

Spirit of Optimism and Hope Remains Strong for Our Mission

by *Kenneth D. Wade*



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In this issue of *Bright Ideas* we examine various development tools used by practitioners to create and preserve affordable housing. Community development leaders continue to make great strides in expanding the availability of affordable housing, yet many people are still unable to obtain a safe and decent place they can call home. Despite the many challenges, the spirit of optimism and hope remains strong within the housing and community development field.

In recent years, as the quality of factory-built housing has improved and in some cases become indistinguishable from “site-built” homes, many community development practitioners have reconsidered factory-built as a viable solution to the affordable housing dilemma. Community developers, particularly those working in rural areas and communities impacted by the 2005 hurricanes, have begun to re-evaluate how manufactured and modular housing can be successfully integrated into their existing efforts to expand homeownership opportunities for lower-income families.

This issue also explores successful efforts to develop and preserve affordable rental housing. As more and more low-income rental apartments vanish from the nation’s inventory, these efforts have become ever more important. Victories have been achieved by NeighborWorks® organizations across the country, as exemplified by the hard work of the Housing Partnership of Northeast Florida in Jacksonville. Described as a “David and Goliath scenario,” in which nonprofits are up against the gigantism of free-market economics, Housing Partnership of Northeast Florida was able to purchase a \$5.5 million building that was slated for conversion.

NeighborWorks® organizations are also overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds to develop new affordable senior housing in communities where it’s desperately needed. Thanks to the visionary work of South County Housing in Pacific Grove, California, new affordable senior housing has been developed and celebrated for its remarkable ocean view. After more than 10 years in development, a three-story, \$10 million 49-unit senior complex was christened this past winter in the Monterey Bay community following a protracted battle concerning water rights.

Last, this issue explores innovative efforts to address homelessness. Advocates are re-energized by new local initiatives and long-term plans that some say could end homelessness. Arguing for preventive methods rather than short-term fixes such as shelters, many NeighborWorks® and faith-based organizations have successfully helped homeless individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency through programs that provide affordable rental housing combined with supportive services, such as job skills training and help for addiction.

The commitment to innovation and unwavering dedication to affordable housing production and preservation described in this issue are hallmarks of the community development field. Practitioners continually strive to identify new approaches and to pursue opportunities to close the housing affordability gap and strengthen communities.