

Fall 2015 \$16.00  
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**THE NHP FOUNDATION**



# Improving Housing, Strengthening Communities

Ambitious nonprofit expands affordable housing through construction, preservation and partnership



Roundtree Residences – Exterior

Reacting to the urban unrest plaguing the 1960s, the U.S. Congress chartered the National Housing Partnership to help provide answers to the grievances these inner-city communities were facing. The NHP Foundation (NHPF), a private nonprofit corporation headquartered in New York City, grew as a direct result of that early federal initiative. Today, NHPF has celebrated its 25th anniversary and continues to preserve and develop affordable housing across 13 states and the District of Columbia.

“Our primary focus remains the preservation of America’s existing affordable housing market,” says Dick Burns, NHPF President, CEO and Trustee. “We are engaged in new development as well, including a major effort just completed in southeast Washington, D.C. Construction has just begun on a much-needed, 36-unit Chicago project in East Garfield Park, and there are three other projects in predevelopment in Brooklyn, Chicago and Houston. The affordable housing inventory is deteriorating rapidly in this country, so its preservation must be combined with new development to meet demand.”

Maintaining the current affordable housing supply is a challenge for public housing agencies across the United States. NHPF aims to help ease the burden, while recognizing some of the threats to affordable housing. According to Burns, two main factors contribute to these threats.



The NHP Foundation

President & CEO and Trustee :: Dick Burns | Location :: Washington, D.C.

"Expiring land-use restrictions remove the incentives to keep units affordable," he says. "Secondly, older market-rate properties in the low B-to-C category in great locations attract developers that look to renovate and raise rent by \$100 to \$300 a month. Current residents cannot stay there at those rates. We look to secure the cooperation of the local housing agencies, which are usually happy to have our support in helping them achieve their goals."

The NHP Foundation has started an affiliate program to assist smaller nonprofits in renovating and updating their local affordable housing stock. Through the program, the organization also works with various municipal governments and agencies. Thus far, these partnership efforts have been very successful.

"Our affiliate program helps those who lack the capital, financial strength and, sometimes, the expertise to renovate their properties and expand in their markets," Burns says. "We acquired 1,300 units through this program's partnerships. With this competitive atmosphere, the publicly marketed deals are not within our resources. We have focused on off-market deals, and it's really paying off."

## NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Cleme Manor, an NHPF property located in Houston's Greater Fifth Ward, exemplifies how quality affordable housing and residential services can transform a community for the better. Thanks to the combined efforts of NHPF and the City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department, the acquisition of Cleme Manor was made possible with Hurricane Ike Disaster Relief funds.

Built in 1970, the 24-building, garden-style community offers 284 units ranging in size from one to five bedrooms. Unfortunately, residents have struggled to deal with high levels of crime and drug use at the property and in the surrounding area. The buildings needed significant repairs, and the residents generally said they did not feel safe living there. To offer a more secure and attractive place to live, NHPF has worked to improve living conditions in a number of perceptible ways.

"The first thing we did was establish a crime-free zone for the residents, and we had terrific cooperation with the Houston Police Department," Burns says. "We worked with the police to find troublemakers, and we evicted



Roundtree Residences – Interior





unauthorized tenants. We installed cameras and monitoring services, and secured gates and entrances. The residents just wanted a safe environment, and when there's neglect of the property and tenants are not properly screened, you end up with a criminal element. Tenants have been delighted with the change."

#### THE POWER OF REVITALIZATION

Reducing crime was only the first step in this process. NHPF is also launching a significant renovation program; ensuring residents can take greater pride in the place they call home.

"We are getting ready to undertake extensive improvements to Cleme Manor," Burns says. "When we do major renovations of properties such as this, we not only restore the physical integrity of the buildings, such as the exterior facades and landscaping. We also redo the unit interiors. Residents can then enjoy upgraded apartments, renovated with attention to Enterprise Green Communities standards, that are attractive, encourage sustainability and lower utility bills."

Resident service programs, provided through NHPF's Operation Pathways, are featured prominently at Cleme Manor. Individuals and families will have opportunities to improve their lives in varied and significant ways.

"We have a robust resident services program and NHPF goes by the mottos of 'not just a roof over your head' and 'where you live matters,'" Burns says. "We feel it's important not just to give the residents safe, clean housing but also to attend to their life improvement needs and goals. Operation Pathways maintains active after-school programs, summer camps, health and wellness initiatives, adult financial literacy classes and seniors programs, all of which enrich the lives of the residents. Services are also open to other neighbors in the surrounding area."

NHPF hopes to build on lessons learned at Cleme Manor, applying that knowledge to future efforts throughout Texas and beyond.

"We've been in Texas for quite a while. We have five properties in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex and another one in Houston," Burns says. "Cleme Manor was really the next step in building a solid foundation within the Houston market. We felt that this was an opportunity to positively impact the residents of the property, while also having a very positive impact on the greater Fifth Ward community as a whole. We received tremendous support from the various agencies and the city of Houston to make that a reality. In fact, our combined efforts led to the only public school in the area remaining open, reversing an earlier closure decision. That's progress we can measure and celebrate." 