

2014 Network Highlights



Celebrated 25 Years of Supporting NJ's Community Development Sector with events that featured the success of our members and our Network since 1989, including:

- Releasing an update of our 2012 NRTC report, *Transforming New Jersey Communities, through Planning, Investment and Community Engagement*;
- Co-hosting the City of Jersey City's Housing Conference and the Morris Housing Alliance's Housing Choices Bus Tour;
- Honoring leading organizations and visionary individuals who have made a major impact on the community development sector at our 25th anniversary celebration dinner;
- Publishing ***Stronger Together***, a groundbreaking economic impact analysis of our member's work that found NJ's nonprofit community development sector has been a \$12 billion economic engine for NJ since 1989.

PUBLIC POLICY EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

- **Promoted an Efficient and Equitable Sandy Recovery:**
 - Mobilized members, allies, local residents, and elected officials to improve policies and programs for Superstorm Sandy recovery. Encouraged greater input from the public resulting in three public hearings on the second tranche of federal recovery dollars.
 - Secured HUD certified housing counseling to be included in the recovery process.
 - Coordinated local hearings with Sandy survivors as part of the Sandy Bill of Rights effort, led by Senate President Stephen Sweeney. The Sandy Bill of Rights would have addressed problems in the RREM program and increased transparency for Sandy survivors and those affected by future storms. Despite nearly unanimous, bi-partisan passage by the Legislature, Gov. Christie vetoed the bill. The Network pressed for an override vote, collecting signed flip-flops and delivering them to legislators who voted for the bill but would not vote to override the veto.
 - Advocated for changes that were incorporated into the historic Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA) with the State of NJ by Fair Share Housing Center, State Council of NJ-NAACP, and Latino Action Network. The VCA resulted in policy improvements, including \$40 million for lower income households to access RREM. At least \$10 million of that pool will be initially reserved for manufactured homeowners. The VCA also created a Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program and secured \$594 million for the Fund for Multifamily Restoration to build 7500 new apartments in hard-hit areas.
 - The VCA required grassroots community-based outreach to be conducted around these new programs. We are proud to be leading the outreach effort to reach over 250,000 lower income homeowners and tenants.
- **Promoted Housing Policies to Move NJ Forward and Build Strong Communities:**
 - Supported our Advocacy Teams and local developer networks of more than 100 leaders advancing policies to create vibrant communities and homes people can afford, near employment and transit.
 - Shepherded passage of legislation to enhance land-banking opportunities, to change NJ's tax lien sale law to provide more options for generating revenue and gaining control of troubled properties, and to give municipalities tools to reduce the impacts of foreclosure. Gov. Christie vetoed the land banking and tax lien bills but signed two bills to allow municipalities to ensure foreclosed properties are well maintained.
 - Hosted over 100 members, allies, and supporters at our annual Advocacy Day at the State House, meeting with 25 NJ legislators to educate them about our policy agenda and build support for our issues.
 - Presented lawmakers with a new reportⁱ on the impact on foreclosures in NJ and the crisis' disproportionate effect on people and communities of color.
 - Co-sponsored a major housing conference with the City of Jersey City "A Housing Vision for Our Community." The City is developing a comprehensive housing policy to address people at all income levels and with varying needs, which will be the first of its kind in NJ.
 - Helped prevent municipal housing funds from being used to balance the FY2015 state budget.

- **Protected the *Mount Laurel* doctrine:**
 - Mobilized members and allies against efforts to gut NJ's Council on Affordable Housing and undermine the Fair Housing Act.
 - Coordinated with our partners a sector-wide response to Gov. Christie's proposed Third Round rules that would have significantly reduced the number of affordable homes to be built in the next 10 years. Over 3,000 comments were received by COAH, the vast majority opposing the new rules. This opposition resulted in a deadlocked COAH board and the flawed rules not moving forward.
 - Advocated to get COAH action approving the spending plans of about 20 towns. We helped organize a sign on letter with APN urging DCA Commissioner Constable to approve more plans.
- **Advanced Federal Priorities, Led United for Homes (UFH) in NJ:**
 - With our national partners, we sought to minimize budget cuts and restore funding to key federal programs.
 - Met with 14 members of New Jersey's Congressional delegation as part of the National Low Income Housing Coalition's Lobby Day and part of the National Alliance to End Homelessness annual conference.
 - Led the NJ effort to build support for the UFH campaign to fund the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) through changes to the mortgage interest deduction.
 - Organized nearly 100 UFH endorsements from NJ organizations and elected officials; NJ State Senators passed a resolution of support for funding the NHTF.
 - As a result of FHA action, the NHTF will be funded for the first time; NJ will receive an estimated \$3 million from the NHTF annually, starting in 2016.

COMMUNITY STABILIZATION & NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

- **Fostered Problem Property Restoration:**
 - Continued our work with municipal officials and statewide partners, advancing efforts to reclaim and restore problem properties in communities around NJ. Over 100 municipalities have adopted vacant and/or abandoned property ordinances to address these problems, giving municipalities the tools they need to identify and hold property owners responsible, and providing critical resources for local communities to control the impact of these properties.
 - Provided technical and organizational assistance to several towns to evaluate their ordinances, helping them strengthen their laws to increase effectiveness. A growing number of municipalities are using spot blight eminent domain, establishing vacant property registration ordinances and implementing requirements for out-of-state creditors.
- **Supported Neighborhood Revitalization:**
 - Our Neighborhood Revitalization Task Force met regularly to share best practices and brainstorm on an array of issues. The Network continued to serve on the State's Task Force, monitoring implementation and advocating for continued efficacy and flexibility.
 - Published an updated report that highlights successes of the NRTC Program at its 10 year mark.
 - Continue to work with our partners in ***Together North Jersey*** (TNJ) to implement the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning effort in the North Jersey Transportation Region. We have worked with TNJ to provide technical assistance to five Micro-Grant recipients, providing support for planning efforts associated with TNJ's Local Demonstration Projects to promote regional planning initiatives and supporting resident participation.
 - Maintained partnership with APA-NJ on a second round of the Community Planning Assistance Program, providing volunteer planners to promote and assist with local planning projects with Network members and other groups.
- **Advanced Foreclosure Prevention and Recapture Efforts:**
 - Provided recommendations to HUD for programs and services needed in disaster recovery situations, including a comprehensive response to HUD's Office of Homeownership Counseling.
 - Communicated regularly with policy makers to relay the concerns of counselors and offer suggestions for

- improved implementation and administration of various foreclosure-related programs and services.
- Participated in local foreclosure task forces and joined with the National Housing Resource Center to address national policy, resource and program issues related to foreclosure prevention and counseling efforts.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT & MEMBER SERVICES

- **Provided Community Development Training and Technical Assistance:**
 - Conducted four trainings attended by over 100 individuals including *Community Real-Estate Development Process*, *Community Planning: An Introduction on How to Make Your Community Stronger through Planning*, *Low Income Housing Tax Credits for beginners and experienced professionals*, and *Project Feasibility Analysis Workshop*.
 - Provided technical assistance to our members in the areas of strategic and business planning, resource development, marketing, pre-purchase and foreclosure housing counseling, and addressing problem properties.
- **Educated Our Members and Policy Makers:**
 - Garnered extensive media coverage on a range of topics and events, including the NJ release of the NLIHC's *Out of Reach* report and raised issues associated with Superstorm Sandy recovery in the national media
 - Engaged in extensive communications outreach to support our agenda and promote the important work our members are doing around NJ. As a result of our targeted communication efforts, the Network and our members were covered in over 330 print, radio, and television media stories. We distributed a total of 35 TA Alerts, Newsletters, and Policy Bulletins to keep our members, supporters, and allies informed and on the cutting edge of Network news, resources, policy opportunities and industry best practices.
 - Expanded our social media portfolio by joining Instagram.
- **Certified as a funded HUD Housing Counseling Intermediary.**
 - Approved as one of three funded, HUD counseling intermediaries in NJ, and are now working with six of our member organizations to provide counseling services.
 - Convened housing counseling agencies throughout the state, beyond those who are part of our HUD counseling program, to share information and best practices, provide training, and address issues as they arise.
- **Providing Sandy Outreach Information.**
 - Working with the State of NJ and HUD to provide information to the residents of the nine hardest hit counties informing them of the services and opportunities available to assist them in recovering from Superstorm Sandy.
 - Partnering with our member organizations to reach Sandy survivors still in need of assistance to recover and rebuild from the storm.

ⁱ Kathe Newman, associate professor and director of the Ralph W. Voorhees Center for Civic Engagement at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers