

# 2009 Highlights

Housing and  
Community Development  
Network of New Jersey



## ***Advocacy & Legislative Victories***

- **Preserved Core Elements of the Housing Reforms Enacted in 2008.** The Network worked with allies to **keep the state from returning nearly \$20 million intended for affordable housing production** as a windfall to private developers as part of the New Jersey Economic Stimulus Act of 2009, and succeeded in ensuring that 20% of all age restricted homes being converted to non-age-restricted will be affordable.
- **Promoted Foreclosure Prevention & Preservation of Neighborhoods:** We participated in the January bill signing for the **NJ Mortgage Relief and Stabilization Act** and have worked since then to improve it, including securing amendments that strengthen the forbearance provisions giving homeowners time to recast their mortgage. We are now working to redirect the Act's \$40 MM appropriation to better assist homeowners and preserve neighborhoods, through amendments that would: provide lines of credit to local community development groups to acquire and rehabilitate foreclosed properties through NJ CDFIs, and provide more resources for foreclosure counseling and emergency loans to prevent foreclosures. The Network also helped advance the **Foreclosure Fairness Act**, which requires foreclosing entities to inform tenants of their right to remain in their apartments, and prescribes civil penalties for those that pressure tenants to vacate their homes.
- **Helped Get County Homeless Trust Fund Bill Enacted:** The Network helped pass state enabling legislation permitting counties to impose a document recording fee to generate revenue for a homeless trust fund to support programs outlined in their 10 year Homelessness Plan. Three counties have already passed resolutions creating these trust funds.
- **Encouraged Community Schools and Public Private School Partnerships:** Worked with Paterson members to release *Better Schools, Better Neighborhoods* by Network board member Alan Mallach, which argues that by constructing new schools through public-private partnerships, much-needed public schools can be built more quickly, at less cost and with lower up-front financial exposure to the state. The report supports the Network's case for amending the current school facilities construction law to encourage the creation of mixed-use, community schools and joint use facilities which can better leverage the public's investment.
- **Federal Highlights:** Network members and staff stepped up efforts to advance a progressive housing and community development agenda in Washington through our partnerships with NACEDA, the National Low Income Housing Coalition and NJANEH. Special focus was on creating a working capital fund for CDCs, strengthening HUD's NSP program, advancing SEVRA, a proposal to reform the section 8 program, and getting the president's proposal for \$1 billion for the National Housing Trust Fund (of which NJ would receive \$34.5 million) included in the next budget.

## ***Increasing Networking, Visibility and Public Awareness***

- The Advocacy Teams celebrated our anniversary year by **organizing 11 Housing Choices Showcase Bus Tours around the state in ten counties.** More than 500 community members, lending and corporate partners, public officials and members of the media visited over 100 sites in 42 communities to see first-hand the high-quality work our members do, the impact they have had in their communities, and their plans for the future.
- **Sponsored Press Events and Public Education:** Secured 45 news stories in major daily and local media, website coverage, television and radio, with members appearing in more than 100 media pieces; placed 8 op-eds on critical issues and 10 letters to the editor in leading publications. Added YouTube for video and Flickr for photographs to our social media toolkit; produced 11 newsletters, 28 policy bulletins and 5 Community Choices Bulletins directed to key government decision-makers.
- **Advocacy Activities:** Network staff and board had a breakfast meeting with the Governor in March to discuss issues affecting NJ CDCs and communities. Nearly 100 people attended our state Lobby Day in May, meeting with scores of legislators to educate them about our policy agenda. Members also visited dozens of state legislators in their districts and met with more than two thirds of New Jersey's Congressional delegation.

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## ***Capacity Building and Resource Development***

- Completed 3 extensive training programs in **asset management, business plan implementation and scattered site rehabilitation**, resulting in plans to preserve or develop 2200 affordable homes and reclaim nearly 500 homes in over a dozen neighborhoods impacted by the foreclosure and economic crisis.
- Staff from 7 organizations completed our rigorous training in **Scattered Site Rehabilitation** and received **national certification from the Trainer's Guild**.
- **Neighborhood Stabilization:** The Network convened a 30 member task force of municipal and county representatives, financial institutions and CDCs to find ways to quickly respond to foreclosure crisis and maximize access to NSP funds. Staff assisted applicants in developing stabilization strategies and facilitated the development of collaborations among 25 CDC members and their partners across the state. Network members secured some \$20 million in NSP I funds and partnered on applications for more than \$98 million in NSP II funds. The Network partnered with Citi and PSE&G to offer workshops on **NSP implementation and Lease Purchase financing**. We provided **6 pass through grants** from Capital One to organizations implementing neighborhood stabilization strategies, and worked to create funding pools for acquisition/rehab and to provide "mini-perm" loans for scattered site rental projects.
- Worked with members to **save OHA base operating grants** supporting housing staff for over 50 groups.
- Provided equity like investments and predevelopment financing for important **commercial revitalization projects in Camden, Jersey City, and Neptune** from the SEED loan program.
- Launched a **pilot program** with the City of Newark, NJ Community Capital and 12 Essex County CDCs **to develop a collaborative delivery system to streamline acquisition, rehab, resale and rental of homes in neighborhoods fighting abandonment and foreclosure**. This program is already showing promise for leveraging groups' organizational resources and buying power as they envision new ways to collaborate on the rehabilitation of more than 500 units over the next 3 years. Collaborative members will work together to develop tools they can use to reduce time and costs and standardize systems, such as the establishment of high quality, green rehab standards that localities can adopt and members can use to make the rehab process more predictable and efficient.
- **Support for Citywide Networks:** Provided targeted support to nonprofit or CDC networks in 4 cities to help them pursue specific policy goals or strategies aimed at facilitating local community development efforts. Highlights include passage of an abandoned properties ordinance in Paterson; approval of more than \$1 million for property acquisition to 7 CDCs in Camden; and closer collaboration between CDCs and Newark officials as they work to establish a permanent funding source for the city's housing trust fund, implement its abandoned properties ordinance and incorporate neighborhood plans into the master plan.

## ***Participating as Innovators in the Field of Community Development***

- **Expanded our National Scope:** Helped to convene NACEDA's first ever national meeting on the organizational capacity of CDC associations as a sector, which resulted in the design of several national collaborative initiatives aimed at strengthening state level neighborhood preservation work; and worked with individual state associations to integrate the use of NACEDA's Organizational Capacity Assessment program into their capacity building work.
- **Hosted 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** dinner for 300 supporters, and released ***Building from the Ground Up: 20 Years of CED in NJ*** highlighting the successes of the community economic development sector and the challenges and opportunities facing CDCs in the future.