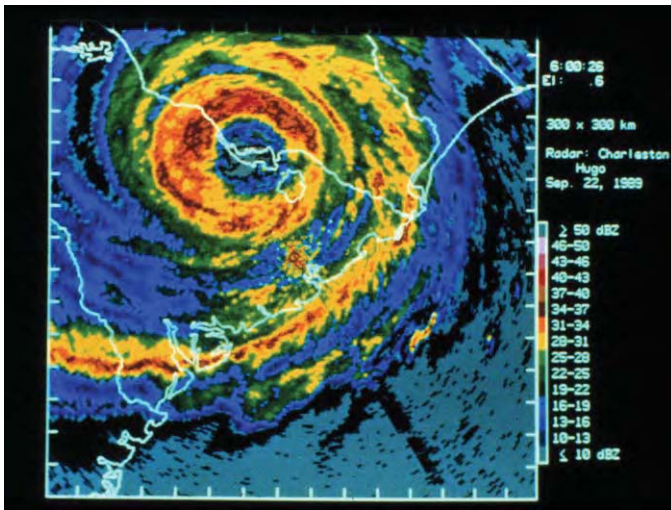




## Corporation, Home Depot Join in Hurricane Aid



With hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne creating record-setting losses as they crisscrossed Florida and then headed inland, Neighborhood Reinvestment and a major private partner are distributing funds to NeighborWorks® organizations to assist with the rebuilding.

The Home Depot has committed \$1 million to Neighborhood Reinvestment for NeighborWorks® organizations involved in the recovery effort. In addition, Neighborhood Reinvestment is providing more than \$300,000 in financial assistance, as well as technical support.

“The Home Depot has worked hard to help our customers prepare for the recent weather emergencies,” said Bob Nardelli, chairman, president and CEO of The Home Depot. “Now we are committing an unprecedented level of financial support, materials and people to help rebuild communities

and lives. We are proud to contribute a portion of our pre- and post-hurricane sales to the rebuilding efforts in the communities that we serve.”

“Repair and recovery will take months for many residents affected by the hurricanes,” said Kenneth D. Wade, Neighborhood Reinvestment’s CEO. “The Home Depot’s generous donation will enable our NeighborWorks® organizations to support the long-term recovery faced by so many families.”

Two network organizations receiving early support from Neighborhood Reinvestment are **Community Housing Partners Corporation** of Christiansburg, Virginia, and **Centro Campesino Farmworker Center** of Florida City, Florida.

Community Housing Partners Corporation (CHPC) is receiving assistance for repairing one of its multifamily properties in Richmond, which had major damage from record flooding, resulting from Tropical Storm Gaston, in August.

Centro Campesino Farmworker Center (Centro) will be receiving help with the rebuilding effort in south Florida counties devastated by Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Jeanne.

“This is an extremely challenging time for the residents in South Florida,” said Don Phoenix, Neighborhood Reinvestment’s Southern District director. “Our NeighborWorks® network member, Centro Campesino, will focus on providing basic relief and housing repairs for the families in need. We are fully committed to the rebuilding of these communities.”

Steve Mainster, executive director of Centro, said hundreds of farmworkers and other low-income rural families in south Florida “have lost everything, their homes, their possessions, and security.” ■

## Cobb Housing Partnering on Affordable Homes

Cobb Housing Inc., a NeighborWorks® organization in Marietta, Georgia, has partnered with area homebuilders and developers to produce 31 affordable homes in a 9.5-acre, high-profile development that will provide an alternative to soaring home prices in Cobb County, northwest of Atlanta.

The development, called the Mitchell Chase subdivision, is designed to produce 1,400 to 1,600 square foot, three-bedroom homes that will sell for between \$120,000 and \$130,000. The median sales price in the county is approximately \$180,000.

Cobb Housing purchased the site several years ago, using HOME funds. In June, ground was broken on Mitchell Chase, and work on the infrastructure proceeded during the fall. Foundations for the first 10 homes were to be in by Thanksgiving, looking toward a spring 2005 completion date.

Work on the remaining homes will be divided into two more phases, with 10 homes planned for completion by December 2005 and the final 11 by summer 2006.

Key partners are the Cobb Chapter of the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association, whose president, Bobby Lunceford, is a Cobb Housing board member, and an area developer, Howard Zuckerman. A nationally recognized architect has agreed to provide drawings. Neighborhood Reinvestment provided approximately \$40,000 in predevelopment capital.

The plan is for the building community to provide goods and services as contributions or at reduced rates. The savings, together with other financing, will allow Cobb Housing to market the homes to working families in the service sector, such as police, fire fighters, nurses, and teachers.

The scale of the project has drawn support from a range of elected officials. U.S. Rep. Phil Gingrey serves as honorary project chairman. The state representative and the county commissioner for the area attended the groundbreaking and have endorsed the project.

The 9.5-acre site includes an historic building, the Mitchell House, which dates from the 1830s and was used as a headquarters in the Civil War. It will be protected and preserved under an arrangement with the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. ■

## Nonprofit D.C. Mortgage Company Helps Lease-to-Purchase Buyers

Manna Mortgage Corp., a nonprofit subsidiary of Manna Inc., a Washington, D.C., NeighborWorks® organization, has helped nine new lease-to-purchase homeowners in Wheeler Creek Estates in southeast D.C., after other lenders failed to follow through.

Wheeler Creek Estates is a Hope VI project developed by the DC Housing Authority.

Wheeler Creek Community Development Corporation approached Manna Mortgage to work with people whom numerous other mortgage companies had turned down for relatively small mortgages under lease-to-purchase agreements.

The Housing Authority was providing a large soft second loan, and had established supportive programs of homebuyer education, a matched-savings individual development account (IDA) program with Capital Area Asset Building (CAAB), and the support of the Wheeler Creek CDC in assisting buyers who were not mortgage-ready when the units were completed.

Manna Mortgage took the lead in working with 10 different organizations that played critical roles in putting the deals together for settlement. For instance, it used its relationship with Neighborhood Housing Services of America (NHTSA), the NeighborWorks® secondary market, to get approvals on the nine cases, working with the applicants (with the help of the Wheeler Creek CDC) to satisfactorily clear up some complicated credit and income issues.

CitiMortgage, a subsidiary of the Citibank organization, committed to be the lender on these loans, based on its relationship with NHTSA and Manna Mortgage, funding the loans and shipping them to NHTSA. Enterprise Home (the housing authority's sales agent and a subsidiary of The Enterprise Foundation) worked with Manna Mortgage to extend the lease-to-purchase time period based on the loan approvals.

Each of the partners had to make exceptions to their usual processes.

The nine new homeowners included a broad range of occupations – teacher, food service worker, delivery truck driver, hair stylist, seamstress, elder care provider, church bus driver, elevator repair person, property management employee. Incomes averaged \$26,000 a year, less than one third of the area median.

Most of the households have long associations with the

community, including one borrower whose mother was so active in the community that one of the streets in the development is named after her. All are committed to community improvement.

“We just had to find a way to make these loans,” said Frank Demarais, Manna Mortgage’s vice president and general manager. “We knew that the commitment of these folks to the training, savings, and credit management means that they will be successful borrowers, and we knew that the contributions of the DC Housing Authority, the Wheeler Creek CDC, and the CAAB organization had made the payments very affordable.

“Manna Mortgage’s role was to organize all that in a way that a responsible investor would be happy to make the loan, at low-interest rates, and we’re glad we could do that with CitiMortgage and NHSA.” ■

## Ohio Affiliate Helps University Housing Program

Neighborhood Housing Services of Hamilton, Ohio, has helped 50 to 60 Miami University employees become homeowners through a university-based, employer-assisted-housing program to increase faculty and staff homeownership in the university’s hometown of Oxford.

The program offers forgivable, zero-interest loans in two amounts, depending on the location of the home. For homes in the historic “Mile Square” area, the loan may be needed for up to \$10,000. For homes elsewhere in the city, the loan may be up to \$4,000. NHS of Hamilton administers the program.

Loans may be used for down payment, closing costs, or renovation. They are forgiven after seven years of owner occupancy. All full-time

university employees are eligible.

“We’re trying to attract families back into the Mile Square area,” said Paul Allen, the university’s director of business services, as quoted in the *Miami Student*. “By keeping a mix of families and students, we can make the area more attractive and better control some of the problems that come with a large student population.”

“We expected to be helping six to eight families a year,” said NHS Executive Director Ron Woolwine, according to the *Student*, “but the program has helped 50 to 60 families in just a year and a half.” ■

## Network News Briefs

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has honored **Lawrence Community Works (LCW)**, a Massachusetts NeighborWorks® organization, with its HUD Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation.

LCW won the award for its \$3.3-million Reviviendo project, which renovated three nationally recognized historic buildings and converted a vacant parking lot into 17 affordable housing units for low-income families, the homeless, and disabled.

**Neighborhood Housing Services of Silicon Valley (NHSSV)** has become the first nonprofit corporation in California to win approval from the California Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA) as a direct lender. “Both CalHFA and we are very excited about our emerging relationship,” said Edward F. Moncrief, NHSSV executive director.

NHSSV has functioned as a mortgage broker for three years. Over the past year, it has focused its lending almost exclusively on CalHFA’s products, brokering these to Washington Mutual Bank and Fremont Bank. (Further background, spring 2004 *bright ideas*, page 64.)

**HANDS Inc.**, a NeighborWorks® organization in Orange, New Jersey,

has been honored with the Governor’s Excellence in Housing Award for its groundbreaking work in returning abandoned and deteriorated housing to productive reuse, and revitalizing neighborhoods in Orange’s East Ward and Valley neighborhoods.

The award was presented under the auspices of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency in the category of community revitalization. (Further background, summer 2004 *bright ideas*, page 70). ■