



GREEN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM: A VIEW FROM COLUMBUS, OHIO

“Green building is not a particular method or material; green building is an attitude,” New Home Builder Ron Casteel emphasizes as he explains how his company – Sovereign Homes – greened their way of doing business when they became involved as a developer in the first green affordable housing development in Columbus, Ohio, Greenview Estates.



After



Before

This same green building attitude has been cultivated in the city of Columbus’s housing programs over the past several years through a partnership with Enterprise Green Communities. Based on the Green Communities Criteria, a set of customized rehabilitation specifications were produced, taking into consideration the climatic conditions and local availability of resources in the area. From this, the city of Columbus and Franklin County were able to create the AWARE Manual (Accessible, Water Conservation, Air Quality, Resource Conscious, Energy Efficient), which describes their specific green rehabilitation standards and sample specifications, to hand out to developers, contractors, and other partners. In 2008, the city of Columbus took a significant step in their housing policy by making green design central to their \$22.8 million, federally funded, Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). Today, the city and region stand as a national leader in green acquisition rehab.

The city of Columbus identified several key elements essential to creating a successful green program: ongoing education; creative and efficient partnerships; and interdisciplinary sharing of knowledge. These elements have led Columbus to adopt comprehensive green rehabilitation standards in their Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

Columbus Timeline

Green affordable design went from a relatively unknown concept to a core principle of Columbus's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) and other major policy initiatives in just four years. Green affordable design has proved successful and well received with designers, developers, policymakers, and residents. The City of Columbus and the surrounding area of Franklin County are reshaping their development strategy under NSP with a new vision for sustainability. This outline covers the major events of this rapid rise of green affordable housing in Columbus.

2005

- The Mayor of Columbus, Michael B. Coleman, convenes a "Green Team" — a collaborative advisory body of for-profit, nonprofit, environmental, policymaker, design, construction, and urban planning experts and leaders — to join with him in "advancing policies to protect the environment while promoting economic growth" (Mayor's Office Green Report, 2005).

2006

- The Board of Commissioners of Franklin County unanimously pass a resolution committing the region to more green design, linking this commitment to economic vitality.
- Greenview Estates becomes a more active development, with Sovereign Homes, MiraCit, and other partners coming together to develop Columbus's first green affordable housing subdivision.
- The Columbus Green Building Forum takes the lead, with other partners, in beginning Columbus's first LEED Platinum level housing rehab project.

ONGOING EDUCATION

Education and on-site technical assistance has become an increasing priority for local jurisdictions adopting and implementing acquisition rehab under NSP. The city of Columbus found that with the AWARE Manual, created out of their partnership with Enterprise Green Communities, their scope of work and budget for integrating green measures is clearly identified and easy to follow. Education is also at the heart of the green building "attitude" Casteel describes.

Without a willingness to learn new concepts — in this case, green design aligned with affordable housing preservation — and then the knowledge to put these new principles into practice, the program will not sustain.

In Columbus, individuals and interdisciplinary groups were open to learning about green design and how to incorporate it into single-family acquisition rehab. Much of this learning occurred in a series of workshops and meetings that brought together individuals and groups from public, for-profit, and nonprofit sectors, which the city required for those involved in the NSP.

Enterprise Green Communities, in partnership with Armand Magnelli, president and Senior Consultant of Livable Housing, Inc, designed three NSP-related workshops. These sessions provide an excellent model to effectively educate—raising awareness, while encouraging experimentation and innovative implementation strategies — that can be replicated in other jurisdictions. For training information, please go to www.greencommunitiesonline.org/tools/training/index.asp.



1) Overview of Green Rehabilitation Specifications

The initial training required for all program participants in Columbus is a full-day session on the Green Rehabilitation Specifications. This training is designed to introduce participants to the information and tools necessary to integrate the Rehab Specs into REO properties. This training was delivered over two days, with the first day tailored for rehab specialists and construction managers participating in the city's NSP program, and the second day for developers.

This training session is primarily classroom based, and includes a walk-through at a project site if possible.



2) Green Rehab Lab training

This workshop is designed for program participants to learn how to meet certain specs through examples at a project site. The Green Rehab Lab brought together local product manufacturers and installers for demonstrations of spray insulation installation, air sealing techniques, low-VOC product options, flashing details for windows and doors.

Program participants learned first-hand from the demonstrations and also had a chance for informal peer-to-peer exchange as they moved among the lab stations in small groups.

2007

- Home B.A.S.E. high school class of 2007 begins work and blog based on Columbus's first LEED Platinum level house, owned by Columbus Housing Partnership. See their blog at http://homebase07.blogspot.com/2006_10_01_archive.html.

2008

- City of Columbus begins researching options for developing green specifications for their housing programs.
- New class established at Ohio State University, in coordination and partnership with Columbus Green Building Forum, focusing on green building design.

2009

- City of Columbus decides to use the Enterprise Green Communities Criteria as the basis for their AWARE Manual, and in partnership with Enterprise, local green rehabilitation specifications are created.
- Publication of the AWARE Manual.
- City of Columbus makes green design central to their \$22.8 million NSP allocation.
- As part of the local NSP program, a continued partnership with Enterprise Green Communities is established and a series of workshops and technical assistance seminars are convened to continue and accelerate collaboration and education between for-profits, nonprofits, developers, and policymakers on green affordable design.

3) Moisture Management in Energy Efficient Homes session

In response to many questions from NSP program participants on moisture mitigation strategies, the city brought in building science experts to focus on this topic. The half-day training, led by Dr. Joe Lstiburek, described how to identify the various ways in which moisture may enter the home and best practices for prevention and mitigation. The city found that this and other advanced building science topics are useful to program participants once they have gone through the introductory training session and have a thorough understanding of the Green Rehab Specs. For more information on specific green rehabilitation topics, please go to www.greenbuildingadvisor.com/green-communities-nsf.



The local workshop model has created an environment of knowledge and acceptance of green building practices among developers and contractors in the Columbus area. This has made the implementation of the prescribed green rehabilitation specifications under NSP easier to manage for the local housing staff.

Another educational focus is the need to convey information about the green features of the property to the future owner or tenant. Rita Parise, the Housing Administrator in the Columbus Department of Development, commented that her department expects to produce specific post-rehab resident education manuals and training for residents. The curriculum would include proper maintenance of green features already installed, as well as offer guidance on maximizing water conservation and energy efficiency.

CREATIVE AND EFFICIENT PARTNERSHIPS | INTERDISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Creating efficient partnerships in an open forum, where knowledge from a variety of industries can be shared and built upon is another element in the success of a green acquisition rehabilitation program. Kim Stands, the Assistant Housing Administrator in the Columbus Department of Development is proud that the partnership formed with Enterprise Green Communities has dramatically expanded green building knowledge and capacity in the Columbus area. This partnership has helped the city of Columbus build their green standards and specifications, as well as, deliver them to their partners in the nonprofit and private sectors.

It is important that successful policies and practices resulting from partnerships are disseminated and updated on a regular basis. The AWARE Manual – a joint project of the city of Columbus, Franklin County, Enterprise Green Communities, and other partners – is now in its 2nd edition, with 70 pages guiding designers and developers on green affordable building. The manual is considered to be a living document that will encourage experimentation and constant feedback from all parties involved in the housing program. To access the AWARE Manual, please go to www.td.ci.columbus.oh.us/DivisionsandOffices/housing/index.asp.



2010 and Beyond

- Publication of the 2nd Edition of the AWARE Manual (January 2010)
- Next phase of implementation under NSP
- Accelerate education efforts, working with universities to introduce more students to principles of green design
- Share knowledge and broker public-private partnerships and educational workshops.
- City of Columbus receives \$23,200,773 in NSP2 funding.

When developers and their contractors begin working on a NSP property, they create their own working specifications by utilizing the AWARE Manual. Once those are created, they submit them to the city of Columbus housing staff to review and approve the plans. If they determine the working specifications will produce a home that is of the AWARE Manual standards, they then commit the NSP funding for the property. These efficient partnerships fluidly transition from the planning stage to the implementation stage of the program.

When asked about the future of green affordable design and development, individuals from Columbus-area for-profit, non-profit, and the public sectors all responded that ultimately green design would not be an optional set of specs among others, but central to all housing design and rehabilitation. Yet, they all emphasized integration will happen through the hard work of raising awareness, continuing education, creating strong partnerships, sharing knowledge, and

documenting both the successes and failures of program design and implementation.

The steps that the city of Columbus has taken to fully integrate green rehabilitation in their Neighborhood Stabilization Program took commitment and dedicated technical assistance. Through creative partnerships and a series of workshops for developers and contractors, a diverse knowledge base was formed and educational opportunities were plentiful.

Active participation from developers and contractors in the area and the commitment by the city of Columbus to make affordable green building a permanent part of their housing program led to a comprehensive and replicable model for greening NSP.

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