



# “Building Communities Together”

A Networking Tool of HUD's Center for Community and Interfaith Partnerships

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## HUD's Front Door

As part of HUD's new focus on outreach and customer service, the Department has a new “front door” in the Community Builders program. These highly trained experts in the field offices of 81 U.S. cities do much of their work outside, the office at the community level, as the agency's first point of contact or, in other words, HUD's front door. **Community Builders (CBs)** are the first point of contact with the agency for the thousands of people who need HUD's help: homebuyers, tenants, community leaders, non-profits, foundations, mayors, county executives, governors, bankers, realtors, business owners, and many others.

Trained in all aspects of the agency, they serve as team builders, fostering partnerships both inside and outside the agency. They work closely with HUD program experts, known as **Public Trust Officers**, to help communities solve problems. Public Trust Officers are longtime, highly-experienced, HUD employees who monitor the effectiveness of all agency programs. CBs are reaching new clients, forming new partners, and expanding HUD's capacity to provide assistance to families in need.

A few examples of work assignments for CBs include: meeting with community leaders, business owners, educators, non-profit groups, and elected officials to help them design a comprehensive plan for effectively utilizing funds from government, the private sector, and foundations; helping a small business owner obtain a loan or grant to expand or open a business;

working with a group of developers to find financing for a shopping center in a low-income neighborhood; scouting out a location for a new park with the neighborhood association president; developing ways to increase homeownership in neighborhoods.

Some 800 strong, Community Builders now represent a significant presence at HUD. Over 400 Community Builders are short-term employees who are part of a two year fellowship program designed to serve as a revolving pool of community development experts at HUD. While most of these Fellows are responsible for being well-versed in the wide variety of HUD programs, some fellowship assignments focus mainly on key Department initiatives such as Welfare-to-Work, Faith-based organizations, Public Housing, Migrant Farm Workers, Officer Next Door program, Economic Development, Native American initiatives, and Civil Rights, among others.

To highlight the good work that's happening at HUD, the National Office of the Community Builder Fellowship at HUD has created a new communication vehicle – an electronic newsletter, “Community Builders on the Front Line.” You can also see it at the Community Builders website at [www.hud.gov/combuild.html](http://www.hud.gov/combuild.html)

For a listing of your local CBs, contact the Center for Community and Interfaith Partnerships at 1-800-308-0395 or 202/708-2404. This information is also at our website at [www.hud.gov/cdc.html](http://www.hud.gov/cdc.html).

## Message from the Center

Recently, questions have been raised as to why some people are no longer receiving various faxes from the Center. After realizing multiple copies of faxes were being sent to organizations because several individuals of the same organizations were at identical fax numbers, we've reformatted our process and now send only one copy to each fax number on our list. We do this to relieve organizations exasperated with receiving so many copies, causing wasted paper and tied up fax time. In doing this, the Center wishes to give organizations the option of producing multiple copies of our information, without burdening them.

We soon will be mailing an updated survey for your response. The new format of this survey will help us target groups for various events and activities that may interest you. We will also be sharing the survey results with local HUD offices so they will know of your presence in the community. This information will assist your local Community Builders in their local networking efforts. Thank you for your input; we welcome your further comments.

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# Project New Hope: Combating NIMBYism with Faith

NIMBYism is a major obstacle hindering the provision of affordable housing, shelters for the homeless, housing for the disabled, etc. in many communities across this country. However, congregations and faith-based organizations are uniquely positioned to overcome community opposition, and therefore play an extremely important role in the implementation of these types of projects.

An excellent example is Project New Hope, a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, which develops affordable housing for very low-income individuals living with HIV/AIDS and other disabilities. Nearly every project initiated by Project New Hope has faced NIMBYism to varying degrees, yet the faith-based nonprofit has had a high-rate of success in overcoming community opposition.

According to founder and Executive Director Jack Plimpton, the secret to their success is the 'faith-factor.' He recommends engaging leaders from various denominations from the beginning of the process. Specifically, he

suggests meeting one-on-one with various clergy and congregation leaders and inviting them to become involved in aspects of the project like tenant selection, planning / design, the board of directors, recommending supportive individuals in the neighborhood, etc. He also advises enlisting clergy persons to assist with outreach efforts and to convene large community meetings at local places of worship and parks.

While outreach to local government, police, firemen and community groups are other essential elements to Project New Hope's strategy to overcome community opposition, Mr. Plimpton believes that engaging the interfaith community from the outset lends tremendous credibility to proposed initiatives and is central to their eventual success. To that end, he encourages secular non-profits interested in these types of projects to partner with the local faith community when taking on this type of project. For more information regarding Project New Hope and their strategy for combating community opposition, call Jack Plimpton at (213) 580-9977.

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## Important Resources

The Welfare to Work Partnership is holding a three-day conference with national leaders in welfare-to-work, **August 2-4, 1999 entitled "Welfare to Work Partnership - One America" at the Navy Pier in Chicago, Illinois.**

The Partnership is an independent, nonpartisan, national effort of the American business community to help move those on public assistance into jobs in the private sector. Today, it has more than 10,000 Business Partners nationwide, all dedicated to hiring and

retaining former welfare recipients.

This conference, meant to provide a platform to share the progress and challenges of welfare reform and to form partnerships, is geared toward businesses who are or want to be involved in the Partnership, local, state and federal government agencies, Welfare to Work service providers, and community- and faith-based organizations. For more information, please contact Mr. Errol James at 202/955-3005 x304 or visit their website at [www.welfareto-work.org](http://www.welfareto-work.org).

## Featured Best Practice

The City of Charleston, WV was interested in arranging ways to identify low-income adults interested in and suitable for job-training or on-the-job training opportunities, leading to gainful employment and potential advancement.

The City has coordinated employment and training for low-income persons under the City's Section 3 provisions of its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)-assisted contracts and the Charleston Housing Authority's similar provisions of its Section 3 Public Housing contracts. This local system is expected to be utilized as the State of West Virginia's Welfare Reform requirements for persons on welfare are implemented.

A large number of local professionals have actively participated in Charleston's Section 3 Implementation Task Force. Key Players in the Task Force were various departments and programs of the local, state, and federal government and businesses, as well as several local organizations such as the Black Male Coalition, Appalachian Center for Independent Living, Multi-CAP, Single Mothers Program of Covenant House, and Charleston Job Corps.

The Charleston Section 3 Task Force has led to the creation and the success of multiple local projects. Over 340 adults have received job training. Several public housing "Step Up" positions have been successfully achieved. Equally important, the Task Force has created working relationships among interested local employment and training agencies, related nonprofit training and advocacy groups, the local State social service programs, and City staff.

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*This information has been edited from the John J. Gunther Best Practices on HUD's web site at <http://www.hud.gov/ptw/menu.html>.*