

Advocacy & Legislative Victories

- **Advanced Housing Policies to Move NJ Forward:** The Network promoted state policies that encourage the creation of homes people can afford, near employment and transit centers, and strenuously opposed proposals to undermine the principles of Mount Laurel. Working with members and allies, we developed our own proposal, the **Housing Market Reform Act, for replacing NJ's housing delivery system with a strong new framework for creating a range of homes in the state.** Many elements of this proposal have been incorporated into the compromise bill now being considered by the Legislature, and which will likely be enacted by year's end. A.3447/S.1 now requires every community to do their fair share, preserves many of the reforms we won in 2008, and provides new mechanisms to get local housing trust fund dollars spent more quickly to create homes, with priority for nonprofit organizations.
- **Won New Foreclosure Prevention & Neighborhood Preservation Tools:** The Network and our partners succeeded in getting the **Foreclosure Fairness Act** passed, which requires foreclosing entities to inform tenants of their right to remain in their apartments, with penalties for pressuring tenants to vacate their homes. It also makes creditors responsible for maintaining properties they are foreclosing on once they are vacated by their owners, including tenant occupied properties.
- **Increased the Number of County Homeless Trust Funds:** Another six counties created trust funds this year with support from Network members. Eight counties now have homeless trust funds, including Somerset, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Bergen, Union, Passaic and Camden Counties. The funds, which generate revenue through a document recording fee to support programs in counties' 10 year plans to end chronic homelessness, have generated about \$1 million to date.
- **Promoted Federal Priorities:** Network members and staff continued to advance a progressive housing and community development agenda in Washington through our partnerships with the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA), the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and NJ Advocacy Network to End Homelessness. In three trips to our nation's capitol we focused on securing full funding for HUD's programs, strengthening HUD's NSP program, advancing Livable Communities and Section 8 and federal preservation reforms, and securing \$1 billion for the National Housing Trust Fund.

Increasing Networking, Visibility and Public Awareness

- **Promoted Innovative Communications Strategies:** In 2010, we piloted a **Be Your Own Media** effort in Mercer County, training area members to use values based messages and new technologies to build support for community development and homes everyone can afford. We launched the **Journey Home** video blog, featuring over 25 individuals describing their housing successes and challenges. The Network also stepped into the social media world by developing a Network **Facebook page** and one for our **Mercer Advocacy Team, as well as a Twitter** feed for our supporters to keep updated on issues and resource opportunities, and be more connected with each other. We held **six trainings to help nearly 100 leaders** and grassroots activists hone their communications skills and employ these emerging tools in their communities.
- Our Advocacy Teams held another round of successful **Community Choices Showcase Tours**, including our first virtual tour, in Essex, Camden, Morris, Passaic and Union counties. More than 250 community members, corporate partners, public officials and members of the media visited nearly 30 sites in 20 communities, viewing the high-quality work of our members, the positive changes they are making in neighborhoods and their future plans. Teams also organized **local outreach and networking events** in counties across the state.

- **Sponsored Press Events and Public Education:** We secured more than 30 news stories in major daily and local media, website coverage, television and radio, with members appearing in more than 100 media pieces; placed 10 op-eds on critical issues and 12 letters to the editor in leading publications. We were once again the state partner in releasing *Out of Reach*, the annual NLIHC report detailing the high cost of rental housing. We produced 11 newsletters, 27 policy bulletins, and 8 Community Choices Bulletins directed to key state decision-makers.
- **Advocacy Activities:** Over 125 people attended our Spring Advocacy Day, meeting with scores of legislators to educate them about our policy agenda and build support for our issues. Network representatives also visited dozens of state legislators in their districts, hosted events with local and county officials and met with over half of New Jersey's Congressional delegation, as well as HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan and his senior staff.

Capacity Building and Resource Development

- We worked with **nine Essex County CDCs, municipal and county governments in a pilot program** to maximize the impacts of neighborhood stabilization work going on in those cities. This group developed green rehab standards that have been adopted by the city of Newark, created a shared cost database and standard specifications for construction materials and services, and worked with the city to overcome barriers to the development process.
- The Network **provided \$30,000 in pass through grants to help 7 members** in Essex, Hudson, and Union Counties strengthen their infrastructure for implementing scattered site rehabilitation projects and neighborhood stabilization strategies.
- We **trained 17 CDC and municipal representatives** on best practices from across the country in marketing affordable neighborhoods and homes, held three webinars on acquiring REO properties and NSP implementation, and provided a week-long training for 14 practitioners in mixed-use finance.
- To help members cope with the challenging economic environment, we stepped up efforts to **track emerging federal programs and identify less well-known funding for comprehensive community revitalization**, while improving members' access to available state and private capital for housing. The Network sponsored several workshops on federal and private financing, as well as securing changes to HMFA's CHOICE program to better support scattered site rehabilitation projects. With members' help we launched a webpage to provide information on mortgage products currently available to their homebuyers.
- We **launched a foreclosure counseling working group with 15 member organizations** that researched geographic gaps in counseling capacity; identified challenges; and explored technical, training, and resource needs. Working group members met with members of NYC's counselor collaborative and a local bankruptcy attorney, and initiated work with HMFA to explore opportunities for coordination, collaboration, and improvements to foreclosure counseling programs.
- We **launched an enhanced problem properties initiative with NJ Community Capital** to help specific cities implement recently won state tools and strategies to help preserve homes and reclaim neighborhoods in collaboration with community stakeholders. To supplement this the Network succeeded in getting NJ selected as one of 4 states participating in the Center for Community Progress' CP Leadership Institute in 2011. We also **helped CDC networks in 3 cities** advance stronger local land use and problem properties policies.