

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 4

# the CAMPAIGN for AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEWSLETTER

JULY 9, 2007

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.....HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING



**Julie Bornstein**  
*President, The Campaign for Affordable Housing*

The Campaign for Affordable Housing is organizing each edition of its bi-monthly newsletter around a specific theme. Last edition, for example, emphasized innovations in size and design of housing that could bring affordability with no or reduced subsidy. This edition focuses on new achievements in "green" or environ-

mentally creative housing. Why this emphasis on the housing product rather than the housing message by an organization with the mission of public education?

There are several parts in the answer to this question. One very important fact that we've found (as have others who have been involved in public awareness campaigns) is that building coalitions and partnerships with community organizations outside the affordable housing industry is critical to effectively reach a broad audience. Attracting the public to learn the facts of affordable housing usually means framing the message in terms that will gain the attention of people with a variety of interests. The business community may be interested in workforce housing for employees; senior groups may

look for opportunities for affordable senior housing. Environmentalists and those looking for responses to global warming may be interested in conservation techniques being used in the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing. At the very least, environmentalists who have suggested that increased housing production is bad for the environment can learn that that is not so.

In addition, important to the achievement of affordability is the use of higher densities. As he explained in his presentation at the Campaign's *San Diego Forum on Overcoming Regulatory Barriers to Workforce Housing* held in May, Sierra Club official Tim Frank believes that increased densities and affordable housing should be widely supported as a solu-

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## CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

Bringing business, political, faith, housing and other community leaders together to promote an affordable housing initiative is a powerful weapon to have in your anti-NIMBY arsenal. Our September issue will focus on Coalition Building—both the "how to" as well as real world success stories. We encourage you to share your expertise and achievements in this area with our readers by submitting an article on this important topic. The submission deadline is **August 27, 2007**. For more information or to submit articles, please contact us at [tcah@tcah.org](mailto:tcah@tcah.org) or at 323-330-0540.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

tion to global warming. Land use patterns that require low density, single use building construction leading to sprawl development have played a significant role in the creation of green-house gasses.

In addition, an important goal of the Campaign for Affordable Housing and the groups we work with is to attract the attention of media and policy makers to our issues. With both groups, attention is usually paid to the "hot issue" of the day. A current issue with government decision-makers and the media is global warming and human impacts on the environment. Highlighting the positive environmental impacts of innovative affordable housing developments may be the best way to get our "foot in the door" to speak to government officials and interest the media in affordable housing stories.

So, understanding a wide variety of ways to frame the positive affordable housing message to appeal to the public for whom affordable housing may not be a daily concern helps educate a much larger portion of the community—and fulfills the mission of the Campaign for Affordable Housing.

We are fortunate in this issue to have the contributions of a number of experts in making the connection between green building and winning support for affordable housing. James Lyons

of Newport Partners describes the conservation technologies of a demonstration home in Omaha, built under HUD's PATH program: The National Housing Trust shares information about an innovative preservation program in Washington, D.C.; Campaign research assistant Alaine Azcona explores free parking's impact on affordable housing, Sue Reynolds of Community HousingWorks shares a story about their award-winning project and Doug Carpenter of Buffalo's Belmont Shelter Corp. talks about spreading the affordable housing message.

We know that safe, decent and affordable housing is the foundation for addressing so many of the critical issues facing our communities, states and the nation. It is rewarding to be connected with the important efforts to share current, accurate and important information about this very fundamental necessity. If you enjoy or are stimulated by this edition of the newsletter, I hope you will also consider helping the Campaign for Affordable Housing with its fundamental needs as well. As a reminder, the Annual Sustaining Fund provides the majority of resources to keep the work of the Campaign going. Please help sustain this effort by using the donation form at the end of this newsletter or making a donation online to become a supporter of the Campaign for Affordable Housing. ■

## NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Although the housing market has slowed considerably from its peak, and concern about the rise in foreclosures occupies the agenda of lenders and policy makers around the country, the lack of a sufficient supply of affordable housing—both for sale and rent—is still a significant challenge around the country.

**California**—Average home prices have not declined around the state and the impact of a lack of affordable housing is being felt in a number of significant ways. A recent study by the Public Policy Institute of California found that an unprecedented exodus of college educated workers threatens the State's long-term economic vitality. The reason: California has the nation's most expensive housing. Since it is estimated that by 2025, two in every five jobs will require a college degree, California policy makers must pay attention to increasing the supply of housing affordable to recent college grads to stem the brain drain.

Elsewhere in California, Community Hospital on the Monterey Peninsula found that a high salary was not enough to attract personnel needed to provide medical services. Housing assistance programs for nurses and physicians are deemed necessary to attract health care professionals to this high-cost area.

**Pennsylvania**—Employers in the Pocono Mountains region of Pennsylvania are seeing the need to become involved in the creation and identification of affordable housing opportunities in order to recruit and retain critical workers. Home prices in Monroe County have grown by 42 % over the last seven years while wages have risen only 4% in the same period. The local police chief cited his recruiting problems in hiring new officers and the president of the Chamber of Commerce is concerned that new employers will not locate in the area because of high housing costs. The Pocono Mountains Association of Realtors and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency discussed the creation of an Employer Assisted Housing program as a method for the business community and major employers to bring housing affordability to their area.

**Rhode Island**—Housing Works RI held an innovative and effective press event in mid-June. Meeting the press at a truck rental lot in Pawtucket, they used the creation of a fictional home-buying couple to compare the cost and opportunities in their state with the opportunities in other states around the region and throughout the nation. They emphasized the gap between wages in home prices for common occupations in Rhode Island to underscore the need for more affordable housing. ■

## SUSTAINABILITY RULES THE PATH CONCEPT HOME OMAHA

By James Lyons P.E.  
Newport Partners LLC

*(Newport Partners provided project management for the HUD PATH Concept Home)*

As the debate on how to best address the impact of global warming continues across America, one thing is for certain—we in the housing industry need to consider the future of the environment and how we impact

foot vernacular house located in a dynamic urban Omaha neighborhood, combines over 60 innovative products and systems with traditional design elements to create a vision for the future of housing.

Built to serve as a national model of innovative sustainability, the Concept Home has been certified for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for

affordable home,” said HUD Assistant Secretary Darlene F. Williams. “June is National Homeownership Month and we are excited to showcase a home that is affordable to purchase, maintain and renovate as families and their needs change over time.” The home boasts many sustainable features including the building envelope system and insulation, mechanical systems, radon

sustainability in housing,” notes Scott Webb of the New York Wall Company.

Another cutting edge product featured in the Concept Home is BioBased Insulation which is comprised of annually renewable U.S. grown soybeans. BioBased’s foam insulation expands to 100 times after being sprayed into walls, sealing gaps in the building shell that would otherwise rob the home of energy. This creates an efficient and comfortable indoor environment.

Hansgrohe’s grey water system, Pontos AquaCycle, purifies shower and drinking water to produce clean water to be used for operating washing machines, flushing toilets and watering gardens. Their filtration and UV-based treatment process results in a reliable

source of non-potable water without the use of chemicals - - so water entering the Concept Home will often be used twice - not just once. This process of reducing water usage and waste should be touted as a model of responsible building and emulated nationwide.

The home’s cool metal roof, made available by Follansbee Roofing and the Metal Roofing Alliance, gives both long-term durability—an amazing 75-100 years—and maximum energy performance through its pre-painted solar reflective color that reduces heat and via its special zinc/tin alloy that provides enhanced corrosion resistance.



The completed PATH Concept Home Omaha

it in our everyday work. Sustainable and smart housing technologies are constantly being developed and refined. These technologies support the nation’s building industry by making it easier to employ environmentally-friendly building practices and create housing that also considers the long-term impact of a building.

HUD’s PATH Concept Home Omaha, debuted in a ribbon cutting ceremony and open house on June 6, carefully considered the environmental impact of its design, materials and operation of the home before construction began last fall.

The home, a 2,000 square

Homes, *Environments For Living*®, ENERGY STAR™ and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Green Building Guidelines. As evidenced by these certifications, “green building” in the Concept Home means enhanced energy efficiency, water efficiency, and comfort/IAQ, better resource utilization, sustainable materials, and environmentally responsible development practices.

“With the PATH Concept Home, HUD has created a blueprint for the future of the American Dream by using innovative housing technologies that support our goals of sustainability, efficiency and flexibility in an

mitigation, water conservation and the use of sustainable materials down to the linseed-oil based flooring, low-VOC paints and drought-tolerant grass.

One creative solution for long-term sustainability can be seen in the New York Wall Company, working with Georgia Pacific’s Industrial Wood Products group, to create a moveable wall system in the house that can be easily moved to create different spaces.

“Providing families the ability to easily shape their living environment without moving or expensive remodeling, as their needs change over time, is the ultimate in

## SUSTAINABILITY RULES THE PATH CONCEPT HOME OMAHA (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

Innovative building processes, not just products, also make the Concept Home sustainable. Prefabrication, or the process of pre-building building components off-site in a factory setting, was used extensively in the project to construct the basement foundation, all the walls and floors, and even the window trim. Prefabrication requires a little more upfront planning, but in return offers big benefits:

- Tremendous reductions in construction waste—even accounting for waste in the factory, which is much lower.
- Faster on-site construction times (e.g., with floor panels it took less than an hour to construct an entire floor for the house).
- Higher levels of quality, because components are constructed in controlled conditions designed with worker safety and quality in mind.

These benefits all support sustainability, as well as the bottom line because costs are lower for materials, project financing and warranty callbacks, respectively.

These products are just a few of the diverse family of innovative systems which have been showcased in the PATH Concept Home and serve to underscore how technology can help the housing industry advance. You can learn about all of the products and systems

used in the home by visiting [www.pathnet.org/concepthome](http://www.pathnet.org/concepthome) for an interactive tour.

The PATH program—the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing—is a public private partnership between the U.S. government and America’s housing industry that works together to advance the use of technology in the housing infrastructure throughout the country.

HUD’s next PATH Concept Home will be built in Charleston, South Carolina. Concept Home Charleston will continue to demonstrate construction efficiency, flexibility and sustainability while focusing on durability and the ability to withstand everything nature has to offer—like high winds from hurricanes, possible flooding, termites, and a climate with year-round humidity that can lead to moisture and mold problems. All of these challenges make it the perfect spot for the next Concept Home. For more information on Concept Home Charleston, please contact Newport Partners at 301-889-0017.

For more information on the PATH Concept Home including plans, four narrated videos documenting key technologies used in the construction process, an interactive tour of the home, a description of the innovative products and systems utilized, and the builder blog, please visit [www.pathnet.org/concepthome](http://www.pathnet.org/concepthome). ■

### Features of the PATH Concept Home Omaha



Workers install a moveable wall system in the house that can be easily moved to create different spaces. New York Wall Company worked with Georgia Pacific to design this innovative system.

The minimal construction waste that remained after framing nearly the entire house with prefabricated systems.



Advancements in building envelope construction can be seen through the "truth window" in the great room, which provides a cut away through the dry-wall, insulation, wood framing, weather barrier, and siding insulation, and ends at the Autumn Red siding.

## ENERGY-EFFICIENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING SEEN AS PIONEERING PROJECT

Reprinted from  
The San Diego  
Union-Tribune  
June 2, 2007

By Lisa Petrillo

Edited for the Campaign's  
Newsletter by  
Sue Reynolds, President,  
Community HousingWorks

POWAY—For Abby Indiongco-Magtoto, what's not to like about her new apartment where she's saving both money and the planet? She saves on rent: Leases run, on average, 40 percent below market at Solara, the city of Poway's newest affordable-housing complex in the heart of the town of 50,000 people in California's high-cost San Diego County.

She saves on utility bills: There aren't any – not for Indiongco-Magtoto or any other Solara tenant. That's such a deal that even her 8-year-old son Jacob gets it. As the second-grader explained: "It's solar-powered, so the lights are free."

In Solara, nonprofit developer Community HousingWorks has built an environmentally pioneering low-income apartment complex that basically powers itself. Experts call it the first of its kind in the state, and possibly the nation: a green-built, government-financed, affordable-housing complex that's virtually climate neutral, constructed with minimum pollution and maximum energy efficiency.

Even the landscaping is edible; Solara's grounds include



sage and rosemary and lemon trees.

"It's really an innovative project. It serves as a living, breathing program to serve as a model," said Adam Gottlieb of the California Energy Commission. "Not only are they building smart and fighting climate change, but they are reducing greenhouse gases for the rest of us."

The energy commission subsidized the \$18.5 million Solara complex to help create a working example for developers in the public and private sectors on how to build cheap and green.

What Krissy Toft of Poway's Redevelopment Agency likes about the 56-unit Solara, which gets its official ribbon-cutting June 5<sup>th</sup>, is that they've created a lasting resource that writes the book on environmental public policy.

"We're setting the bar. I don't see us stopping this and going in another direction after what we'd gained," Toft said. She expects the city of 50,000 residents to follow the green wave in future public housing projects, six of which are in the pipeline.

What Jacob Magtoto, who lives in Solara, likes is that when he needed a Jedi light saber to join the "Star Wars" battles with his new friends in their new complex, he and his mother could simply walk to the store to buy one. "You have wiggle room in your budget here," said Indiongco-Magtoto, membership services director for the local chamber of commerce.

Her eyes gleam with the possibilities imagined with what she'll be saving from not paying an estimated \$1,200 per year in utilities and on gas. Because of Solara's central location, she and her son will be able to

walk to stores, movies, the market, the pool, the parks and the library.

During a recent after-school light-saber duel on Solara's colorful grounds, Jacob and his new neighbor, Jeffrey Lopez, 8, paused to talk about what makes their place special. "My house is really cool, because the sun does all the work," Jeffrey said.

Their youthful grasp of the politics of ecology drew proud smiles from Mary Jane Jagodzinski and Anne Wilson of Community HousingWorks.

Jagodzinski and Wilson led the team for the San Diego-based nonprofit that developed this complex and now manage it, complete with educational orientation programs for all new residents, children included, about the whys and hows of sustainable building.

## ENERGY-EFFICIENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING SEEN AS PIONEERING PROJECT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

### It wasn't easy being green.

When planning began on the Solara project five years ago on 2 1/2 acres on Community Road near Poway Road, the only direction from city officials was to make it save money through energy efficiency. —but also do it without making the place look like a science experiment.

"We found there was nothing out there like this. There was no road map, no book. We were going to have to

figure it out ourselves," said Wilson, director of housing and real estate development.

Only 2 percent of affordable-housing developers integrate renewable energy features into their projects, according to the Energy Commission. Yet utility bills can be the crushing blow for some people living on the edge financially.

Those involved with developing Solara say they wanted to achieve the important balance of providing solidly built low-cost housing to help their tenants, while at the same time making that housing ecologically friendly.

While Community Housing owns and manages 25 affordable-housing complexes

countywide where they strive to save energy costs, Wilson said achieving climate neutrality was beyond its expertise. It hired as consultants Global Green USA, a Santa Monica-based nonprofit that combats global warming and nuclear proliferation. Global Green spokesman Ted Bardacke said the organization helped find ways to make Poway's

in high-rent San Diego County, where some 13 percent of workers earn less than \$20,000 per year, while the median home price tops \$550,000. There are 800 families on Solara's waiting list.

Residents must meet income requirements, based on formulas factoring in median-area incomes and

housing costs. A typical family of four earning less than \$42,000 per year would qualify. Rent runs from \$388 to \$1,075 per month in the

complex of standard-sized apartments, with one-, two- and three-bedroom units that feature built-in-shelves and extra closets.

### The green is what's unseen.

The shade structures for the carports hold the solar panels that convert the sun's rays into electricity. Also, the architectural firm Rodriguez Associates shifted the buildings to take advantage of natural breezes and designed window openings to offer cooling cross-ventilation. Double-paned windows restrict temperature loss. Roofs use heat-reflecting materials; attics and walls are filled with non-toxic, formaldehyde-free insulation. There are energy-saving, tankless water heaters and dual-flush toilets. ■

#### THE SOLARA COMPLEX 2007 CHARLES L. EDSON AWARD WINNER METROPOLITAN/URBAN HOUSING CATEGORY

*The Charles L. Edson Award is named after the Campaign for Affordable Housing's former Chairman and current Board Member, Charles Edson.*

*These awards are presented to the most outstanding Low Income Housing Tax Credit (Housing Credit) developments in several distinct categories.*

*For more information, visit [www.taxcreditcoalition.org/awards](http://www.taxcreditcoalition.org/awards).*

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## GREEN RENOVATIONS PRESERVE DC AFFORDABLE HOUSING

“Preserving housing like Galen Terrace is the essential first step in solving Washington, D.C.’s housing dilemma,” said Michael Bodaken, president of the National Housing Trust and advisory board member of the Campaign for Affordable Housing. “By safeguarding Galen Terrace, we have improved the well-being of the families and seniors who call it home and have reinvested in and strengthened the community.”

Significant improvements have been made to the property including new kitchen and bathroom fixtures, roof, painting, carpeting, windows, HVAC system and more. Many security improvements were also made including better lighting, a new secure key card building entry system and new surveillance cameras. A state-of-the-art community center was also added on site and will provide after-school programming for youth and computer and

financial literacy classes for all residents.

The renovations incorporated “green” features that have made the building more energy efficient and healthier for residents.



Ribbon cutting ceremony at Galen Terrace.

Galen Terrace is now the first rehabilitated property in D.C. to meet all of the green criteria under the Enterprise Green Communities Initiative.

Environmentally friendly features include low volatile organic compound paints, primers, sealants, and adhesives, Energy Star appli-

ances and lighting, solar reflective roofing material, double-paned windows, and water barrels to collect and reuse rain water.

“The Green Communities Initiative encourages developers to build efficient, sustainable and healthy homes for families with low incomes,” says David Bowers, Washington, D.C. office director for

Enterprise Community Development Partners, Inc. “We understand that building green affordable housing is environmentally sound; but it also offers cost saving benefits for the residents and is economical for the developers. Enterprise was pleased to provide a \$50,000 grant to help with integrating green building

strategies into the renovations at Galen Terrace.”

Other primary sources of funding for the renovations included tax-exempt bonds and Low Income Housing Tax Credits provided by the D.C. Housing Finance Agency, and CDBG funds provided by the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development. MMA Financial purchased the bonds in the amount of \$5.6 million and Enterprise Community Investments purchased the tax credits in the amount of \$4.6 million.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development agreed to a long-term Section 8 contract that will ensure rents remain affordable to low income families and seniors for twenty years.

View news coverage of the Galen Terrace complex by WRC-TV4, an NBC affiliate in DC, on the Internet at [video.nbc4.com/player/?id=122269](http://video.nbc4.com/player/?id=122269).

### RECOMMENDED VIEWING

#### *Designing A Great Neighborhood: Behind the Scenes at Holiday*

In *Designing A Great Neighborhood*, director David Wann follows the progress of the Wild Sage Cohousing Community project, where future residents participate in the design of their own community, consisting of 330 homes on the site of the former Holiday Drive-In Theater in Boulder, Colorado, where affordability and sustainability are primary goals. The stated architectural goal at the Wild Sage site in Boulder is a “zero emissions” neighborhood in which solar energy, energy efficiency and changes in behavior eliminate the need for fossil fuels.

The film is 54 minutes. VHS & DVD versions are available for rent or purchase. There is also a free, downloadable study guide, as well as a list of key contacts for the project.

For more information go to [www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/dagn.html](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/dagn.html).

(To the right is a rendering of Studio Mews, a work/live area at Wild Sage.)



## WHO SAYS “IT’S NOT EASY BEING GREEN?” NOT TIM FRANK!

By *Alaine K. Azcona*

The idea that environmentalists might be allies of affordable housing may come as a surprise to many people. After all, aren't environmentalists the first people to oppose new housing development, affordable or not? The Campaign for Affordable Housing has discovered that this is a stereotype, no less misleading and inaccurate as the stereotypes that persist about the people who live in affordable housing.

Just as the Campaign is dedicated to challenging stereotypes about affordable housing, Tim Frank is dedicated to challenging stereotypes about environmentalists, through his unwavering commitment to affordable housing as a indispensable component of a greener and more sustainable future and combating global warming. Frank has proven to be an invaluable ally to the Campaign's mission, as a featured speaker at our last two annual conferences, and, more recently, at the San Diego Forum on Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Workforce Hous-

ing in May.

As a senior policy advisor to the Sierra Club's Campaign to Build Healthy Communities, Tim Frank travels the country to talk about the need for more affordable housing in all communities, and he articulates how affordable housing is an indispensable component of smart growth. For example, Frank spoke passionately about the need for more affordable housing in his testimony before California's Little Hoover Commission, an independent state oversight agency with the mission to promote efficiency, economy and improved service. In his testimony, Frank articulated the connection between affordable housing and sustainable growth, as well as an increased quality of life for everyone:

*“Decent, safe affordable housing is a necessity of life. Without affordable housing, families and communities are destabilized, and land use and commute patterns are skewed. Addressing this critical problem is important to environmentalists because building more, and*

*more fairly distributing, affordable housing will do more to protect open space and air quality than many measures aimed explicitly at achieving those ends.*

*“Affordable housing protects open space by improving the density of our housing stock. Since housing occupies in the neighborhood of ¾ of our urban land, improving residential density is one of the most important steps we can take to protect urban space. Density also helps make transit more practical and thereby helps reduce pollution.*

*“Better distribution of affordable housing also helps reduce pollution by reducing trip demand. The reason for this is that market-rate housing is typically extremely segregated by cost, and consequently forces residents to make location decisions based on their wallet rather than on what will minimize their travel demands. Better distributing affordable housing can lead to less driving, and hence less demand on expensive infrastructure. We also appreciate that better distrib-*

*uting affordable housing brings substantial social benefits.”*

Frank has also been a leading advocate for affordable housing within the Sierra Club and the environmental movement at large, in his role as the chair of the Challenge to Sprawl Campaign Committee. In addressing leaders of the Sierra Club, Frank took NIMBY forces head-on in acknowledging the “need for wealthier communities to accept their fair share of affordable housing.” For Frank, environmental justice and social justice are inseparable:

*“The common practice of excluding affordable housing puts considerable strain on those who work in wealthier areas but have to commute from areas of concentrated poverty. For a variety of reasons, exclusionary practices put a strain on the environment too (more congestion, loss of open space...) Over the past 50 years, sprawl has undermined social justice just as much as it has degraded the environment.”*

As part of our ongoing collaboration with Tim Frank, the Campaign for Affordable Housing is currently planning to co-author a white paper with Frank about the connection between affordable housing and global warming. We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions in this endeavor. Please feel free to contact Tim Frank directly at [tim-frank@msn.com](mailto:tim-frank@msn.com) or Alaine Azcona at [alaineazcona@tcah.org](mailto:alaineazcona@tcah.org). ■



*Tim Frank has served as an advocate and public affairs consultant for more than 17 years. He has extensive experience in land use policy development and advocacy and has represented clients on the local, state and national level. He has served as a lobbyist for Sierra Club California on land use issues, and currently serves as the Senior Policy Advisor to the Sierra Club's national Campaign to Build Healthy Communities. Tim also serves as Secretary/Treasurer on the board of Good Jobs First, a DC based think tank devoted to economic development reform and smart growth.*

**MESSAGING THE MESSAGE AND BRINGING IT HOME**

By Doug Carpenter  
Communications Manager  
Belmont Shelter Corp.  
Buffalo, New York

There's a question Oprah Winfrey likes to ask people when she interviews them. "What do you know for sure?" On the face of it, you'd think it would be fairly easy to answer—unless, of course, the topic of discussion happens to be affordable housing. You'd be amazed how much trouble a lot of people seem to have with that. Or maybe you wouldn't.

If you've been working in the field for any length of time, I'm sure you already appreciate what a "hot button" issue affordable housing can be. Even in what would appear to be very enlightened communities,

it's unsettling how often you can still encounter pockets of NIMBYism.

But whether you're prepared for or surprised by the public's less-than-enthusiastic response, changing people's minds remains both the toughest and the most important challenge we face. Unfortunately, even in a world with unprecedented, light speed access to infor-

mation, far too many people's views on far too many things seem to be shaped less by what they know than what they *don't* know.

A lot of people, for example, are quite sure they know what affordable housing is and who affordable housing is for. The fact that what they *think* they know is

ing, is in invaluable tool for dispelling the 5 most common misconceptions about affordable housing: that it's ugly, produces more traffic, increases crime, overburdens schools and community infrastructure, and lowers property values.

Making it even more useful is the fact that the presentation is easily customizable to incorporate area-specific information at points where it does things

From 100-unit senior residential complexes in ring area suburbs to new 3- and 4-bedroom single-family homes revitalizing Buffalo's urban neighborhoods, pictures like these don't even have to be worth a thousand words as long as they communicate these six: "Affordable housing is a good thing."

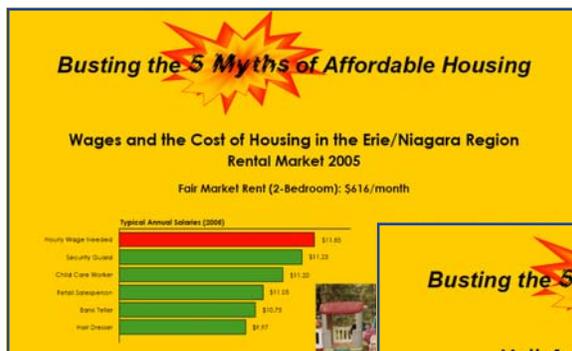
Sometimes, though, the most powerful tool can be just that—words.

Last fall, when I returned from the Campaign's excellent conference in Houston on effective affordable housing communication strategies, I genuinely felt it had been time well spent. I didn't fully appreciate just how well un-

til I was reminded of how powerful the right words spoken at the right time can be.

Specifically, it was a message that I saw being invoked in affordable housing advocacy campaigns across the country that is as simple as it is true. "We need the people who need affordable housing." It struck me, and it stuck with me.

Shortly after my return, our organization began dealing



**Busting the 5 Myths of Affordable Housing**

Myth 1: Affordable housing is ugly.

**THE TRUTH:**

Two images of modern, attractive houses are shown side-by-side.

wrong, however, doesn't stop them from being against it. And where their understanding ends is where our job starts.

Part of mounting a successful public education campaign is making the most of the resources available. For instance, the Campaign for Affordable Housing's excellent PowerPoint, *Busting the 5 Myths of Affordable Hous-*

**Busting the 5 Myths of Affordable Housing**

Myth 1: Affordable housing is ugly.

**THE TRUTH:**

Two images are shown: an aerial view of a large, modern apartment complex and a sign for Southwind Landing Apartments.

like compare typical professionals' salaries with what it really costs to afford median-priced homes and fair market rents in your community.

Another simple-but-effective adaptation that greatly enhances its relevance is purely visual in nature. We find that the presentation resonates with audiences even more powerfully when images of the kind of housing we've built throughout our own community are added.

## IS FREE PARKING AT THE EXPENSE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

By *Alaine K. Azcona*

Is “free parking” really free? Not at all, especially when it comes to affordable housing, according to Donald Shoup, Professor of Urban Planning at UCLA and author of the book *The High Cost of Free Parking* (APA Planners Press, 2005). Shoup’s research illustrates how excessive parking requirements drive up the cost of housing construction by an estimated \$20,000 to \$30,000 per unit, while also contributing to environmental damage by encouraging auto-dependence and dedicating vast quantities of land for parking lots that are often empty. The result of such misguided policies can be seen in communities throughout the country—an abundance of free parking and a shortage of affordable housing.

Not surprisingly, one-size-fits-all parking requirements are particularly onerous for developers of affordable housing, and such requirements make little sense in light of the fact that lower-income households have fewer vehicles than higher-income households, according to U.S. Census data. Additionally, parking require-

ments based on the number of rooms or bedrooms per unit also discourage developers from building larger units, thus contributing to the shortage of rental units appropriate for larger families.

In city centers, high parking requirements can be a major obstacle to infill development, despite the positive role that infill development can play in neighborhood revitalization, as well as providing affordable housing near job centers and public transit. Nevertheless, in order to comply with inflexible parking requirements, infill developers must either purchase additional land or reduce the number of total units in order to build parking.

In recognition of this problem, many cities are adopting flexible parking requirements, which may vary depending on the type and location of a proposed development. A report by the Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing (SCANPH), “Parking Requirements Guide for Affordable Housing Developers,” (available online at [www.cacities.org/resource\\_files/24076.ParkingGuide.pdf](http://www.cacities.org/resource_files/24076.ParkingGuide.pdf)) provides an excellent

overview of how cities can offer developers significant savings by employing more realistic approaches to estimating demand for parking. For example, Los Angeles and San Diego have lowered their per-unit requirements for affordable housing and developments located near mass transit. San Francisco offers significantly reduced parking requirements in downtown areas with easy access to public transit—from one space per unit to one space for every four units, as well as a reduction for housing for seniors or disabled persons.

The SCANPH report illustrates that the impact of more flexible parking requirements can be significant. For example, a 100-unit affordable housing development in Los Angeles will need to have 125 parking spaces, whereas the same development in Anaheim, which does not have flexible parking requirements, will need 238 spaces. In addition to lowering construction costs, flexible parking requirements provide an incentive to build near existing mass transit routes—thus giving developers and residents an attractive, affordable alternative to continued sprawl.

## MASSAGING THE MESSAGE AND BRINGING IT HOME (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

with a particularly energetic surge of NIMBYism surrounding the construction of 64 units of affordable family housing in a growing suburban community.

Although that kind of controversy—and the subsequent media exposure it can generate—can potentially be negative, we chose to view this situation as an opportunity, in which we had the attention of the community on a very important issue.

And in every interview and public comment in which they were included, those words apparently rang true, because they were consistently quoted. “We need the people who need affordable housing.”

By massaging that message and bringing it home, we continue moving closer to fulfilling a very important goal. Because everyone deserves a decent, affordable place to live.

That’s one thing I know for sure. ■

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