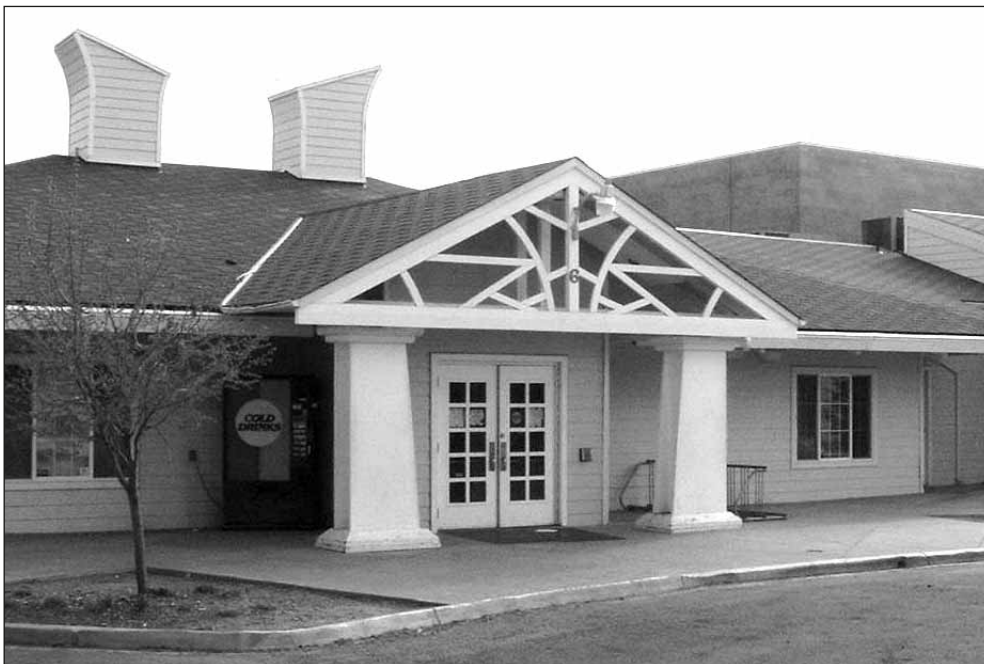
## Lesson One: Starting, Running and Sustaining the Center

**Center sustainability is critical, but not easily obtained** – A long-term goal of the Consortium is to work towards integrating specific portions of Learning Center expenses into the operating budget of a property and to have these costs recognized as allowable expenses by various federal housing programs. One of the challenges that Learning Centers face is the ability to keep solid programs with sustainable funding when the center is dependent upon outside funding sources such as that from state and local governments. When funding to a particular program is cut, the Learning Center has to shift focus to a different program or service. This may reduce service outcomes.

By targeting the integration of a specific percentage of Learning Center expenses into the operating budget of the property, center programs would be more likely to remain stable when funding is cut for an individual program or service. However, as a return on this investment, solid outcomes must be delivered on a basis that is cost effective when compared to alternate delivery systems.

**Shared resources build best practices among centers** – Consortium members share resources, with two goals in mind. The first is to build and share a library of best practices with respect to budgeting, staffing and programs. In working toward common formats for budgets and job descriptions, the NRLCC has found that a wide range of strategies are being used in different property settings. Therefore, “standardized” tools are not always possible. Therefore, as the Consortium grows, its second goal is to identify various categories of programs and funding for Learning Centers and to create benchmarks and targets for operating Learning Centers in different settings.

**Identifying sustainability indicators helps members develop strong centers** – These measures include the percentage of residents served and the percentage of the Learning Center budget that is funded by sustainable revenue sources. Efficiency and sustainability measurement is expected to expand over the next two years. For example, “cost per participant” is likely to be added to the shared list of key indicators of sustainability.



**Aligning resident service and property management staff optimizes Learning Center impacts** – In order for Learning Center programs and services to bring maximum benefit to both the residents and the property, Consortium members agreed to document procedures by which they work with property management staff to identify concerns and resolve issues at the property. Several Consortium members are documenting processes for both resident services staff and property management staff regarding how to address rent delinquencies, and they hope to target other issues such as substance abuse and vandalism.

## Lesson Two: Outcomes and Program Impact

**Leading indicators of program impact enable staff to modify programs for optimum impact** – Measuring the ultimate outcomes of programs on the target population can often take months and sometimes years. Consortium members agreed it was important to look at some leading indicators to understand how well individual programs perform so that short-term adjustments can be made.

Specifically, as part of the quarterly data collection process, programs are evaluated to determine:

- The target population for a particular program
- The target enrollment for a particular program
- How actual enrollment compares to targeted enrollment
- How program attendance compares to program enrollment and
- How many participants complete the program (if applicable)

By using these indicators for each particular program, members and their staffs are better able to see where short-term program changes or additional marketing can result in maximum impact.

**Ultimate outcomes measures occur across a wide variety of highly valuable social assets** – As the Consortium continues to collect data, it is defining a broad reach of measures that will cover the wide variety of work being undertaken in learning center communities across the nation. These measures are organized under three major asset areas – personal assets, community assets and center sustainability. (*See Appendix B.*)

**It is important to choose measures that strategically “fit” resident and property needs** – Just as it is important to the Consortium to have a wide variety of measures and asset areas that cover the work being done through the Learning Center community, members find it equally important to strategically choose a limited number of measures that fit with the work being done at each local center. While some measures are used by almost all of the centers reporting data, others are used by only one or two centers, depending on their program focus and the needs of the community they serve. Once measurement of outcomes begins, corporate focus increases on those programs. Therefore, it is important to prioritize those outcomes on which the organization strategically chooses to focus its resources over the long term.

*“Membership in the consortium has forced us to look at our processes for collecting information about the performance of our programs. Our processes have improved considerably, both in terms of the quality of information gathered and the consistency of data collection across our eight learning centers.”*

Foundation Communities

Setting up a reliable measures system requires focused time and staff or consulting resources – Selecting outcomes is a strategic decision that needs to be supported at senior management and board of director levels. Establishing procedures and tools for routine, timely and accurate data collection, compilation and reporting takes time and focus. Effective use of tools such as spreadsheets or databases is a key to efficiency. Once established, the data collection and compilation should be written into job descriptions and become a part of training, so that accomplishing the data collection is a part of standard operating procedure. It is best if the initial number of measures is limited and carefully selected until systems are created and standardized.

## TRANSFERABLE LESSONS OF NATIONAL SCOPE

For the purpose of collecting data from across the nation, Consortium members created a common language and platforms for their work while protecting individual program characteristics. Specifically, the Consortium worked to address:

- **Common measures strengthen our voice** – Using shared definitions for outcomes allow us to compare and strengthen programs and to speak with one voice to funders and other audiences.
- **Common language and platforms** – Using common definitions and collection instruments improved the quality of the data reported by member organizations.
- **Standards of measurement** – By defining the method of calculation for each measure in a Measures Dictionary, member organizations were better able to collect data that meets the standards of measurement.
- **Sharing management tools** – Standardized job description elements assisted members in reducing staff turnover by fitting skill sets to job requirements. Data collection and reporting processes were designed to assure smooth transitions, minimizing the need for repeated staff orientation.



## LONG-TERM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Consortium has two long-term goals, each with several objectives.

**1. Expand the Consortium beyond the original 10 organizations to include five new organizations per year.**

- Continue tracking and reporting data for a multi-year period.
- Focus on capacity building and training by providing multi-day training sessions for all new and continuing participants to ensure that everyone receives equivalent training on data collection methods and tools. Conduct site visits to new member sites as needed.
- Begin to connect measures data with property performance data as member organizations submit both types of data.
- Work with partners to construct a formal research structure that will produce annual or semi-annual reports on data and findings.
- Identify funding sources that can support a multi-year, research-focused concept of Learning Center research, as well as capacity building efforts for participating organizations.
- Develop partnerships to advance the network of housing-based learning centers.

**2. Move toward a larger membership base and industry-wide impact.**

- Expand membership to include other owners dedicated to the comprehensive vision of the Learning Center Consortium.
- Identify funding sources that would provide funding on a competitive basis to support centers' work.
- Develop case studies for different funding models that could improve the efficiency of learning centers in housing-based settings.



- Set standards, benchmarks, measures and outcomes for the housing-based learning center industry.
- Train, develop products and resources, and provide technical assistance for member organizations.
- Continue to study the impact of housing-based learning centers on the residents and properties they serve. Serve as a public education organization that helps government agencies, foundations and others understand the impact of housing based learning centers.

## A LEARNING CENTER SNAPSHOT

While the nine organizations that are members of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Learning Center Consortium vary in the number of centers they operate (as few as three and as many as 80), the centers share some common elements.

**Location** – A Consortium Learning Center is a staffed facility located in the community center of an apartment complex and serves as a platform from which to offer numerous programs.

These facilities range in size from 400 to 10,000 square feet. The number of computers located at each center ranges from four to 19, but all provide Internet access. While each center is typically open at least five days per week, and often seven days per week, total weekly hours of operation range from eight to 60. To maximize accessibility, many programs are offered throughout the day and often on evenings.

The average size of the community served by a Learning Center is 240 households (about 500 adults and children) who have diverse cultural backgrounds. Typically, household incomes are mixed on these properties, with the majority of residents in the lower-income bracket. Many of the centers are open to the surrounding neighborhood, making them pathways into the larger community.

**Staffing** – Most centers have a dedicated on-site staff person responsible for the Learning Center. This staff person is usually a part of the property's operational budget, although occasionally outside sources fund this position. In addition to the on-site staff person, most centers are supervised by mid- or senior-management staff who oversee several centers and assure consistency throughout the organization's properties. This position is typically paid for out of the organization's core budget and is occasionally prorated to the property budgets. At smaller properties, typically those of fewer than 50 units, on-site staff may be shared between two or more centers. Among the NRLCC-member properties, the number of on-site staff ranges from one to as many as 10 employees.

*“The benefit of the Learning Consortium is to share ideas with other groups who are similar and slightly different than our own organization. The Consortium brings a more national focus on the benefits and importance of measuring outcomes, and validation of existing programs to the community.”*

**Alamo Area Mutual Housing Association**

Most organizations also have a variety of other on-site staff responsible for delivering programs or for connecting residents to other services and programs in the community. Funding sources for these positions vary.

**Partnerships** – All of the organizations in the Consortium use partners to help leverage the resources of the property and the organization. At some centers, partners provide staff and resources to the center free of charge in exchange for the space to deliver programming. Other organizations pay a portion of the partner's cost.

Examples of programs and services that are delivered by partners include after-school programs, job training programs, computer literacy programs and English as a Second Language programs. In some instances, a single on-site staff person may coordinate eight to 10 partnerships that deliver more than 40 hours of programming.

**Financial resources** – Based on the profiles of the NRLCC properties, annual Learning Center budgets at a single property can range from \$42,000 per year to more than \$300,000. Although mostly a factor of the size of the property, in general a property with more than 100 units and with a per unit cost of \$400 per year could provide resident services for about \$33 per unit per month.

**Relationship of resident services staff to property management staff** – One of the first things the Consortium recognized is that property management staff and resident services staff have separate and distinct responsibilities. In order for an on-site resident services program to be truly effective, it could not be run solely by property management staff. It is critical for these two staffs to work together to assure the success of the resident services program as well as to reap its benefits to the property. These benefits may include reduced tenant turnover, fewer rent delinquencies and lower maintenance costs.

Several Consortium members have documented procedures outlining the steps that resident services and property management staff may take regarding late rent collection and eviction processing. These procedures have a dual focus: to protect the financial interests of the property, while helping residents resolve financial issues that threaten their ability to pay rent in a timely manner.



## Appendix A: Member Organization Profiles

### *AHC Inc. Arlington, Virginia*

#### **Organizational Information**

AHC Inc. was incorporated in 1975 as the Arlington Housing Corporation. Its name was officially changed to AHC Inc. in 1998. AHC's activities include the acquisition and preservation of multi-family rental properties, the construction and rehabilitation of single family homes, the promotion of homeownership opportunities through education and counseling, lending to low-moderate income families for home improvement and/or assistance with home purchases. In addition to these activities, AHC is involved in the delivery of community services primarily directed to the needs of children and families residing in AHC properties.

AHC's mission is to sustain and increase the supply of safe, affordable rental and owner-occupied housing for low and moderate-income individuals; to educate the public about the importance of high quality affordable housing; and to ensure that AHC properties enhance the neighborhoods in which they are located.

#### **Property Profile Information**

Virginia Gardens, 76 units, and Taylor Square, 44 units, are two adjacent multifamily housing properties owned and managed by AHC Inc. in Arlington, Virginia. Approximately 90 percent of the units are subsidized. Community services are offered at Virginia Gardens to serve both properties and the surrounding community. Virginia Gardens houses 4,000 square feet of learning center space, including a 1,000 square-foot computer center, 1,000 square feet of space occupied by Greenbrier Learning Center, a 1,000 square-foot community room and 1,000 square feet of space used by Arlington Public Schools Preschool program. The computer center houses 12 Pentium II computers, with high-speed Internet access and a laser and inkjet printer. Approximately, 25 percent of the property residents along with residents from the surrounding community attend programs at the learning center.

#### **Data Highlights**

2003 data highlights from Virginia Gardens Community Center participants include:

- 93 percent of children in grades 3-5 improved in reading or math
- 88 percent of preschool program participants improved in reading
- 67 percent of middle and high schoolers maintained or improved grades

For more information, contact:

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Arlington, VA 22204  
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*Alamo Area Mutual Housing Association  
San Antonio, Texas*

**Organizational Information**

The Alamo Area Mutual Housing Association (AAMHA) was established in 1990 as a private, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that develops, owns and manages new and existing affordable housing in San Antonio area communities. AAMHA provides an affordable alternative to homeownership. Mutual housing offers residents long-term affordability, a stable community, voice in the operation of their housing, and an environment that supports them and their children in achieving their goals. AAMHA sponsors programs and activities that emphasize education, self-sufficiency, leadership and volunteerism.

AAMHA's mission is to develop, acquire, own and manage leased affordable housing in a community environment that promotes resident education, self-sufficiency, leadership and volunteerism through successful partnerships.

**Property Profile Information**

Western Hills is a 146-unit multifamily housing property in San Antonio, Texas. Approximately 20 percent of the units are occupied by Section 8 Voucher holders. Western Hills is home to a 1,000 square-foot learning center housing four computers with high speed internet access and two printers. The learning center is open to the property for programs or open lab access on average of 40 hours per week. Approximately, 40 percent of the property residents of Western attend programs at the learning center.

**Data Highlights**

2003 data highlights from Western Hills include:

- 67 percent of children ages 6-12 maintained or improved grades
- 75 percent of youth ages 13-18 maintained or improved grades
- 100 percent of children ages 5-18 attend an extracurricular afterschool program
- 4 percent of learning center participants moved out into homeownership

For more information, contact:

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## *CommonBond Communities* *Minneapolis, Minnesota*

### **Organizational Information**

CommonBond Communities is Minnesota's largest nonprofit provider of affordable housing. CommonBond housing includes 47 communities serving over 5,000 people living in 3,500 apartments and townhomes of family, senior, and special needs housing, located in 30 municipalities in the state of Minnesota. CommonBond has earned a national reputation for excellence in developing and managing quality affordable housing while providing customized resident services administered through Advantage Centers that promote resident success.

CommonBond partners with hundreds of people and organizations. These collaborations help provide attention-to-detail acquisition and development services and property management services to create affordable rental housing that the neighborhood sees as an asset. These partnerships also offer resources that foster self-reliance and build community; promote economic independence for adults, academic achievement for youth, and bolster independent living and life-long learning for seniors and people with special needs. The CommonBond Board of Directors and leadership team guides the organization's work. Local independent community boards monitor the needs of the residents and help sustain the quality of the rental communities.

### **Property Profile Information**

Seward Towers West is a 319-unit HUD Section 236 property with Project-based Section 8. It currently houses a 760 square-foot learning center containing six computers with high-speed Internet access. In January 2004, the building's new addition will be completed. This will provide the learning center with 8,500 square feet that will accommodate 10 computers and increased learning opportunities. The center currently does not serve the community because the facility is located in the midst of resident apartment hallways. This situation will change with the new addition – the center will have a private outside entrance for non-residents.

### **Data Highlights**

2003 data highlights from Seward Towers West include:

- 100 percent of adults participating in ESL who improved their English test scores
- 71 percent children are reaching their academic goals
- 57 percent of children are attending after-school academic programs
- 21 percent of residents obtain jobs through the learning center employment program

For more information, contact:

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Tav Buechler, Advantage Program Coordinator at Seward Tower West [buechler@commonbond.org](mailto:buechler@commonbond.org).

To learn more about Seward Towers West, see [www.commonbond.org](http://www.commonbond.org)

## *Foundation Communities Austin, Texas*

### **Organizational Information**

Foundation Communities provides high quality, affordable rental housing in Austin and Dallas where families have the opportunity to succeed. Foundation Communities was established in 1990 as a private, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that develops, owns, and manages affordable rental housing. Foundation Communities aggressively reinvests in all its properties, enhancing not only their immediate community, but also the surrounding neighborhood.

In addition to great physical properties, Foundation Communities also has created many on-site programs and activities that help residents realize and develop their talents. At each of its properties, Foundation Communities strives to foster a culture of opportunity that instills pride in community and individuals. Foundation Communities is governed by a board of directors consisting of residents, business and finance leaders, and non-profit social service providers. In addition to the board, each community operates with the involvement of a resident association, allowing residents to actively participate in day-to-day maintenance as well as setting overall policies for their community. Foundation Communities currently owns and manages 12 properties with a total of 1,900 units. It has been designated as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), is a partner agency of United Way/Capital Area and is a member of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation's national NeighborWorks Network.

### **Property Profile Information**

Sierra Ridge is a 148-unit affordable housing property in Austin, Texas. Rents are affordable to families at or below 50 percent of area median income. In 2002, a 3,000 square-foot learning center was built with the support of Neighborhood Reinvestment, the Meadows Foundation and Advanced Micro Devices. It houses 18 computers with high-speed internet access. Approximately, 75 percent of the property along with residents from the surrounding community attend programs at the learning center.

### **Data Highlights**

2003 data highlights from Sierra Ridge include:

- 81 percent of children maintain or improve grades
- 100 percent of learning center staff received continuing education
- 7 families participating in the financial literacy program, met their savings goals
- 25 children use the computer at the learning center to do homework

For more information, contact:

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## *Mutual Housing Association of Hawaii Lihue, Hawaii*

### **Organizational Information**

Mutual Housing Association of Hawaii was founded in 1992 for the purpose of stabilizing communities through resident participation in the development, ownership, and management of high quality, affordable housing. The mission of MHAH is "to develop, own and manage multi-housing communities through affordable housing, economic development and supportive services so that residents can build assets, earn income and improve the quality of family life and the economic vitality of the surrounding community." MHAH current owns and operates over 500 units of affordable housing and has three learning centers as part of their property portfolio.

### **Property Profile Information**

Lihue Court Townhomes is a 173-unit subsidized housing property located in Lihue Hawaii. Lihue Court houses more than 2,300 square feet of learning center program space including 12 computers with internet access and four laser printers. The Lihue Court Townhomes learning center serves approximately 20 percent of the property.

### **Data Highlights**

2003 data highlights from Lihue Court Townhomes include:

- 100 percent of children who improve one grade level in reading or math
- 77 percent of children met their academic goals
- 38 percent of high school seniors graduated from high school
- 86 percent of children attend an extracurricular afterschool program

For more information, contact:

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*Mercy Housing Inc.  
Denver, Colorado*

**Organizational Information**

Mercy Housing Inc. develops affordable housing for families, seniors, formerly homeless populations, people with HIV/AIDS and individuals with chronic mental illnesses and physical impairments. With the help of public and private funding, Mercy Housing, Inc. builds or rehabilitates housing according to community needs. The types of housing we develop include multi-unit rental apartments and single family homes, single room occupancy apartments for formerly homeless adults, handicap-accessible units for individuals with physical impairments and self-help housing programs for families ready for homeownership.

Mercy Housing, Inc. partners with residents to promote job creation and advancement and to provide access to job training, skills development programs, technology advances and other forms of education. Mercy Housing, Inc. is a partner of choice among governments, financial institutions, not-for-profit organizations, foundations, health care institutions and religious communities. Mercy Housing, Inc. believes that Mission is accomplished in part by being competent business partners.

**Property Profile Information**

Folsom Gardens is a 95-unit HUD-subsidized property with a 400 square foot computer learning center. Folsom Garden Learning Center houses four computers with high-speed Internet access and an HP printer.

Folsom Village is an 81-unit tax credit property with a 600 square-foot computer learning center. Folsom Village Learning Center houses 12 computers with high-speed Internet access and a laser printer.

Wishing Well Villas is an 83-unit multifamily property with 16 units of subsidized and 66 units of unsubsidized housing. Wishing Well Villas houses a 1,000 square-foot learning center with five computers with high speed internet access and two printers.

**Data Highlights**

2003 data highlights include:

- 100 percent of children ages 5-12 maintain or improve grades (at the Wishing Well Villas Property)
- 38 percent of residents are enrolled in a health insurance plan
- 74 residents participated in the Learning Center Advisory Council
- 50 percent of children attend an extracurricular afterschool program

For more information, contact:

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## *The Community Builders Boston, Massachusetts*

### **Organizational Information**

Founded in 1964, Community Builders is the largest nonprofit urban housing developer in the country. Community Builders has completed more than 17,000 units of affordable and mixed-income housing, and manages more than 6,500 units. One of the most active developers in the HUD HOPE VI program, they are engaged in 15 large-scale, mixed-income public and assisted housing redevelopment projects. At 20 developments with substantial Community Initiatives (CI) programming, site staff implement a housing-based service strategy centered on employment. CI staff have adapted the Project Match methodology for use at our housing developments. On-site Resident Service Coordinators and Case Managers reach out to residents, engaging them where they live, on their terms, around things that matter to them most - decent, affordable housing, a safe and supportive environment, a path to a new or better job. We begin by providing affordable, well-managed, supportive housing environments. Around the housing, we build a network of programs and services aligned in seven program areas: Resident Services, Housing Services, Workforce and Employment Development, Asset Building, Youth Development, Community Building and Senior Services.

Through the end of 2002, CI staff had helped place more than 1,200 residents in jobs, assisted 2,800 EITC claims, completed nearly 8,500 successful service provider referrals, enrolled 600 children in positive youth development programs, registered over 300 children for health insurance through CHIP, and prevented over 380 evictions through timely engagement of families in crisis.

### **Property Profile Information**

Plumley Village East is a 430-unit subsidized multi-family housing property in Worcester, Massachusetts. Plumley Village CI department provides programs and services in the seven program areas listed above. All programs utilize the more than 3,000 square feet of learning center space containing 19 Pentium computers with high-speed Internet access and 8 printers.

### **Data Highlights**

2003 data highlights from the Plumley Village East Learning Center include:

- 48 percent of children maintain or improve grades
- 68 percent of adults participating in a job training program got a job
- 40 percent of the population served by the learning center at the property
- 21 children use the computer at the learning center to do homework

For more information, contact:

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## ***Rocky Mountain Mutual Housing Association Denver, Colorado***

### ***Organizational Information***

The Rocky Mountain Mutual Housing Association, Inc. (RMMHA), was founded in 1992 with the belief that those people who do not own their homes could enjoy safe, affordable, quality housing and have a significant voice in the management and operation of their housing communities. The principle mission of RMMHA is to be a partnership organization of local community and resident members that develops, owns and manages permanent affordable housing and provides related services for low- and moderate-income residents. The residents are members of, and have a voice in, the affairs of the Mutual Housing Association.

RMMHA partners with public and nonprofit agencies to address three target areas: youth programs, education and economic asset building. Services include after-school and summer youth programs, English language acquisition classes, economic literacy classes, and employment assistance through the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development.

RMMHA operates Community Technology Centers (CTC) within each Learning Center. All technology center computers have Pentium IV processors, DVD drives and high-speed Internet access. These centers teach the following classes: Windows XP, Word 2002, Excel 2002, Publisher 2002, Access 2002, Front Page, and Internet use.

### ***Property Profile Information***

The Joint Activity Center serves two properties, Heritage Estates and Garden Court, which contain 626 units of multifamily housing, 40 of which are subsidized with Section 8 vouchers. Approximately 77 percent of residents earn between 40 percent to 60 percent of Area Median Income (AMI), 22 percent between 60 percent to 80 percent AMI, and an additional 1 percent above 80 percent AMI. Located in Denver, the 9,800 square-foot Joint Activity Center contains a weight room, full-size gym, meeting space and satellite offices for collaborative partnership staff, including the Colorado I Have a Dream Foundation and Girls Incorporated of Metro Denver. The CTC contains 11 computers.

*The Townview Plaza Learning Center* serves Townview Plaza and Townview Annex in Denver. The properties have 149 units of multifamily housing with six Section 8 voucher holders. The CTC contains six computers. At Townview, approximately 60 percent of households have incomes between 0 percent to 40 percent of AMI and 40 percent of households have incomes between 40 percent to 50 percent of AMI.

*Mountain Terrace Learning Center* in Westminster serves Mountain Terrace, a 152-unit multifamily property. Seven of those units have Section 8 Voucher holders. The CTC contains 10 computers. Seventy-nine percent of households have incomes between 40 percent to 60 percent of AMI and 21 percent have incomes between 60 percent to 80 percent of AMI.

### ***Data Highlights***

2003 data highlights from the Joint Activity Center include:

- 89 youth engaged in structured after-school and summer programs
- 43 adults completed computer classes
- 23 adults enrolled full time in college or trade school
- 47 youth used computers to do homework
- 13 families moved into homeownership

For more information, contact:

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 Rocky Mountain Mutual Housing Association  
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## *Sacramento Mutual Housing Association Sacramento, California*

### **Organizational Information**

In 1988, a partnership of neighborhood residents, businesses, housing advocates, and local government founded Sacramento Mutual Housing Association with the goal of improving housing opportunities for lower-income families and strengthening their communities. SMHA develops affordable multifamily housing through new construction on vacant in-fill lots and through acquisition and renovation of troubled properties. Residents of mutual housing participate in the operations of their properties and community building activities. Mutual housing communities are anchors in the neighborhoods in which they are located. Through partnerships with local school districts, local nonprofit organizations and resident leaders, services provided out of the mutual housing community centers include computer classes, adult education, life skills' classes, financial education, community watch training and support, youth recreation and free lunches for low-income children. The mission of Sacramento Mutual Housing Association is to develop and operate permanently affordable housing that builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development.

### **Property Profile Information**

River Garden Estates is a 124-unit tax credit property in Sacramento, California. River Garden Estates houses a 2,300 square-foot learning center with 12 Pentium computers, high-speed Internet access and two laser printers. Approximately, 60 percent of the property residents participate or take a leadership role in programs at the learning center.

For more informatio, contact:

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## Appendix B: Strategic Asset Areas and Corresponding Measures

### Social Assets

#### *Youth – Categories of Programs and Measures*

- Early Childhood School Readiness
- Elementary School Achievement
- Teen School Achievement
- Extracurricular Success
- Teen Postsecondary School Readiness and Employment Readiness

#### **Sample Measures**

- Percentage of children attending extracurricular after-school programs
- Percentage of children who maintain or improve grades
- Percentage of children who improve one grade level in reading or math

#### *Adult/Family – Categories of Programs and Measures*

- Adult Literacy and Basic Adult Education
- Adult Employability
- Financial Literacy and Family Savings
- Family Readiness for Homeownership

#### **Sample Measures**

- Number of adults acquiring a GED
- Percentage of residents in a job training program who stay at jobs (for periods from 90 days, to six months to one year)
- Percentage of adults participating in a job training program who get jobs
- Number of families participating in an Individual Development Account (IDA) who use the funds for an eligible asset or purpose
- Number of families participating in a financial literacy program who are meeting their budgetary goals
- Percentage of Learning Center participants who move out into homeownership

#### *Seniors and Health – Categories of Programs and Measures*

- Senior Computer Literacy
- Personal Health

#### **Sample Measures**

- Percent of residents at the property enrolled in a health insurance plan

***Community Assets – Categories of Programs and Measures***

Leadership in Property and/or Learning Center  
Civic Leadership in the Larger Community  
Security on the Property or in the Neighborhood  
Other Strategic Community Asset Building

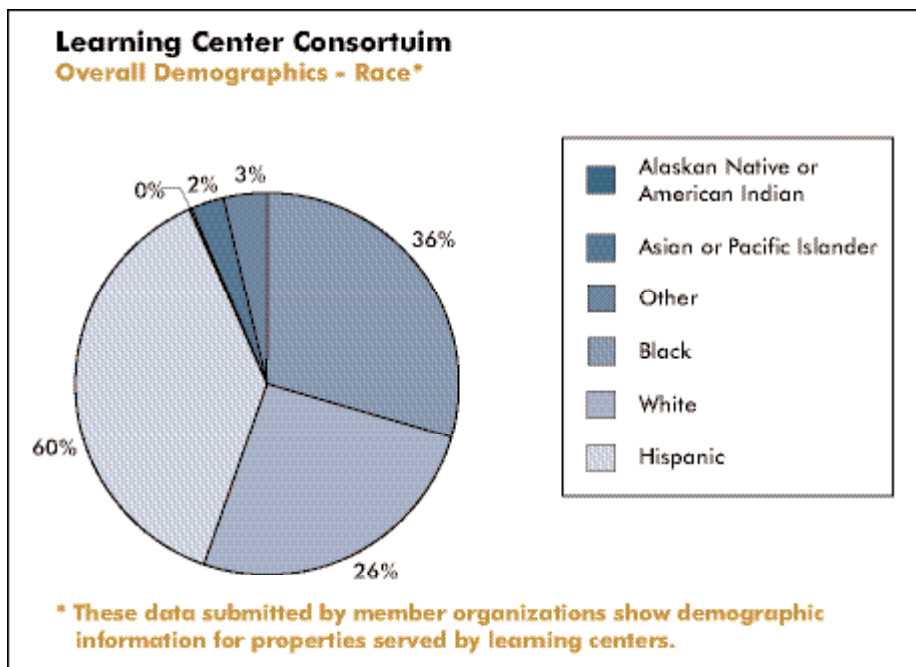
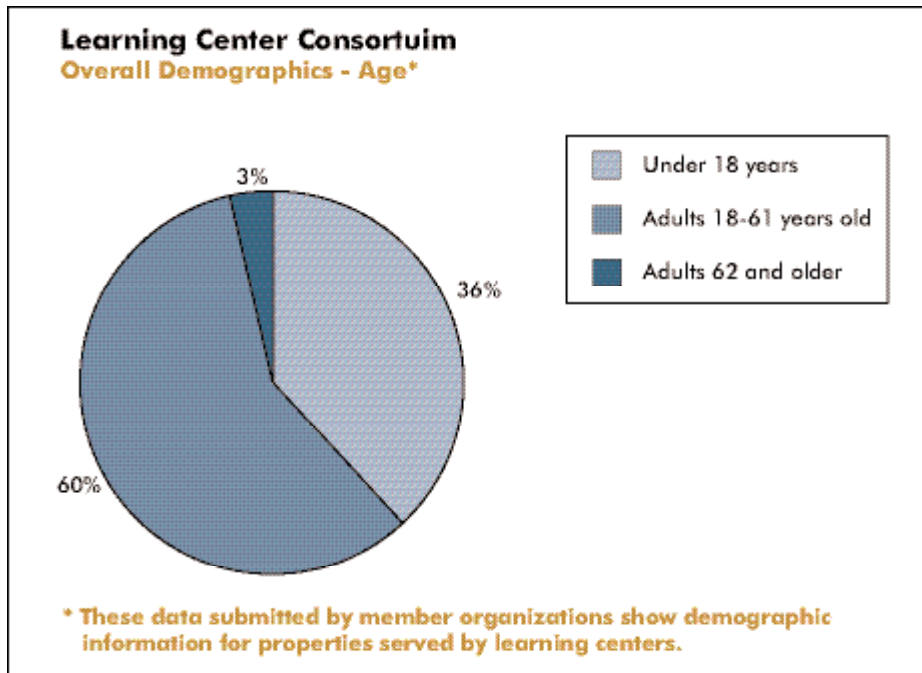
**Sample Measures**

- Decrease in crime on the property and in surrounding neighborhood
- Percentage of property residents who vote in an election
- Number of residents who become active in the political process

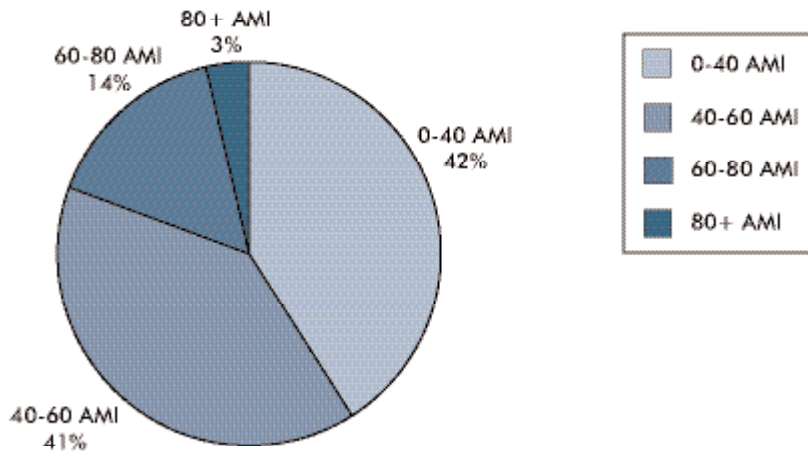
***Center Sustainability – Categories of Programs***

Staffing  
Leadership  
Computers  
Participation

## Appendix C: Summary of Current Demographic Data



**Learning Center Consortium**  
**Income Levels Served\***



\* These data submitted by member organizations show demographic information for properties served by learning centers.



## Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, the NeighborWorks® Network and the NeighborWorks® Multifamily Initiative

The Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation was established by an act of Congress in 1978 (Public Law 95-557). A primary objective of the Corporation is to increase the capacity of local community-based organizations to revitalize their communities, particularly by expanding and improving housing.

Currently there are approximately 225 independent, locally led nonprofit community development corporations that comprise the NeighborWorks® network. A key to the success of NeighborWorks® organizations is their partnership-building approach to neighborhood revitalization, uniting residents, private-sector businesses, foundations and local and state governments.

Launched in 1999, the NeighborWorks® Multifamily Initiative is the collaborative portfolio management program for NeighborWorks® organizations whose primary mission is development, ownership or management of affordable multifamily housing. Currently, 68 NeighborWorks® organizations, operating in 33 states and Puerto Rico, belong to the Multifamily Initiative. Together, they own more than 35,000 affordable housing units.

### 2004-2008 5-YEAR GOALS

- Develop or preserve 15,000 units.
- Invest \$1 billion in development and preservation.
- Asset manage so that 90 percent of Multifamily Initiative members have "positively performing portfolios".
- Serve 15,000 residents through services which support increased family and community assets.
- 3,500 residents are involved in leadership at the property, organization or community level.
- Provide broad-based access to lessons of the Initiative.

As a capital partner, the Multifamily Initiative has formed the Neighborhood Capital Corporation (NCC). NCC speeds access to capital designed to enable the preservation and development of affordable multifamily housing. NCC provides predevelopment loans of up to \$150,000 and interim development loans. Initially capitalized by Neighborhood Reinvestment, the NCC is now building its capital base through both direct investment and through agreements with lenders who would like to participate in this type of lending.



## Learning Center Consortium: Partnerships in America's Dreams

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