



CREATIVE OFFICE RENOVATIONS

Sorry, the Gargoyles Are Not for Sale

BY CATHERINE A. SMITH

Location, location, location – the real estate mantra of what is most valuable about a property certainly holds true also for where local NeighborWorks® organizations are housed.

The location of a local NeighborWorks® office is important in achieving its mission. It needs to be accessible to residents, presentable to funders, big enough to accommodate expansion, and comfortable, safe and secure for staff and visitors alike.

Sometimes, however, finding all these features at a single site in a distressed community can be a challenge. Here is a completely unscientific selection of four NeighborWorks® organizations – in Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, and Colorado – and the old or unusual buildings they have creatively turned into office space.

OLD JEFFERSON HIGH

Lafayette Neighborhood Housing Services

Lafayette Neighborhood Housing Services (LNHS), in Lafayette, Indiana, had its eye on the old Jefferson High School building from the moment the city's Board of School Trustees voted to dispose of it.

Located in the middle of the LNHS target area, the structure was a community landmark. It had served as a high school from 1912 until 1969, then was used as a junior high, and most recently housed Ivy Tech State College.

Committed to keeping the structure intact yet put to good use, the school board considered a variety of proposals for development. It then selected LNHS and the Stenz Corporation's plan for 74 affordable senior apartments and 12,000 square feet of office space for LNHS. Stenz is an Indianapolis construction and property management company.

Careful planning and community collaboration were key to the project's success. It took more than three years to get all the financing pieces in place, including state and federal historic tax credits. The \$9.9 million project required 14 sources of funding.



Historic Jefferson Centre, Lafayette, Indiana,

COURTESY LAFAYETTE NHS

Keeping the unusual features of the original building was paramount to LNHS in the restoration. Each of the 74 senior apartments is unique, and the community spaces have retained the beautiful woodwork that adorned the original space. The old auditorium is now a community room with a full kitchen. Other amenities included an indoor atrium with a glass ceiling, fireplace and sitting area, and there is an outdoor atrium as well.

Students from the new Jefferson High School designed and painted a 12-foot by 32-foot mural in the community room that illustrates the past and the future of the Historic Jefferson Centre.

In addition to the 74 senior apartments, Historic Jefferson Centre also includes 12,000 square feet of nonprofit office space. This area houses the offices of LNHS as well as the LNHS Education Center. The Education Center offers a home maintenance workshop lab with hands-on stations to teach home repairs. The "Thinkin' Room" is available for various adult classes and is open to the public. There is also a computer lab.

Apartments are now beginning to be rented and occupants are moving in. The Stenz Corporation is handling marketing and renting. Rents range from less than \$300 for some efficiencies to \$650 for a two-bedroom

unit. Seventy units are restricted to lower-income seniors. Most are efficiencies or one-bedroom apartments.

“To do a project like this, you need to have a lot of patience and make sure you have partners that you can work with over the long haul,” said Marie Morse, LNHS’s associate executive director. “We were fortunate to have partners we really clicked with and with whom we shared a lot of mutual respect.”

TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY KRESGE’S

Neighborhood Housing Services of Freeport

“This was one of those lucky things” said Deb Elzinga, executive director of NHS of Freeport, Illinois.

For years, NHS struggled to serve its residents out of an old, small storefront whose two upper floors had been gutted and never restored. “Now we feel like we’re the Jeffersons,” she said with a laugh. “We’re movin’ on up.”

Where NHS recently moved was a turn-of-the-20th-century building that had once been a Kresge’s Five and Dime, a J.C. Penney’s Department Store, a ladies’ garment store called Spurgeons, and then home to Grand National Bank, which became Old Kent Bank, which then was bought by Fifth Third Bank.

After 15 years of using the building as the loan processing center for its Chicago affiliate, Fifth Third decided to move the center to a newer facility. However, it was determined not to abandon the building or its customers in Freeport’s central city.

Instead, the bank decided to give the building away. What Gary Quinn, Fifth Third Bank’s western regional manager, envisioned was breathing life into this large, deep building by inviting a number of organizations to share the space.

“What motivated us was that we could see there were a half a dozen very good organizations all working nearby,



NHS’s former office building, with staffers Pat Brown [inset, left] and Carol Waller.

and all of whom are about the same thing – building better communities and encouraging investment,” Quinn said. “We thought, if we could reduce or help eliminate some of their occupancy costs, they could devote more of their budgets to other operational efforts,” he said.

Turning this vision into a reality began when Fifth Third offered use of the building to the Freeport Area Economic Development Foundation and the Freeport Chamber of Commerce, which had been sharing about 1,400 square feet of office space.

“The bank said, ‘Give us a token amount of rent until we can work out the donation.’” said Robert J. Skurla, executive director of the Freeport Area Economic Development Foundation. “We said, ‘how about \$500 a month?’ and they said ‘fine,’” Skurla recalled. “So now we pay \$500 a month for 10,000 square feet of office space and 5,000 square feet of secured, fireproof storage space.”

The bank also gave the foundation a \$90,000 loan at a very low-interest rate to renovate the building. Bricked-in windows are being replaced with “historically appropriate” windows, Skurla said, “and we want more of a storefront, so we can have a neighborhood design center at street level.”

The foundation literally threw open the door to NHS and other organizations. Among those to join in were the Chamber of Commerce, the Freeport Downtown Development Corporation (which focuses on revitalizing historic downtown Freeport) and, soon to move in, the local community college’s small business development center.

Small office spaces also have also been made available for the Jane Addams Land Park Foundation, which accepts land for use as future parks; Partners in Planning, which is a joint land use effort of several organizations and agencies; and “a group of visionary, retired executive directors and community leaders called Vision 20/20,” Skurla said.

“The response from the community has been really great,” said NHS’s Elzinga. “This changes the perception of us and will help us broaden our scope. Some people were



The “new look” at NHS of Freeport

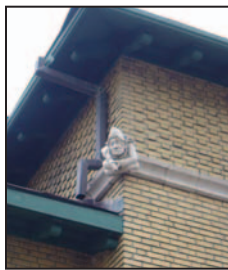
PHOTOS COURTESY NHS OF FREEPORT

concerned that our customers would be intimidated by our new offices, but they rave about them.”

Gary Quinn of Fifth Third expects ownership of the building to pass from the bank to the Freeport Area Economic Development Foundation very soon.

Meantime, the shared space is enabling Freeport’s plans for economic development to be “one coordinated effort,” Skurla said. “We have more of an opportunity to meet around the water cooler and find common ground.”

Quinn agreed: “There is a synergy that all these organizations gain by being in proximity to one another and being able to work together.”



PHOTOS COURTESY CHWC INC.

Old Fire Station #9

CHWC Inc.

Eight gargoyles of firemen that grace the corners and tower of Old Fire Station #9 have looked down upon the main thoroughfare of the Prescott neighborhood of Kansas City, Kansas, for almost 100 years. The gargoyles are so unique and valuable that offers to buy them have come from as far away as Europe.

But the gargoyles are not for sale. Instead, they have been rescued from obscurity by CHWC Inc. in whose target area the fire station is located.

CHWC is a new NeighborWorks® organization created in 2002 when Catholic Housing of Wyandotte County Inc. merged with Neighborhood Housing Services of Kansas City, Kansas. CHWC serves seven ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the core of Kansas City. It currently has 21 staff members.

CHWC decided to renovate the fire station for three reasons: its location, its meaning to the community, and its own urgent need for more office space.

“The fire station is symbolic to the neighborhood,” said Michael Snodgrass, president/CEO of CHWC. “It is shown on neighborhood banners, and its revitalization is key to neighborhood morale.”

Because of the fire station’s historic nature, Snodgrass knew that renovating it would require costly procedures and materials. For example, tiles in the roof needed careful

numbering for removal and replacement.

CHWC also acknowledged the unusual renovation requirements by involving as early as possible an architect who specializes in historic renovations. CHWC was fortunate enough to find the same architect who had worked on slight renovations to the building almost 30 years ago.

Financing for the \$1.1 million project came from a variety of sources, including state and federal historic tax credits, NeighborWorks® America, the Hall Family Foundation, the H & R Block Foundation, the Kemper Foundation, and the unified government of Wyandotte County-Kansas City, Kansas. Fundraising for the project is continuing as costs rise.

The completed building will have three floors. The first floor will house a community resource center that will offer meeting space to neighborhood groups as well as desk space for community partners. Computer access will be open to all. The meeting space also will be used for community social and health awareness events. CHWC also will run a program to distribute free paint to local residents through the center.

The second and third floors will be used for CHWC office space. There also will be office space for lease.

Work on the roof began in the fall of 2004 and interior renovations started in March 2005. CHCW expects to complete the project by July 2005.

“We are thrilled to have the opportunity to preserve a structure that is historically significant both locally and nationally,” Snodgrass said, “and at the same time move to a more central location in our target area, with the space to keep pace with the growth of our staff and services.”

High-Visibility Commercial

NeighborWorks® of Pueblo



Ribbon-cutting at the Bessemer building.

COURTESY NEIGHBORWORKS® OF PUEBLO

For 15 of the last 28 years, NeighborWorks® of Pueblo, Colorado, (formerly NHS of Pueblo) was housed in a 2,400-square foot office. Over time, it had expanded programmatically and geographically, and its staff had grown to six full-time and two part-time employees. Its office was bursting at the seams.

Then the opportunity arose to renovate an 11,000-square foot building right on Northern Avenue, the main thoroughfare through Bessemer, its original target neighborhood.

“It’s a very old building, dating back to the 1940s,” said



NeighborWorks® of Pueblo Board President Doug Ring, a real-estate broker with ERA Werner Realty Inc. “It had most recently been a dollar store, and before that a rent-to-own furniture store, and maybe even at one time a grocery store.”

Renovating this highly visible building – across the street from a bank, near senior housing and just down the street from a park – cost \$400,000, in addition to \$265,000 for acquiring it. Financing included \$110,000 from NeighborWorks® America, U.S. Bank, Vectra Bank, and literally hundreds of individual and corporate donors.

NeighborWorks® of Pueblo is utilizing 7,000 square feet for its offices and for classroom space where it can stage hands-on home repair classes for homeowners. The remaining 4,000 square feet are being leased for retail space, to help businesses open up in the neighborhood.

“It’s all very state-of-the-art,” Lionel Trujillo, NeighborWorks® of Pueblo’s executive director, said of the renovation. “We have a laptop and projector set-up with an automatic screen that comes down for our homeownership



A makeover produces a signature building.
PHOTOS COURTESY NEIGHBORWORKS® OF PUEBLO

counseling classes, and lots of room for our tool-lending library and hands-on classes.”

Most importantly, though, is the location. “Bessemer is a very large, old neighborhood,” Ring said. “The Bessemer blast furnace was utilized here, and at one point many Puebloans worked at the steel mill.” The aging housing stock is the focus of NeighborWorks® of Pueblo’s attention, as are vacant lots on which it is building infill housing.

“We really wanted exposure in the Bessemer neighborhood where we’ll be rehabbing many homes in the coming years,” Ring said.

With its beautiful remodeling job of the Bessemer building complete and the organization all moved in, Ring couldn’t help commenting that “this is an exciting time for NeighborWorks® of Pueblo. We’re real proud of ourselves.” ■

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T-Shirt Design Contest Taps Students’ Imaginations

A “Dreaming of Home” T-shirt design competition for fourth graders, sponsored as a marketing project by Lafayette Neighborhood Housing Services in Indiana, produced imaginative designs, excited winners, and a burst of visibility for LNHS.

“It was truly a fun experience,” said Pamela Turner, LNHS marketing and resource development director, “I look forward to continuing the project and seeing our T-shirts on kids throughout the Lafayette area.”

LNHS selected three Lafayette elementary schools, Glen Acres, Washington and Vinton, and, after providing some LNHS background and design guidelines, asked fourth graders to create a “Dreaming of Home” design. A panel of five judges selected winners.



Two of the winners, including Charity Sparks with her design for Vinton.
PHOTOS COURTESY LAFAYETTE NHS

The T-shirts were printed for the fourth grade of each school, with its winning design on the front and LNHS’s logo and tag line on the back. Framed copies were presented to the winners and their schools.

The media were present for the announcement, and the winning students and art teachers were interviewed, along with LNHS, for an article in the local paper.

The three winners were Anne Halliwell of Glen Acres, Orlando Morgan of Washington, and Charity Sparks of Vinton. ■

NNA Announces Excellence Awards

NeighborWorks® executive directors in Virginia, California and Pennsylvania won the 2005 National NeighborWorks® Association (NNA) Excellence Awards for lifetime achievement, practitioner of the year, and emerging leader.

“We are launching these awards,” said Martina Guilfoil, NNA president and executive director of Inglewood NHS, “to highlight individuals who foster and lead great projects and practices in housing and community development within the NeighborWorks® network.”

The winners were Janaka Casper of **Community Housing Partners Inc.** of Richmond, Virginia, for lifetime achievement; Edward F Moncrief of **NHS of Silicon Valley**, San Jose, California, for practitioner of the year; and LouAnn Ross of **Pittsburgh NHS Inc.**, for emerging leader.

The awards were presented at the NeighborWorks® Executive Director Symposium in March in Austin, Texas. Each also carries a cash prize.

Casper was honored for more than 30 years of “compassion and commitment to public service and social justice that have made Community Housing Partners an exemplary institution, with impact that is invaluable.” Under his vision, guidance and tireless support, Community Housing Partners has evolved from a purely volunteer-run organization into a multistate community development corporation, with a budget of \$40 million,



Janaka Casper



Edward F. Moncrief



LouAnn Ross

PHOTOS BY GEEP SCHURMAN, COURTESY NHS OF SILICON VALLEY AND WONDAY PHOTOGRAPHY

combined assets of \$120 million, and a staff of 275. (For related story, see summer 2004 *bright ideas*, page 33.)

Moncrief was cited for making NHS of Silicon Valley “a vibrant organization and forerunner of excellence for years to come,” markedly increasing homeownership among low-income and minority residents of San Jose, and growing NHS with increased operational support from the city of San Jose, a NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center®, certification as a community development financial institution, and its own “Home Ventures Fund,” a mortgage assistance product. (For related story, see spring 2004 *bright ideas*, page 64.)

Ross was honored for facilitating a turnaround at Pittsburgh NHS and, in two short years, bringing it back to the status of a highly respected housing agency. Not only has she taken NHS to new heights through valuable partnerships, she also has restored its financial stability and is funding more programs than ever. (For related stories, see page 27.) ■

NETWORK NEWS BRIEFS

Marina Sampanes Peed, president and executive director of **The IMPACT! Group** of Duluth, Georgia, was honored by the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce with a 2005 Public Service Award for her work and accomplishments in neighborhood revitalization, homeownership, and community outreach.



Debbie A. Joyner, a resident of Parkside Gables and Trinity Park Mutual Housing in Stamford, Connecticut, has been elected board president of **MHA of Southwestern Connecticut**, the first resident so honored.

Troy Rehabilitation & Improvement Program (TRIP) honored its partners in

its NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center with a special recognition lunch. Among the top honorees were HSBC, The Troy Savings Bank Foundation, Charitable Leadership Foundation, Allstate Foundation, State Farm Insurance Companies, and J.P. Morgan Chase.

LaCasa of Goshen, Indiana, has celebrated its 35th anniversary of working on neighborhood development, homeownership training, and immigrant counseling.

“We are able to carry out our mission today,” said Executive Director Larry Gautsche, “because many more persons care about families who are struggling, neighborhoods that need help, and the health of our larger community. Behind

each number is a family whose life is better because you cared.”

Cobb Housing Inc. of Marietta, Georgia, and **HomeSight** of Seattle were honored by the National Association of Home Builders with its Innovation in Workforce Housing Awards for projects that showed ingenuity in developing, constructing, and marketing affordable workforce housing. Cobb was cited for its 31-unit Mitchell Chace development (winter 2004/2005 *bright ideas*, page 67), HomeSight for its 34-unit Stellina development.

In California, Arabella Martinez, who in 1964 helped found what became the **Unity Council** of Oakland and was its long-time executive director as well as



Introducing New NeighborWorks® Network Affiliates

Centro Campesino Farmworker Center

Florida City, Florida

Centro Campesino Farmworker Center has long been an integral part of the community development culture throughout South Florida's vast rural areas. The organization has created strong partnerships with a variety of local agencies serving the farmworker and the broader community. Its work after Hurricane Andrew had significant impact on the rural communities of South Dade County. The organization hosted a tent city and provided and coordinated supplies and health care for farmworker families whose homes were destroyed.

Centro Campesino maintains high production in its rural rehab program and has demonstrated capacity to produce high-quality, affordable homes, both new construction and rehab. Centro Campesino completed and sold 19 single-family homes in 2003, with 25 additional homes under construction at the end of 2003. It also began the development of a neighborhood association in Villa Lago.

Neighborworks® Columbus (GA)

Columbus, Georgia

Beginning in late 1997, a Housing Task Force was formed out of the Columbus Community Vision Process. Recognizing the lack of an organized effort in the affordable housing arena, the task force worked for a year and a half on the task of: "developing a strategy to eliminate substandard housing by the year 2010, and ensure an

adequate supply of affordable housing for Muscogee County." The following recommendation was made in the Task Force's final report: "Establish a public/private corporation to identify existing, and cultivate new funding sources dedicated to the development and redevelopment of affordable housing." The Columbus Housing Initiative was formed in 1998. CHI is a private, nonprofit, community based, housing development organization. It now operates as NeighborWorks® Columbus (GA).

Corporation to Develop Communities of Tampa

Tampa, Florida

The Corporation to Develop Communities of Tampa Inc. (CDC of Tampa Inc.) was incorporated in 1992 for the purpose of alleviating poverty and physical deterioration in Hillsborough County's East Tampa Community. The neighborhood was plagued with dilapidated, overcrowded housing and high rates of and/or poverty, unemployment, teen pregnancy, school dropout/ suspensions, and drug abuse.

To address the needs of the community, CDC of Tampa Inc. has spent a decade providing community and economic development services to East Tampa (target area), bringing \$20 million in public/private ventures to the community. Services and programs provided, include the Career Resource Center, which provides job training and placement services; the Business Center, which assists prospective and current small business owners by providing consulting services, business training, and

being an assistant secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Carter administration, has retired and was honored in May at a Unity Council celebration, "The Legacy of a Legend."

Martinez's most visible community legacy was the improvement of Oakland's Fruitvale district, including beautification of the business district along International Boulevard, development the Las Bougainvilleas Senior Housing Complex, and completion of the first phase of the Fruitvale Transit Village. The Transit Village, described as "realizing a dream" by Martinez at the grand opening in 2003, is a \$100 million mixed-use revitalization project developed alongside the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station

servicing the Fruitvale community.

Citizens Bank of Connecticut has named **Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven** as the recipient of its first-ever Housing Heroes Award. As part of the award, NHS will receive a \$50,000 grant from the Citizens Bank Foundation, and the opportunity to tap into the expertise of Citizens Bank's CEO through the "President to President" program. The Housing Heroes grant program is an extension of the Citizens Housing Bank, a low-interest loan program designed to increase the affordable housing supply in the state.

Pasadena Neighborhood Housing Services in California held its "Cultivating Communities" event for friends and spon-

sors in April at the Pasadena Museum of California Art. Among those honored was PNHS board member Bernadette Kornfeld, recipient of the "Wind Beneath Our Wings" award for her tireless efforts on behalf of the agency over the years. The Cultivating Communities of San Gabriel Valley award went to the All Nations Adventist Church in Monrovia in recognition of its faith-based partnership with PNHS. The founders of the Lincoln Village Task Force and Festival received the Cultivating Communities of Pasadena Award for their role in the revitalization of the Lincoln Avenue Corridor in Northwest Pasadena. ■

microloans; and the Housing Opportunity Center, which provides intensive counseling and educational training to empower potential homebuyers.

CDC of Tampa Inc. has completed and sold 19 homes, with 12 additional homes under construction in 2005. The Youth Center programs include the Youth Opportunity Movement, Men II Boys, and East Tampa Learning Academy. CDC of Tampa Inc. commercial development includes Nehemiah Laundromat, Open Air Market, East Tampa Business Center, and One Stop Capital Center.

Interfaith Housing Alliance

Frederick, Maryland

Founded in 1989, Interfaith Housing Alliance is the largest nonprofit affordable housing developer in the western Maryland region. It has expanded over time to also serve south central Pennsylvania. Its mission is to strengthen families, build communities, and promote human dignity and economic justice by providing decent, affordable housing for those with lower incomes.

Through education, advocacy, and the creation of new jobs, Interfaith Housing fosters economic growth and overcomes the effects of shelter poverty. Interfaith Housing's programs are self-help homeownership, homeownership counseling, revitalization, owner-occupied rehabilitation, multifamily and senior living rentals, and emergency shelters for homeless individuals and victims of domestic abuse.

Mid Central Community Action

Bloomington, Illinois

Mid Central Community Action grew out of a grassroots movement by residents concerned about the effects of poverty, and was incorporated in 1965 as an Economic Opportunity Corporation. It later evolved into a Community Action agency, and now offers a broad range of services to the families of two counties in central Illinois.

Primary housing-related services are down-payment and closing-cost assistance, budget and credit counseling, transitional housing, weatherization of homes, and post-purchase counseling. Utility bills assistance, and emergency assistance to families experiencing crisis are additional program areas. The agency has some experience in single and multifamily construction and rehabilitation, and has new construction projects in the planning stage, as well as a goal to be involved in rehab.

A comprehensive group of services is also provided for victims of domestic violence, including shelter, counseling, therapy, court advocacy, and law enforcement advocacy. Mid Central Community Action also operates an economic development/job creation small business loan program and a seniors program that provides information and referral,

and assistance with applications to various other programs.

Neighbor to Neighbor Inc.

Fort Collins, Colorado

Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) grew out of a grassroots movement in 1970. In a poor neighborhood in northeast Fort Collins, a large family was about to lose their home. Their neighbors joined together to keep this family from becoming homeless. This spirit of giving and compassion led to the founding of N2N. Since then, N2N programs have expanded to meet the growing need for affordable housing and self-sufficiency programs in Larimer County, Colorado, including a HUD-certified comprehensive housing counseling program, an affordable housing office, which currently owns and manages 159 affordable units in Fort Collins and Loveland, and a satellite office for housing counseling in Loveland.

N2N's mission is to empower people and promote housing opportunity through counseling, education, supportive services, community partnerships, and the provision of multifamily affordable housing. N2N fosters positive outcomes and stable housing along all points of the housing continuum, from homelessness through homeownership.

N2N programs strive to aid renters and homeowners in crisis in maintaining their homes; help the homeless find affordable, sustainable housing; assist renters working toward homeownership; advise aging homeowners on the pros and cons of reverse mortgages; and provide low-income households with safe, decent, affordable rental units.

Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership

Slayton, Minnesota

The Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership was incorporated in 1992. The organization provides homebuyer education and counseling, down-payment assistance, post purchase counseling, foreclosure prevention, mortgage loan packaging, multifamily new construction and management, rental rehabilitation, construction management for disaster relief and employer-assisted housing development. In addition, the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership works with communities to access zero percent deferred and loan interest loans to upgrade downtown commercial buildings and residential units contained within the buildings. The organization serves 27 southwest Minnesota counties: Big Stone, Blue Earth, Brown, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Sibley, Swift, Waseca, Watonwan and Yellow Medicine. ■