

2010 NCSHA ANNUAL AWARDS FOR PROGRAM EXCELLENCE

Category and Subcategory:
Special Achievement

OVERVIEW

Newark Genesis Apartments is the consummate example of a public/private partnership in which the obstacles of urban redevelopment were overcome, propelled by overwhelming community support and locally-based community revitalization efforts. Newark Genesis Apartments cuts across traditional program lines, and successfully integrates affordable family housing with residential and supportive services. Located in Newark, New Jersey, this innovative project is the first residential facility in New Jersey to provide permanent housing for an in-house post-acute care AIDS facility.

SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON A GEOGRAPHIC AREA

Although many urban centers across the country are struggling, the City of Newark, located just across the Hudson River from Manhattan, is experiencing a rebirth. Commonly referred to as Brick City, Newark is one of the fastest growing cities in the Northeast and is home to some of the nation's largest transportation super-structures, including an international airport, major rail connections and highway intersections, and the busiest seaport on the East Coast. The City continues to see signs of revival. Newark is home to six major colleges and universities that are expanding their presence. Production of affordable housing has doubled, businesses are returning, and crime is going down.

Leading the neighborhood revitalization effort for Newark's North Ward neighborhood is the Newark Genesis project. The project serves as a connection to the local Raphael Hernandez Elementary School, police precinct, and other residential services. Development of the facility required acquisition of only four properties, of which three were vacant and one was owned by an individual seeking to sell his property. Although land assembly for this project was not as complex as is often the case, other challenges included those typical for urban redevelopment, such as construction noise and debris. Newark Genesis was able to successfully surmount these challenges and is now the pride of the community.

RESPONDS TO AN IMPORTANT STATE NEED

The project involves the new construction of 51 affordable housing units, 15 of which are dedicated as permanent supportive housing for residents living with HIV/AIDS. Newark Genesis is proud to serve as the first residential facility in New Jersey to provide permanent housing for an in-house post-acute care AIDS facility. There are 31 one-bedroom units, 16 two-bedroom units, and 4 three-bedroom units. All of the residential units provide

affordable rental housing for low-income families earning up to 50 percent of area median income.

The property, also known as JBJ Soul Homes, opened its doors in December 2009 and was financed by a variety of public/private partnerships, most prominently, the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation (formerly the Philadelphia Soul Charitable Foundation), a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing about positive change and helping those in need, “one soul at a time.” The Soul Foundation seeks to support projects that incorporate the organization’s guiding principles, including a housing component, support services that enable residents to attain homeownership or transition into independent living, a green component, and a volunteer component or mentoring opportunities that encourage residents to become involved and invested in their community.

The developer, HELP Development Corporation, a 501(c) 3 non-profit owned by Help USA, Inc. (Housing Enterprise for the Less Privileged), has grown to become one of the largest builders and operators of service-enriched transitional and low-income permanent housing in the nation. HELP was founded in 1986 by Andrew Cuomo, former Chairman of the New York City Homelessness Commission and current New York State Attorney General. Over the past nearly 25 years, HELP USA’s comprehensive approach to homelessness and community needs, addressing not just housing, but also access to health care and employment, have continued to make HELP USA a model for offering a continuum of care and much needed services. Newark Genesis was the perfect fit as the missions of the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation and the developer, HELP USA, are closely aligned.

Residents enjoy access to a wide array of cutting-edge on-site social services provided by Broadway House, a post-acute care AIDS facility headquartered a few blocks away in Newark’s North Ward. Broadway House is an affiliate of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), which is a nationally recognized university of the health sciences and a vital resource to all residents of New Jersey. The proximity and seamless integration between HELP USA and the Broadway House facilitate clients’ successful return to independent living. The staff housed at Newark Genesis includes a full-time caseworker, part-time substance abuse counselor, part-time clinical counselor, part-time mental health counselor and an on-call crisis response that is available 24 hours a day/seven days a week. The service staff works with each client individually to develop and implement a customized plan that fosters independence and assists the client with maintaining permanent housing.

PROVIDES BENEFITS THAT OUTWEIGH COSTS

The Newark Genesis property has provided more than a home and services for residents of the building; it has brought a much needed investment of services for the community as well. Many of the services provided by HELP and Broadway House not only meet the needs of the Newark Genesis residents, but also residents of Newark’s greater North Ward. These services include case management, family stabilization, health and wellness programs, substance abuse counseling, clinical and mental health counseling, and a job development training program. HELP’s Mentoring USA program provides one-on-one on-site mentoring

for city children including a specialized course in graphic art and design. All of the programs are offered in Newark Genesis's 2,500 square-foot community center.

The Newark Genesis project includes sophisticated "green" energy efficiency amenities that help to keep utility bills low and have a beneficial impact on the environment. Newark Genesis exceeds the standards of two green building programs that are part of New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency's (NJHMFA) federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) green initiative. These programs include the "Energy Star" program, a requirement for many NJHMFA-funded developments, and the State's "Green Future" program. Green technologies incorporated into the structure include a geothermal heating system, a green roof, low-VOC carpets and paint, and Energy Star compliant systems and appliances. By incorporating these features into the construction, the sustainability of the building is ensured for years to come.

The financing structure for the development of Newark Genesis stems from multiple funding sources, including the support of local and private entities. LIHTCs generated more than \$7 million in private equity. State funding in the amount of \$4.7 million includes \$1 million in a first mortgage from NJHMFA, \$1.5 million in a second mortgage from the Special Needs Housing Trust Fund administered by NJHMFA, and \$2.2 million from the NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Neighborhood Preservation Balanced Housing Fund. Additionally, the City of Newark provided HOME Funds in the amount of \$1.4 million. \$588,000 was provided by the Federal Home Loan Bank's Affordable Housing Program, and \$1.4 million of gap financing was made available from HUD's Home Investment Partnership Program. Private investments include \$1 million from both, the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation and HELP USA. Funding for the social services is provided by Medicaid, the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services Division of HIV/AIDS Services, the Ryan White Title I program, the Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids (HOPWA) program, and special grant funding from the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation.

ACHIEVE INTENDED RESULTS

Newark Genesis Apartments is truly achieving the mission of the community and organizations vested in the project by providing affordable housing and essential support services, incorporating green technology, and helping residents to become more personally invested locally. In a March/April 2009 article of *MultiHousing Professional*, Jon Bon Jovi, who has brought with his star power, so much light and life to this project, quoted the ancient proverb when asked about this development, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." This philosophy guided the scope of this project from the beginning. It is evident that the construction of this facility truly achieves the community vision by integrating affordable housing with social services and by connecting the residents with each other, their community, and a continuum of care. In June 2010, Newark Genesis received honorable mention by the Charles L. Edson Tax Credit Excellence Award competition. Further, Newark Genesis is worthy of recognition of the NCSHA 2010 Special Achievement Award for its contribution to holistic neighborhood revitalization and for its sustainable investment in Newark's future.