Planting the seeds for a growing community

ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010
NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES OF NEW HAVEN, INC.
Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven
Positioning New Haven’s Neighborhoods to Succeed

2009–10 ANNUAL REPORT

Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven is a nonprofit organization that positions New Haven’s neighborhoods to succeed by increasing homeownership; making homes functional, beautiful and affordable; and helping neighbors take charge of their neighborhoods.

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Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven
Board of Directors

The NHS Board of Directors is a partnership of neighborhood residents, local lenders, and representatives from the City of New Haven and the insurance industry.

RESIDENTS
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Brenda Jennings
Chris Prokop
George Rose, Sr.
Tanya Smith
Virginia Stevenson, President
Celeste Suggs, Vice President
Jerome Tureck
David White, Jr.

CITY OF NEW HAVEN
Elaine Braffman
Gil Hawkins

LENDING AND INSURANCE PARTNERS
Terence Floyd
People’s United Bank
Andrew Hvizd, Treasurer
NewAlliance Bank
Kevin A. Moran
Bank of America
Chris Raffone
State Farm Insurance Co.
Bert Reid
Citizens Bank

Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven
Staff

Dr. James A. Paley, Executive Director
Henry Dymia, Director of Design and Construction
Bridgette P. Russell, Managing Director, Home Ownership Center

Norma Chadwick, Data Entry/Housing Counselor Support
Thomas Cotarella, Senior Housing Counselor
Stephen Cremin-Endes, Community Building Specialist
Kathy Fay, Rehabilitation Specialist
Michael Haynes, Housing Counselor Coordinator
Aretha Huckaby, Administrative Assistant
Sara Jamison, Post-Purchase Education Coordinator
Tracey Neal, Project Manager
Linda Papa, Assistant Rehabilitation Specialist
Clara Quinones, Housing Counselor
Alice Steinhardt, Housing and Credit Counseling Specialist
Jasmine Torres, Housing Counselor
Julie Trachtenberg, Resource Development Specialist

2009-2010 VISTA Members
Sarah Custer
Jeff Kruth
David Dantes
Jessalyn Michaels

2010-2011 VISTA Members
Jeff Kruth
Emily Rorke
RJ Mercede (Summer Associate)
Jessalyn Michaels

All the photos of events are taken by NHS staff.
Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven, Inc. and New Haven Homeownership Center, Inc.
Consolidated Statement for the Year Ended December 31, 2009

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| Expenses | |
| Program Services | |
| Housing maintenance & development | 2,228,973 | 2,228,973 | - | - |
| Staff compensation | 2,228,973 | 2,228,973 | - | - |
| Total Program Services | 2,228,973 | 2,228,973 | - | - |
| Management and general | 110,097 | 110,097 | - | - |
| Total Expenses | 2,338,960 | 2,338,960 | - | - |

| Change in Net Assets | (84,640) | 84,640 | (311,843) | (311,843) |
| Reversal of temporarily restricted net assets to deferred revenue | - | - | - | - |
| Net assets at beginning, December 31, 2009 | 3,415,181 | 36,183 | 1,547,485 | 5,049,810 |

| June 2009 | |
| Current Assets | |
| Cash | $1,465,573 | $2,066,672 | - | - |
| Accounts receivable | 134,506 | 134,506 | - | - |
| Prepaid expenses | 274,217 | 274,217 | - | - |
| Total current assets | 2,874,396 | 2,475,495 | - | - |
| Total assets | $6,513,081 | $5,785,099 | - | - |

| LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS | |
| Current Liabilities | |
| Accounts payable | $11,290 | $4,178 | - | - |
| Account expenses | 10,240 | 10,240 | - | - |
| Rent due to tenants | 11,490 | 11,490 | - | - |
| Total current liabilities | 33,020 | 33,020 | - | - |
| Total Liabilities | 3,415,181 | 3,415,181 | - | - |
| Net Assets | 3,097,900 | 3,097,900 | - | - |
| Total Assets and Net Assets | $6,513,081 | $5,785,099 | - | - |
The past year has been filled with challenges and accomplishments. The economy is still devastating our region, and housing prices remain depressed. Violent street crime is up in the neighborhoods where we are focusing our attention and New Haven remains a “tale of two cities,” with vast disparities between income and property values depending on location. Despite the pessimism that has tinged our neighborhoods, Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven has taken on the challenge of addressing the revitalization needs of several blocks that have been neglected for years.

Our Revitalization Demonstration Project (RDP) has been proceeding full speed ahead in Newhallville on and around Winchester Avenue and on West Division Street. In the Hill we have focused our attention on Stevens Street, where we are working with residents on a number of community-based projects. Our RDP strategy recognizes the fact that simply rehabbing one or more houses does not revitalize a neighborhood; promoting homeownership on that block is similarly unlikely to have a lasting impact if new homeowners languish in a neighborhood that lacks signs of reinvestment and stabilization; and community engagement will only provide frustration in an area where houses continue to be foreclosed and there is no sign of community reinvestment. Our commitment to a holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization combines active rehabilitation in specifically targeted areas, a new homeowner in each of the houses we are rehabilitating for sale, and an engaged group of residents who are simply unwilling to give in to the despair and despondency that all too often accompanies rising crime rates and street violence.

This past spring, NHS sponsored a Resident Leadership Program that featured five workshops and had different presenters helping to motivate nearly 30 attendees. The sessions were extremely well received and we have already seen a surge in active engagement as residents seek to take back their communities. Resident leadership development has become a top priority for NHS as we plan our activities for the coming year. We currently have a larger inventory of houses for rehab and sale than at any point in our organization’s history. We recognize that this is somewhat of a risk, but we feel strongly that it is not only a risk worth taking, but an endeavor that will reap huge rewards as we transform these targeted areas into neighborhoods of choice for homeowners, renters, and responsible investors. Our first cluster of completed houses is on Winchester Avenue near the corners of Lilac Street and Highland Street. Please drive by and check out the impact that the rehabilitation of these houses is already having on the perceptions and physical condition of the houses in this compact area.

The past year also marked the completion of our Fairlawn Manor development at the corners of Whalley Avenue, Blake Street, and E.T. Grasso Boulevard. The $7 million project has had a significant impact on one of the major entryways into the city. Although this development was very heavily subsidized, it has provided a catalyst for other reinvestment in the area and has helped to stabilize housing values in the Fairlawn-Nettleton Historic District.

In the area of homeownership promotion and preservation, we have recently witnessed an increase in the number of individuals and families who are interested in purchasing a home for the first time. At the same time, the number of foreclosures in the greater New Haven area remains unacceptably high. Our HomeOwnership Center is working assiduously with homeowners who are at risk of losing their homes, structuring mortgage modifications and providing rescue funds where needed to keep our clients from losing their homes.

As always, I wish to thank my dedicated staff, our board of directors, and the many partners who have made our work possible through their generous contributions.
A Message from the Board President

Serving on the board of Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven for nearly 30 years (currently as its board president) has been a very exciting journey for me, and I consider it an honor and a privilege to serve this organization.

One of the major challenges we face at the present time is acquiring houses for rehabilitation at a reasonable cost. We are unable to compete with investors for houses that we wish to incorporate in our affordable homeownership development program. In addition, the overall economy has resulted in several of our donors reducing the amount of their annual support. In spite of the ongoing pressure that we feel on our annual budget, NHS of New Haven will continue to be a strong and vital organization that keeps its focus on our corporate mission.

NHS is addressing these challenges by covering a larger service area to provide new opportunities to clients in other neighborhoods. We have expanded the staff by hiring devoted and talented professionals to deal with the growing needs of the organization. Our HomeOwnership Center staff has been spending an increasing amount of time working on foreclosure intervention and loss mitigation. We are engaging new residents to get involved in the community, taking an active interest in their neighborhoods. We interact with other neighborhood associations, and form new ones, where necessary, to stimulate comprehensive strategies to stabilize our neighborhoods. We also continue to train our staff and board members who attend professional development, skill building, and career enhancement workshops.

It gives me great pleasure and satisfaction to serve an organization that has made a real difference in the lives of hundreds of clients and their families through its various homeownership programs. I choose to volunteer and be a part of NHS because caring for the well-being of others is important to me, as is making homes affordable to those who may not otherwise have an opportunity to own a home. Stabilizing and revitalizing our neighborhoods makes our communities safer and addresses the problems of many homes that are in need of extreme rehabilitation. I am deeply grateful to NHS for achieving its goals and touching the lives of so many people.

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Our VISTA Members

NHS had the good fortune to host four VISTA members during the past year who worked full-time for twelve months. Sarah Custer, David Dantes, Jenna Lupi, and Jessalyn Michaels were responsible for the planning and implementation of several projects that would simply not have been possible using only the regular full-time staff. Their leadership roles in each of their respective projects helped to bring NHS a new level of visibility and branding.

The artist designed a motif after brainstorming with the owner of a vacant building on Winchester Avenue. The artist designed a motif after brainstorming with the owner of a vacant building on Winchester Avenue. The artist designed a motif after brainstorming with the owner of a vacant building on Winchester Avenue. The artist designed a motif after brainstorming with the owner of a vacant building on Winchester Avenue. The artist designed a motif after brainstorming with the owner of a vacant building on Winchester Avenue.

For example, one of the VISTA members organized a month-long series of workshops for multi-cultural women (funded by a NeighborWorks® America grant) that included a range of topics about financial planning, home maintenance skill-building, and the pre-purchase process for first-time homebuyers. It culminated with an “Around the World” festival held on the NHS campus. It was the first time NHS had hosted such a widely attended and extremely successful community event.

Another activity conceived of and implemented by one of our VISTA members was a mural project in collaboration with the city of New Haven, a local public school, an artist, and the owner of a vacant building on Whalley Avenue. The artist designed a motif after brainstorming with the owner of a vacant building on Winchester Avenue. The artist designed a motif after brainstorming with the owner of a vacant building on Winchester Avenue. The artist designed a motif after brainstorming with the owner of a vacant building on Winchester Avenue. The artist designed a motif after brainstorming with the owner of a vacant building on Winchester Avenue.

The mural is significant for several reasons: 1) NHS has never spearheaded an art project with this many partners; 2) The building is located in an area where our rehabilitation work on several NHS properties has already begun, calling attention to our revitalization efforts; and 3) We can anticipate an increased awareness of NHS’ mission and hope to attract a wider audience of constituents (clients, volunteers, partners, and contributors).

Other events and projects included:

- The New Haven Housing Fair that took place on June 19, 2010 in collaboration with the City of New Haven and ROOF (Real Options Overcoming Foreclosure) Initiative;
- Flip camera videos of residents telling their stories about community engagement and foreclosure scams;
- Two newsletters;
- A newly designed NHS website;
- Implementation of Success Measures for Community Stabilization and Presentation of our experiences at the Washington DC NeighborWorks® Training Institute in December 2009;
- Manuals and surveys to be used by the HomeOwnership Center’s housing counselors;
- A HomeOwnership Center brochure and new graphics for advertising;
- A community garden in one of NHS’ targeted neighborhoods.

Students, drew it on the facade of the property, and then guided the students through the actual painting. The wall was whitewashed with the generous donation of paint and labor by the local business, Sherman Paints that recently opened on Whalley Avenue.

Our VISTA Members

The students, drew it on the facade of the property, and then guided the students through the actual painting. The wall was whitewashed with the generous donation of paint and labor by the local business, Sherman Paints that recently opened on Whalley Avenue.
Community Building and Organizing

NHS’ Community Building and Organizing (CB&O) initiative fosters neighborhood revitalization by helping residents, homeowners, and investors realize their ability to change their communities. By providing opportunities for discussion, education, and involvement, we help to mobilize an active resident base. Our efforts include encouraging participation and leadership in community activities, supporting the work of resident leaders, connecting residents with programs and resources, and initiating events that bring neighbors together. CB&O activities concentrate on five Revitalization Demonstration Project (RDP) areas: Blake Street, West Division Street, Stevens Street, Howard Avenue, and Winchester Avenue.

Highlights of the past year:
- Baseline SuccessMeasures surveys in our RDP areas investigating how residents perceive their neighborhoods. Through survey work, we met with residents and learned about community strengths and weaknesses.
- Inauguration of our fifth RDP area: Winchester Avenue. Our efforts in engaging residents around Winchester Avenue have raised attendance at community management team meetings. A mural project has brought residents together to beautify a blighted street corner.
- Production of Resident Leader Documentaries showcasing the work of seven resident leaders in New Haven. We intend to use the power of the media to share these inspiring stories.
- The launch of our Resident Leadership Program. We conducted a series of classes to cultivate the community leadership skills of 26 resident leaders in New Haven.
- Numerous volunteer events involving community members and volunteers.

Building Leaders, Building Communities

In March 2010, NHS launched its Resident Leadership Program, “Building Leaders, Building Communities.” We held our first series of classes using a curriculum developed in partnership with our national organization, NeighborWorks® America. The goal of the program is to develop the leadership skills of New Haven residents while providing a forum for sharing individual experiences. Our 26 graduates, several of whom were already established community leaders, have taken the lead in their communities, organizing greenspace groups, neighborhood associations, and block watches.

In our 30-year history, NHS has fully renovated and sold more than 250 houses to low- and moderate-income families. NHS recognizes that a home is an asset that is only as valuable as the ability of its owner to retain it. In recognition of the unique challenges faced by LMI homebuyers, NHS opened the New Haven HomeOwnership Center in 2001 to serve as a “one stop shop” for prospective first-time homebuyers and existing homeowners in the Greater New Haven area. Today, the combined mission of both organizations is to stabilize and revitalize our neighborhoods through increased homeownership, to develop affordable housing for LMI families, and to provide homebuyer education and financial assistance to individuals and families who are purchasing homes in the Greater New Haven area. We hold the strong belief that homeownership gives families a vested stake in their communities, and provides them with an asset-building tool that will help them to achieve economic prosperity.

NHS is part of the national NeighborWorks® Network under the auspices of NeighborWorks® America based in Washington, DC. The NHS model was first implemented in Pittsburgh in 1968 where a group of residents concerned about the deterioration of their neighborhoods met with city officials and local lenders to start a new concept in community revitalization. The unique partnership that evolved is now active in more than 230 urban neighborhoods and rural areas nationwide. NeighborWorks® organizations have received wide acclaim as successful programs fully capable of turning the tide on neighborhood decline.

When NHS was established in New Haven, service areas were selected for their types of structures, degree of deterioration and extent of homeownership. Although the primary service areas have changed over the past 31 years, the same basic criteria apply. NHS is an effective, flexible organization with a proven track record in positioning neighborhoods to succeed. The ongoing commitment of the NHS partnership with residents, lenders, the insurance industry, and municipal leaders stimulates the holistic revitalization of our communities, creating vibrant, active, beautiful neighborhoods of choice.

NHS Mission and History

Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven was incorporated in 1979 as a nonprofit community housing development corporation. The NHS mission has always included providing safe, affordable housing and homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income (LMI) homebuyers in the City of New Haven. We currently develop 10-12 houses per year (roughly 20 housing units annually), most of which are rehabilitations of existing, formerly dilapidated structures. NHS is committed to strengthening the neighborhoods in which we work by stimulating reinvestment in the housing stock, and creating homeownership opportunities for a steadily increasing number of families.
NHS acquires, rehabilitates, and sells formerly blighted homes to low- and moderate-income families, usually at below-market prices. From time to time NHS also provides affordable housing for our clients through new construction projects. NHS ensures that all homes in its rehabilitation projects are energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly by creating housing that minimizes any negative impact on the environment. Many of these measures help to reduce homeowners’ operating costs. NHS also integrates green practices into our rehabilitation projects without sacrificing historic and architectural details.

All houses are retrofitted with energy conservation features such as insulation, replacement windows, energy-efficient lighting, heating equipment, and appliances. Water conservation is achieved with low-flow plumbing fixtures.

The goal of NHS’ renovation projects is to modernize each building’s layout to make houses more functional for today’s families, while utilizing the existing features to the maximum extent possible. By restoring houses and preserving many of their original materials, NHS minimizes construction waste. Thus, unnecessary demolition is avoided and historic features are more readily preserved.

Not only do our housing development projects increase owner-occupancy ratios, but they also offer an incentive for existing owners to begin to reinvest in their homes. The visible evidence of our reinvestment becomes a catalyst that motivates others to fix up their houses, and symbolizes the beginning of a renewed confidence in the neighborhoods in which we are working.

NHS has accomplished the following from July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010:

- Completed 6 “gut” rehabilitation affordable homeownership units for sale to low- and moderate-income families (complete rehabilitation);
- Created homeownership opportunities for 289 low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers;
- Helped 173 other prospective homebuyers to purchase a home;
- Invested $3 million in the purchase and rehabilitation of houses throughout New Haven, with an emphasis on the Dwight, Hill, Newhallville neighborhoods;
- Provided $750,000 in direct subsidies of development projects through the Connecticut Housing Tax Credit Program and Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program;
- Maintained lines of credit with three local lending institutions, totaling $1.35 million with which to undertake affordable housing development projects;
- Responded to basic inquiries from more than 730 clients expressing an interest in homeownership;
- Provided pre-purchase homebuyer education to 350 prospective homebuyers;
- Held 12 financial literacy classes with 82 participants;
- Provided Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) counseling to more than 45 existing homeowners (ages 62+) who have equity in their homes;
- Counseled 604 homeowners who faced foreclosure;
- Helped 100 clients obtain mortgage modifications to stay in their homes;
- Disbursed $27,880.50 in matching funds for 11 homeowners in the Individual Development Account Program and enrolled 22 new participants;
- Registered 180 participants in our post-purchase home maintenance and energy-saving classes;
- Provided landlord training to 7 owners of multi-family houses;
- Provided Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) counseling to more than 45 existing homeowners (ages 62+) who have equity in their homes;
- Helped 173 other prospective homebuyers to purchase a home;
- Created homeownership opportunities for 289 low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers;
- Completed 6 “gut” rehabilitation affordable homeownership units for sale to low- and moderate-income families (complete rehabilitation);
- Helped 173 other prospective homebuyers to purchase a home;
As we enter the last quarter of 2010 I see in the HomeOwnership Center a year filled with hardships but also with new beginnings. Foreclosure prevention and delinquency counseling still produced caseloads equivalent to what we have seen for the past two years.

Unemployment, underemployment and recessionary woes were the major reasons for missed mortgage payments. Our expanded partnerships and collaboration with the ROOF Project (Real Options Overcoming Foreclosure), the court-appointed mediation team, CT Fair Housing, Homes Saved by Faith and various ministerial alliances allowed us to expand our outreach efforts. On April 1 we launched an awareness campaign on “loan modification scams” with a faith-based partnership, and the offices of Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch and Congressman Jim Himes. This was part of a national initiative by NeighborWorks® America to alert the public on three major points – recognizing and identifying scams, where to report scams, and where to go to find credible help. In June we launched a similar campaign in New Haven and coupled it with the grand opening of our expanded HomeOwnership Center. We had representatives from FDIC, Fannie Mae, HUD, TD Bank, CHFA and NeighborWorks® America to highlight this important scam alert campaign and to share in the festivities of our HOC grand opening.

2010 was also a year of new partnerships and new modes of outreach and marketing. We were able to expand existing programs with the help of staff and our VISTA members. In April we celebrated multi-cultural women’s month – a month-long series of programs based on the “Building Credit” workshop that the HOC presented in 2009 exclusively for women. Of a focus group came four distinctive workshops for women:

1. Resident Leadership – “Woman take the Lead”
2. Demystifying Credit – “Getting Credit Cents”
3. If you’re ready now’s the time – “Getting Ready to Buy”
4. Hands on home repair skills – “Tool School for Women”

The culminating event was the very successful “Around the World Festival” for participants, their families and the community. The picture-perfect April day lent itself beautifully to an array of outdoor festivities. Face-painting and games for children, international entertainment with an exotic Balinese dancer, a beautifully costumed Puerto Rican dance ensemble, and an African rhythmic drum corps – everything was absolutely amazing! Whether you stopped by to taste the succulent barbecued chicken or to enjoy the musical entertainment, everyone felt that this event was a wonderful way to engage the community in our work.

As we prepare for 2011, forming new partnerships and expanding existing ones will continue to be in the forefront on our programming agenda. As a strategy for our marketing efforts, we plan to introduce a new theme each month, which will encompass everything from foreclosure prevention, partnerships and collaborations, to historic preservation. In December we will end the year with “Home for the Holidays.”

There is a plethora of wonderful opportunities for first-time buyers! Interest rates are at an all-time low and the market clearly belongs to the buyer. If you’re ready, now is the time! I define a savvy buyer as one who is not only “credit ready” and “budget smart,” but someone who has taken the time to investigate his or her options, has completed one of our homebuyer education workshops and is committed to continuing post-purchase education in energy conservation and basic home maintenance. Sustainable, healthy homeownership has always been our mission.