

**Community Properties, Columbus, OH**  
**Executive Summary**

Affordable housing is the cornerstone of Mayor Michael B. Coleman's administration. Since 2000, the City of Columbus has partnered with and facilitated the construction of more than 6,000 homes and apartments in neighborhoods and more than 3,000 housing units downtown. **Community Properties** stands out as an unprecedented example of a community partnership to improve City of Columbus' urban neighborhoods. It consists of the rehabilitation of more than 1,000 apartments and townhouses in over 200 buildings in seven neighborhoods, the largest affordable housing initiative of its type in the nation. The **City of Columbus** will invest \$4.5 million in this initiative over three years.

Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing (OCCH) launched this \$85 million acquisition and rehabilitation project in April 2003, but the story starts years before. Campus Partners for Community Urban Redevelopment, the non-profit redevelopment arm of the Ohio State University, determined that crime and blight related to 500 units of low-income housing concentrated in the Weinland Park/ OSU neighborhood had to be addressed.

The properties were part of a complex ownership structure of 1,300 apartments for which the Section 8 housing subsidies were soon to expire. Campus Partners negotiated site control from the former owners in 2001, and engaged OCCH to help structure the transaction under the HUD Mark-to-Market program. HUD restructured more than \$26 million of old FHA-insured debt, preventing foreclosure and displacement of the tenants, and renewed the Section 8 contracts to ensure continued affordability. After consolidating ownership of the properties, OCCH took over management through a new non-profit corporation, Community Properties of Ohio Management Services (CPO).

Using public and private financing, more than 1,000 units will be rehabilitated at an average of \$50,000 per property. The first 300-unit phase of the rehabilitation is financed with \$7.5 million tax-exempt bonds purchased by **Fannie Mae**, as well as private investment raised by OCCH in exchange for tax credits and other tax benefits, and gap financing provided by the City of Columbus and State of Ohio.

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Future phases will be completed by the end of 2006 through partnerships with Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, Columbus Housing Partnership and Community Housing Network, all major developers of affordable housing in Franklin County. Furthermore, some buildings will be sold for market rate housing or demolished as part of a deconcentration strategy.

In addition to the physical improvements, CPO is creating a service-enriched housing model that serves residents and their children in ways that strengthen and preserve families, and provides opportunities to realize individual hopes and dreams. This effort started with a human service summit called by Mayor Coleman. CPO is coordinating area human service providers, and establishing programs in health, after-school and the arts. The typical resident is a single mother age 19-24 with an income of \$5,000 -\$7,000; but there are several buildings for seniors as well. With help from five family and senior resource coordinators, CPO has made more than 1,300 referrals for services to more than 50 organizations, prevented 32 evictions, facilitated more than 115 placements in educational and employment programs and sent 20 children to summer camp. CPO went through a formal tenant endorsement process to engage tenant support. They implemented a “helpline” to quickly and effectively respond to service requests. Through strict lease enforcement, improved applicant screening and increased social services, rent delinquencies have dropped by 60%.

In 2003 Mayor Coleman launched the “Hot Spots” initiative that identified troubled neighborhoods with persistent drug and gang activity, prostitution, robberies and/or gunfire. CPO is working with the City of Columbus Division of Police to address safety issues by increasing neighborhood patrols. The “Eliminate the Elements” crime prevention plan, funded by a special Congressional Appropriation, incorporates increased community policing, community safety support, training for residents and community groups, and rehabilitation including security lighting and new locks. The more than 150 arrests or warnings to date are just one indicator of success.

Community Properties is proving through its collaborative public-private partnership that preservation of affordable housing and healthy communities can go hand in hand.