

# Paying It Forward: Developer Tips for Success

## **Alabama Housing Finance Authority**

Rental Housing: Encouraging New Construction and  
Promoting Preservation

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Entry Title: Paying It Forward: Developer Tips for Success

Category/Subcategory: Rental Housing/Encouraging New Production (NEW)

Beginner and veteran developers alike know that the affordable housing industry can be difficult to navigate, with its own set of specialized terms, regulations, and limitations. Creating safe, decent, and attractive rental housing is a long-term commitment that requires very distinct capabilities and expertise. There are many moving parts involved, including, but not limited to, building partnerships with experienced affordable housing professionals, and utilizing intricate financing structures that have to be tailored and fine-tuned on an individual project basis in order to be successful.

AHFA has identified the need to strengthen and prepare the capacity of future developers in this complex industry so that they, along with their team members, can have all the skills necessary right from the starting line. We have begun to address these needs by creating a collection of interviews to highlight the particular challenges faced by individuals and organizations new to the affordable rental housing arena.

Called “Developer Tips for Success,” the series of videos and written interviews focuses on general aspects of rental housing development by integrating experienced developers’ and other affordable housing professionals’ advice, cautionary tales, and encouragement for newcomers. By introducing themselves to up and coming developers, these seasoned professionals can both “pay it forward” and promote themselves as a resource to the next generation.

We originally began with written interviews published on our website. Because of the positive reception of these early pieces, we have launched a new effort this year to record video interviews to make the content more accessible. The current video library is featured on our website and YouTube. Each new addition is highlighted in bimonthly newsletters to the development community and on our social media channels.

We visit developers either in their offices, at industry events, or on project sites. We introduce them and ask them to share their job titles and years of housing experience. We record their responses to questions tailored to their roles, including, “What inspired you to participate in developing affordable housing?” “What are the key challenges or barriers to participating in this industry?” and “What tips would you give others who might be interested in a career in affordable housing development?”

To our knowledge, this effort is the first of its kind among state HFAs. It could be easily replicated by individual states seeking to shore up their capacity-building efforts in rental housing development communities. After interviews are conducted, videos are produced entirely in-house by existing staff at minimal expense. Because of this project’s cost-effectiveness, lasting value, and positive reception, we plan to expand this undertaking by

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adding more segments and interviews showing different facets of the housing development experience.

Participant feedback so far has been extremely positive. These videos and related newsletter articles and social media posts have reached a combined audience of nearly 3,300 individuals. This year we are privileged to witness the third “generation” of this successful initiative: One of our early interviews with a developer in 2022 inspired a second developer to create the innovative housing featured in one of our videos this year. That video has encouraged a third developer to follow the second developer’s model, and we expect to receive their application later this month. This trio of successful and pending applications came to fruition because of the willingness of the development teams to share their expertise and serve as a resource for one another.

Every developer and affordable housing lender we have approached has been enthusiastic about being interviewed. They enjoy donating their time and sharing their knowledge since it gives them a chance to position themselves as leaders in the field, to showcase their work, and to make further contacts in the industry.

Strong leadership includes paving the way for those who follow. The developers we work with to produce the videos feel like their voices are heard. It is recognition of their expertise, validation of their career path, and acknowledgment of their contributions.

We want to enable all members of the development team to come to the table better prepared, with a greater understanding of the challenges, potential risks, and rewards ahead. “Developer Tips for Success” is an innovative, low-cost, replicable and lasting way to achieve that goal and to support developers’ capacity toward the creation of affordable rental housing in our state for years to come.

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Below are direct links to the most recent Developer Tips segments on AHFA.com:

[Developer Tips for Success | Neighborhood Concepts | Alabama Housing Finance Authority](#)



[Developer Tips for Success: Paula Rhodes | Alabama Housing Finance Authority](#)



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[Developer Tips for Success: Dewayne Richardson | Alabama Housing Finance Authority](#)

**DEVELOPER TIPS**  
**FOR SUCCESS**  
WITH DEWAYNE RICHARDSON



[Developer Tips for Success: Marcella Roberts | Alabama Housing Finance Authority](#)

**DEVELOPER TIPS**  
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