

Office of Housing

2009 Report of Accomplishments

*building strong, healthy communities by
increasing opportunities for people of all income
levels to live in our city*



pictured from left to right: Santa Teresita del nino Jesus; The Mural, an MFTE Program project; the Khadra family in front of their new Habitat for Humanity home



Ending homelessness and increasing the supply of affordable housing

In 2009, OH awarded funding to help create and preserve 329 affordable housing units. Of those, 151 apartments will provide housing with onsite services for formerly homeless individuals and families with children. Projects funded include: Housing Resources Group's Rose Street Apartments, with 70 units for working individuals and families; LIHI's University Apartments, 62 units of permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals; Compass Center's 79-unit Housing First development in Ballard; and Compass Housing Alliance's Gethsemane redevelopment project, with 50 units for low-income households.



Rendering courtesy SMR architects

All 70 units at the Rose Street Apartments will be affordable to working individuals and families earning up to 60% AMI, about \$35,400 for one and \$45,540 for a three-person household. It is located on Rainier Avenue South, close to transit and services.



Downtown Emergency Service Center's Rainier House, a 50-unit permanent supportive Housing First project for chronically homeless men and women with mental illness, opened in February 2009. Supportive services will help residents to remain housed for the long-term, ending their tenures on the streets and in shelters.

Further, OH provided funding to two projects originally funded with the 1981 Seattle Senior Housing Program administered by Seattle Housing Authority (SHA). Reunion House and Willis House will receive much needed repairs and upgrades to the building exteriors, thereby preserving the long-term affordability and quality of 68 units of valuable senior housing.

Seven developments funded in prior years were completed in 2009, providing new homes to 318 households, 219 of which are formerly homeless individuals and families with children. Completed projects include: Downtown Emergency Service Center's Rainier House; Catholic Housing Services' Santa Teresita del nino Jesus and Frederic Ozanam House; Inter*Im's Samaki Commons; Sea Mar's Cesar Chavez Village; Low Income Housing Institute's McDermott Place; and Seattle Housing Authority's South Shore Court.

Affordable Housing and the Economy

Seattle's rigorous investments in affordable housing create new jobs, keep our neighborhoods vibrant and diverse, and promote sustainable development

In the middle of a recession, our affordable housing efforts are critical to safeguarding Seattle's economy. While much of construction around Seattle and the rest of the country slowed, or in many cases halted, projects with Office of Housing funding kept moving, injecting money into our local economy, offering good-paying construction jobs and increasing our stock of affordable housing.

During 2009, construction continued on nine multifamily projects funded by OH, resulting in over **\$71 million** of construction activity. Two homeownership projects developed on surplus City land transferred to the nonprofit agencies in exchange for affordable housing generated **\$29 million** in construction activity in 2009.

Additionally, our HomeWise Weatherization Program committed **\$3.4 million** toward the weatherization of homes occupied by low-income owners and renters. This money, which comes from state and federal grants, went directly into the Seattle economy via local private contractors who bid competitively on weatherization projects.

Finally, at a time when access to capital for the purchase of homes is severely limited, OH funding leveraged over **\$13.3 million** in mortgages for first-time homebuyers. This helped reduce inventory of unsold and foreclosed homes.



Senator Maria Cantwell, surrounded by construction workers and tenants of nearby Dorothy Day House, holds a press conference at Bakhita Gardens to highlight federal stimulus funding that along with Housing Levy funds allowed construction on the housing to continue despite the recession.

A Renewed Commitment to Our Community



The most impressive housing-related accomplishment in 2009 was the overwhelming approval of the Seattle Housing Levy renewal on the November ballot. Despite the economic downturn, nearly 66 percent of Seattle voters—far more than in any of the previous four levies—agreed to continue supporting affordable housing opportunities for seniors, low- and moderate-wage workers, and formerly homeless individuals and families. The seven-year \$145 million levy will produce or preserve at least 1,850 affordable homes and assist 3,420 households through five programs:

- Rental Production & Preservation – funds construction or rehabilitation of rental housing that serves low- to moderate-income individuals and families.
- Operating & Maintenance Fund – provides a subsidy to housing that serves those with the highest needs and fewest resources — including the elderly, disabled and mentally ill, as well as veterans suffering from physical and/or mental trauma sustained during service.
- Rental Assistance – helps low-income families and individuals at risk of homelessness who need help due to a family crisis such as job loss, illness, divorce or a death in the family.
- Homebuyer Assistance – provides downpayment loans for low- to moderate-income first-time homebuyers.
- Acquisition & Opportunity Loan Fund – provides short-term loans to make strategic purchases of buildings or land.

Undoubtedly, the levy renewal in 2009 was bolstered by the success of the 2002 Seattle Housing Levy, which wrapped up in December 2009. By building and strengthening partnerships amongst other public and private funders, OH pushed the \$86 million levy beyond its goal for rental housing production by nearly 30%.

Expanding housing opportunities for low- to moderate-wage workers throughout the city

The 2008 expansion of the Multifamily Tax Exemption Program from 17 to 39 neighborhoods continued to spur development of workforce housing. Under this program, rental project developers receive a property tax exemption for the residential portion of their multifamily developments if they set aside 20% of the units for low- to moderate-wage workers. In 2009, developers committed to creating 2,031 new apartments in 13 projects, with 511 set aside as affordable.

In 2009, the Commercial Bonus Program generated approximately \$3.7 million in developer contributions for housing affordable to low- to moderate-wage workers in exchange for height or density increases in commercial projects. Some of this funding was awarded to the Gethsemane project (mentioned on previous page), where 25 units will be set aside for those earning up to 30% of area median income, about \$17,700 for an individual, and the remaining units will be for those earning up to 50-60% of area median income, about \$35,400 for an individual. Additionally, this program provided \$675,000 in downpayment assistance on the new Nova Townhomes, 15 two-bedroom units located in the Judkins Park neighborhood affordable to households earning up to 80% of area median income, about \$51,200 a year for a two-person household.

The Nova Townhomes, developed by the Low Income Housing Institute, was constructed on surplus city land and will remain affordable for the long-term through a partnership with Homestead Community Land Trust. OH also provided downpayment assistance for qualified first-time homebuyers. Nearly all of the units sold within the first two months following construction completion.



Pratt Park, built on the site of the former Wonder Bread factory in the Central District, used the Multifamily Tax Exemption Program, setting aside 50 of the 244 units as affordable for working families.





Sustainable housing

In 2009, the Seattle HomeWise Weatherization Program committed \$3.4 million to weatherize 753 Seattle low-income homes. The program also distributed 1,745 compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). Overall, this energy-efficiency effort saved Seattle City Light 1.04 million kWh (enough electricity to power 104 average Seattle households). The total electricity saved by Seattle weatherization reduced the city of Seattle CO2 emissions by an estimated 624 metric tons for 2009 (similar to taking 114 cars off the road). Additionally, the Home Repair Loan Program assisted 17 low-income Seattle homeowners in substantially improving the homes.

Seattle, a leader in green building standards for affordable housing, saw the completion of seven sustainable affordable housing developments in 2009. Two of those projects have incorporated PV (Solar) panels into their design for savings on utilities. Since 2002, the OH's SeaGreen Initiative has 52 sustainably built affordable housing projects completed or in development.



*People gather in July 2009 to celebrate the opening of Inter*Im Community Development Association's Samaki Commons, 40 units that will serve a mix of small and large families, plus some elderly and singles.*

Sustainable elements of the project design include permeable surfaces and paving, low-VOC paints, adhesives and carpets, Energy Star appliances, and maximized natural ventilation.



New stable homeownership opportunities and foreclosure prevention for working people

In 2009, the City helped 70 families purchase their first homes through low-interest loans. It is important to note at a time when the nation is seeing historic increases in foreclosure rates that out of the more than 500 first-time homebuyer loans made since 2003, there have only been two foreclosures. *Why?* Because the City requires homebuyers using the program to undertake financial counseling, ensures that households use good loan products and that they don't buy more than they can afford.



The Nsab family gathers outside the front door of their new home in High Point. The home was built through Habitat for Humanity; the Office of Housing provided a first-time homebuyer downpayment assistance loan.

For households not enrolled in the City's homebuyer programs, we are keeping people in their homes with programs like the Foreclosure Prevention Pilot Program. Since June 2008, our partners the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle and Solid Ground have helped 20 families facing default or foreclosure with stabilization loans paired with counseling. In addition, over 150 families who did not qualify for the program due to income restrictions or their specific financial situation have received financial counseling and other services from the agencies. OH, working with other public, nonprofit and financial institutions held two foreclosure prevention workshops in 2009. More than 400 people attended and approximately 60% of those participants will receive some form of loan modification. OH is also administering the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program, which works to purchase foreclosed homes and return them to homeownership opportunities for first-time low-income homebuyers.

