

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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AHF'S READERS'
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REGIONAL
REPORT:
MIDWEST

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BEST OF THE BEST

Readers Vote
Top Honors to
Maverick Landing



Celebrating the Best

Creative problem solving, bold vision, and tremendous persistence: That's what describes all the sponsors of the projects selected to receive AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCE'S 2006 Readers' Choice Awards for the Nation's Best Affordable Housing Developments.

Our subscribers picked seven category winners and one grand-prize winner out of 32 finalists. They range from the rehabilitation of an old convent to a master-planned development of the former site of a drive-in movie theater. One project even includes a charter school on site.

In the following pages, we invite you to read about the winners:

Best Overall Project: Maverick Landing in Boston

Best Family Project: Tierra del Sol in Canoga Park, Calif.

Best Historic Rehab/Preservation Project: Clare Court in Baltimore

Best Master-Planned/Inclusionary Zoning Project: Holiday Neighborhood in Boulder, Colo.

Best Mixed-Use Project: Roosevelt Square, Phase I, in Chicago

Best Seniors Project: Fremont Oak Gardens in Fremont, Calif.

Best Special Needs/SRO Project: The Plaza Apartments in San Francisco

Best Urban Project: Pantages Apartments in Seattle

Maverick Landing in Boston.



BEST OVERALL PROJECT:

Boston Redevelopment Beats the Odds

BY BENDIX ANDERSON

Skeptics say that HOPE VI redevelopments take too long to complete, cost too much, and provide too little public housing.

But Maverick Landing is defying those critics. The new community of townhouses and mid-rise apartments here replaced three-quarters of the public housing torn down to build it, finished six months ahead of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) deadline, and came in \$1.5 million under budget.

The project is a redevelopment of the old Maverick Garden public housing project in East Boston. It was paid for, in part, by HUD's HOPE VI program to revitalize public housing.

Although HOPE VI has been criticized for tearing down much more public housing than it builds, the rede-

Maverick Landing

Developers: Trinity Financial, Inc.
East Boston Community Development Corp.

Sponsor: Boston Housing Authority

Architect: ICON Architecture, Inc.

Major Funders:

Apollo Housing Capital
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Boston Housing Authority
MassHousing
Boston's Neighborhood Housing Trust
Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
Massachusetts Technology Collaborative

velopers of Maverick managed to fit 305 public housing apartments into the rebuilt 426-unit community. That's close to the 413 units of public housing that originally crowded onto the eight-

acre site of the old Maverick Gardens, overlooking Boston Harbor and the office towers of downtown Boston.

“No one would be displaced. That was guaranteed and set in stone,” remembered Elly Saraceni, a board member for the Maverick Tenants Association, Inc. Saraceni, who has lived at Maverick since 1980, said no one who lived at Maverick when the redevelopment started was turned away from the finished community because of lack of space.

Keeping a promise

The concentration of public housing at Maverick is dense for a HOPE VI project, in which typically a third of the apartments are public housing, with the rest being a mix of market-rate rentals, low-income apartments, and for-sale housing.

“Our agenda was to preserve as many of the affordable public housing units as possible,” said Albert Caldarelli, president of the East Boston Community Development Corp. and Maverick’s co-developer.

The developers also increased the total number of housing units to 426 without increasing the development’s density. How? By creating 80 new apartments on a vacant patch of waterfront land just across the street.

The finished product fits an average 44 housing units per acre onto the site. Although that’s about twice the density of a typical garden apartment community, Maverick fits in well with the surrounding neighborhood. Row houses with old-fashioned architectural details line most of the streets both inside and outside the project.



Maverick Landing was developed in record time, led by Sarah Barnat, project manager for Trinity Financial, Inc., and Albert Caldarelli, president of the East Boston Community Development Corp. (Photos by Bruce T. Martin)

Maverick’s mid-rise buildings also match the size of the historic old warehouse and shipping buildings that line the waterfront.

“You would be astonished by the quality of construction,” said Sarah Barnat, project manager for Maverick’s lead developer, Trinity Financial, Inc., based in Boston.

The development includes 91 market-rate rental apartments and 30 for-sale units that are affordable to households earning from up to 80 percent to no more than 120 percent of the area

median income.

The clock began ticking on the \$135 million project in April 2002, when HUD announced that Maverick was the winner of a \$35 million HOPE VI grant. The last units will be finished in November 2006, just four and a half years later.

A head start

It can take well over five years just to get a permit to build apartments in this town, let alone redevelop hundreds of aging public housing apartments. But Maverick had a head start over other HOPE VI projects. Trinity and the Boston Housing Authority had already successfully completed the HOPE VI redevelopment of Orchard Gardens in Roxbury, Mass.

Also, co-developer East Boston CDC already had a long relationship with the Maverick Tenants Association through the technical assistance it offered tenants in handling the HUD bureaucracy. That relationship helped shorten the process of working with tenants to choose a design for the new

project.

Finishing faster should save the project \$1.5 million as rental income flows in and the development’s construction loans are retired, Barnat said. This money will pay for long-term services to the residents, ranging from job training to child care, provided by Maverick Landing Community Services.

The project raised \$51.4 million from the sale of 4 percent and 9 percent low-income housing tax credits, \$13.5 million in capital funds from the Boston Housing Authority, \$12.8 mil-

lion in grants from city and state agencies, and \$8.2 million in a loan from MassHousing, the state's housing finance agency, made using tax-exempt bond proceeds.

Maverick was among the first apartment communities in the country to earn a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Bringing in fresh air

Building to LEED's high standards will create apartments that are 40 percent more energy-efficient than the Boston building code requires, according to Nancy Ludwig, principal with ICON Architecture, Inc., based in Boston. Her design for Maverick includes features from improved insulation to solar panels.

The LEED standards will also

bring more fresh air into the apartments with improved ventilation systems. Before the renovation, nearly three quarters of the people living at the project suffered from respiratory ailments, according to a report from the Committee for Boston Public Housing.

Maverick received a \$453,693 grant from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative through its Renewable Energy Trust to help finance the project's green design features. The hard cost of constructing the apartments at Maverick averaged \$170,000 per unit, according to Barnat of Trinity Financial.

For decades, the old Maverick Gardens public housing project site, with its oversized blocks that had no through streets, had divided Maverick's residents from the rest of East Boston and separated that neighborhood from the waterfront.

"A lot of people in East Boston would not walk through this project at night," Caldarelli remembered.

New streets planted with trees run through Maverick Landing toward the water. Private builders are now planning new construction for many once-vacant waterfront lots.

"There are redevelopment plans for all those parcels for 1,100 market-rate units of housing," Barnat said. She credits all this activity to the work at Maverick.

The redevelopment has also reconnected Maverick and its surrounding neighborhood. The Shining Star Day Care center at Maverick serves 36 children, half from Maverick and half from outside the project, and all of the spaces have long waiting lists.

"When people were willing to do that we knew we had turned the corner," Caldarelli said.

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