

DCHA

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Newsletter



# Connections

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## Green Materials Become a Priority



The use of "green building materials" have become a high priority for redevelopment and new construction projects at the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) thanks to an agreement with the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems (CMPDBS).

"DCHA now advocates the use of environmentally friendly construction products and methodologies whenever possible," says DCHA Commissioner Marcie Cohen, who chairs DCHA's Development and Modernization Committee.

"We have implemented a green building policy and this is a clear indication that affordable housing and the environment are going to be on DCHA's radar screen for a long time," Cohen said.

Advocates say that the application of green building technology is challenging but also rewarding. "Utilizing green building for the construction of affordable housing requires good planning skills and visionary thinking on the part of developers," says Gail Vittori, executive director of CMPDBS. "And there is a payoff to customers because green building technology can also result in lower monthly utility bills." Answers to questions about how to use green building materials are now available for DCHA project managers and development staff. The agency has commissioned the Institute for Local Self-Reliance to prepare "Green Material Guide for the District of Columbia Housing Authority," a primer on the subject.

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## THE NEW HENSON RIDGE

In October, the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) Executive Director Michael Kelly, DCHA Chairman Russell Simmons, Mayor Anthony Williams and Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton, hosted a ribbon-cutting celebration to commemorate the opening of Henson Ridge and the return of residents. Sixty percent of those returning are public housing residents.

At completion, the site will have 600 rental units and will feature all new infrastructure, a new community center, parks and open spaces as well as the building of a new elementary school. Made possible by HOPE VI funding provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Henson Ridge will replace Frederick Douglass and Stanton Dwellings, two



*Beautiful town homes at Henson Ridge*

adjacent public housing developments located in Anacostia and Congress Heights.

"The stigma of the 'public housing look' is gone," said Carmen Smith, one of the first to return after being relocated from the neighborhood two years ago, when renovation began. "I think that a better life will come."

Henson Ridge will include an onsite adult training center providing education, job training, entrepreneurship and mentoring programs, a state-of-the-art computer-learning center and self-sufficiency programs. The long-term plan for Henson Ridge includes job referrals and job placement for all DCHA residents who complete the requisite job training.

DCHA is the fourth largest recipient of HOPE VI funding nationally, having received \$140.9 million. The DCHA is recognized as a nationwide leader in the design and execution of innovative and successful HOPE VI projects.

DCHA is the leading provider and manager of safe, affordable and well-

maintained housing for people of low and moderate income in Washington, D.C. The Authority works closely with residents, landlords and the D.C. government to improve the quality of housing. DCHA actively helps its residents grow both personally and professionally through a variety of economic development and self-sufficiency programs as well as the facilitation of other supportive services. DCHA, a non-municipal housing authority, is lead by architect Michael Kelly, whose commitment to excellent service and management has made the DCHA America's model housing authority. Please visit the DCHA at [www.dchousing.org](http://www.dchousing.org).

*Dear Community Partner,*

## Seeing the Forest: The Importance of HOPE VI



Michael Kelly



Sunia Zaterman

As you approach the holiday season one of the highlights of 2003 was a cool autumn morning in early October--the D.C. Housing Authority and its many partners announced the official opening of the new Henson Ridge community, a HOPE VI funded site. HOPE VI, a program run by the US Department of Housing and Development (HUD), provides new opportunities for low-income citizens who live in public housing developments by going beyond the repair of inadequate housing and also addressing issues related to high crime rates and the provision of educational, job training and life skill services for residents.

For those who are active in the public and affordable housing industry in the District of Columbia, the opening of Henson Ridge was a very proud moment as years of hard work were finally resulting in the return of former residents to the revitalized site. The attractive new townhouses that are situated in a green, landscaped neighborhood on newly paved streets are a far departure from the distressed, run down units that once stood there. One resident said it best by noting that the "stigma" of low-income housing was gone and added, "I think a better life will come."

Henson Ridge is only one of five HOPE VI sites here in the District. The housing authority has been fortunate to win four other grants to redevelopment some of the city's most distressed public housing developments. Two of these sites, The Townhomes on Capitol Hill (which was formerly the vacant Ellen Wilson development) and Wheeler Creek (formerly the Valley Green and Skytower complexes) have both been reoccupied for years and have been the recipients of multiple awards. At Capitol Gateway Estates, formerly East Capitol, demolition is near completion and construction has begun at this site that will evolve into a welcoming eastern gateway into the city. The Capper/Carrollsborg public housing developments will be revitalized into a mixed-use community of new housing, office and retail space with the replacement of the 707 occupied public housing units currently on the site.

However, our joy that morning at Henson Ridge was tinged by the realization that these beautiful new homes were opening at the same time that the HOPE VI program stands in peril.

Despite the administration's request to zero out this program, Congress has funded HOPE VI at \$150 million for FY 2004. This is far less than the \$574 million that was funded last year and years past.

Additionally, HUD officials have chosen this time to issue "default" letters to public housing authorities, including the DC Housing Authority, claiming that some sites are off schedule. While HUD should take action against individual agencies that are clearly not performing their obligations, the fact is that each HOPE VI grant is different and, as in the private sector, the timetables for completing these projects must be adjusted to accommodate changes in financing approvals, legal considerations, environmental concerns, and other reasonable factors.

These HUD notices and a dramatic decrease in funding will threaten the millions of dollars in private investment that HOPE VI leverages. A recent GAO study found that every HOPE VI dollar raises an average of about 3 dollars of other investment. Any threat to the commitment of HOPE VI monies to these projects will make private parties wary of participating, thereby undermining years of work that has gone into building sustainable public/private partnerships.

In our experience, we have learned that it takes time and proper planning to effectively complete the wide range of goals inherent in HOPE VI. We have established the necessary procedures and created the appropriate partnerships to make these goals a reality.

HOPE VI's detractors need to see the forest through the trees. Unless they do, other District residents and families across the country won't ever have the same opportunities as the proud new residents of Henson Ridge.

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Office of Public Affairs  
& Communications

Zachary D. Smith,  
*Director*  
Cymando Henley  
*Communications Coordinator*  
Janice Frink Brown,  
*Managing Editor/Writer*  
Carolyn Davis,  
*Graphic Design and Layout*  
Keith Washington,  
*Photographer*  
Joyce Brown,  
*Distribution*  
(202)535-1315

Michael Kelly is executive director of the District of Columbia Housing Authority  
Sunia Zaterman, executive director of the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities  
contributed to this story.

## Richardson Dwellings Public Housing Community Gets a New Playground

The Potomac Region and "Make Kids Smile" recently hosted a playground build at Richardson Dwellings, at 5231 Cloud Place, N.E. The two groups partnered to build a new playground at Richardson Dwellings to provide safe recreational equipment and to bring enjoyment to children in the neighborhood.

The playground build costs approximately \$50,000, much of which was donated by "Make Kids Smile," a local non-profit organization that raises money for equipment and donates the materials to the recipient. The recipient in turn, is responsible for installing the equipment. The equipment used to build the playground was provided by Playworld Systems, a playground vendor. "Make Kids Smile" was founded by the Ognibene family of Leesburg, Va., to facilitate the resources necessary to provide playgrounds for less fortunate children. Corporate sponsors for the playground build include; West Group Management, LLC, SunTrust Bank and Guaranty Bank.



New Richardson Dwellings playground.

## Green Materials... continued

Traditional building materials can be made from carcinogenic ingredients or materials that can be toxic to the environment. Conversely, green building materials are those made from recycled biodegradable content, that don't cause environmental damage during the manufacturing process, that create the least amount of pollution during the transportation phase, and that are minimally toxic.

Green building materials include items such as denim and cotton-based insulation, biofiber



Door handles are some of the many "green building materials" being considered for use by DCHA.

wheat composite, palm wood, bamboo, cork and linoleum flooring, recycled rubber roofing, fiber-cement siding, fly ash concrete, recycled carpets, natural paints, recycled glass, and cement-based countertops.

## You Can Reach Us...

### Headquarters

1133 North Capitol Street, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20002  
Telephone: (202) 535-1000  
Emergency: (202) 535-1044  
Website: www.dchousing.org

### DCHA Office of Public Safety

Crime Prevention Hotline  
Telephone: (202) 535-2222

### Housing Choice Voucher Program

Telephone: (202) 535-1433  
Fax: (202) 535-2008

### Client Placement Division

Telephone: (202) 535-1706  
Fax: (202) 535-2043

### Office of Resident Services

Telephone: (202) 535-1517  
Fax: (202) 535-2345

### Office of the ADA/504 Program

Telephone: (202) 535-2737  
Fax: (202) 535-1102

### Rock Creek Region

Telephone: (202) 727-3190  
Fax: (202) 727-3199

### Anacostia Region

Telephone: (202) 698-3400  
Fax: (202) 698-3439

### Potomac Region

Telephone: (202) 535-1471  
Fax: (202) 535-1258

## DCHA at a Glance

### Mission

To provide and effectively manage housing which is affordable, diverse, well maintained, and aesthetically pleasing

### Leadership

#### Board Commissioners

Chairman: Russell Simmons  
Vice Chair: Lynn Cunningham,  
Marcie Cohen  
Dorothea Ferrell  
Ken Grossinger  
Frank Lancaster  
Fernando Lemos  
Eric Price

Jacqueline West

#### Executive Director

Michael Kelly

### Number of Employees

900

### Budget

Consolidated budget: \$250 million

### Number of Developments

58

### Total Number of Units

9230

### Number of Residents

25,000 (Public Housing)  
25,000 (Housing Choice Voucher Program)

### Waiting List

17,000 (Public Housing)  
26,000 (Rental Assistance)

### The Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program

11,766 (Total number)  
8,966 (Tenant-based)  
2,800 (Project-based)

# One Fund Campaign Kick Off

Over the years, the District of Columbia Housing Authority has been a participant of the One Fund Campaign Drive, and this year is no different. One Fund, the District government's only official charitable fundraiser that raises money to support more than 1,100 local non-profit organizations in the District, kicked off its 49<sup>th</sup> annual fundraising event recently at the Reeves Center at 14<sup>th</sup> & U Streets N.W.

Some of the non-profit organizations supported by one fund include; the African-American Resource Center, AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Disease Information Services of the American Social Health Association, Advocates for Youth, Adoption Center of Washington and AARP Legal Counsel for the Elderly.

Last year, employees representing more than 35 D.C. government agencies joined forces in support of this worthy cause. Over \$1 million was raised. One Fund's mission is to provide service to the growing needs of youth, help increase the quality of life for seniors and help create a dignified existence for the mentally and physically challenged.

The District government has authorized the United Black Fund, Inc. of Greater Washington, D.C. and the United Way of the National Capital Area to serve as the campaign administrators of the One Fund Drive. However, the District government will continue to have policy management and fiscal responsibility for the fundraising drive.

Your contributions would be greatly appreciated. For more information contact DCHA One Fund representatives, Janice Frink Brown, Office of Public Affairs and Communications at (202) 535-1030 or Greg Meeropol, Office of Resident Services at (202) 535-2172.

# Scattered-Site Homeownership Program Celebrates Newly-Renovated Homeownership Property in Columbia Heights

In October a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house was held in the Columbia Heights neighborhood to celebrate the renovation of another home under the District of Columbia Housing Authority's (DCHA) Scattered-Site Homeownership Program. The home, located at 1851 Lamont St., N.W., marked the completion of six units renovated by the Authority's construction management company and non-profit developer.

DCHA, in collaboration with seven local non-profit developers, continues to spearhead this innovative program in order to create affordable homeownership opportunities in high-market areas in the District. Through the program, 78 single-family homes formerly owned by DCHA, are being renovated into 102 new

homeownership units for market, moderate and low-income families. Dalphine Townsend, a Scattered Site Homeowner spoke graciously about the program, thanking DCHA for its assistance in making her a proud homeowner.

Councilmember Jim Graham (D-Ward1), DCHA Executive Director Michael Kelly and Chair Board of Commissioners, Russell Simmons hosted the event. The local non-profits that partnered with DCHA on the project, include; Mi Casa, MANNA, North Capital Neighborhood Development Corporation, Development Corporation of Columbia Heights, HOPE Housing/Thirteenth-Irving Development Corp., New Columbia Land Trust, and DC Housing Enterprises.



This property, located in Columbia Heights, is one of 78 currently being renovated for homeownership by DCHA and a team of non-profit developers.