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PROJECT PROFILE

Project Name Betts-Longworth Historic District **Location** Cincinnati, Ohio

Owner City of Cincinnati & over 100 other private developers, homeowners & other public agencies

Project Use(s) Residential & commercial

Project Size 8 City blocks (10 acres) **Total Development Cost** Over \$25 million

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) N/A

Date Initiated Planning began in the early 1960's (see attached) **Percent Completed, Dec. 30, 1992** 85%

Projected Completion Date (if appropriate) 1993 attached

(Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates)

Application submitted by:

Name Mark K. Jones

Title Community Development Analyst

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Organization	Key Person	Telephone
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Agencies <u>City of Cinti/NHC</u> <u>Historic Conservation Bd.</u>	<u>Mark Jones</u>	<u>352-1932</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Developer <u>CDP-BL Longworth</u>	<u>Chris Cain</u>	<u>352-3263</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professional consultants: Architect <u>Wichman-Gunther</u> Landscape architect <u>N/A</u> Urban designer <u>N/A</u> Planner <u>N/A</u>	<u>Mark Gunther</u>	<u>241-9933</u>
Lawyer <u>Griffin & Fletcher (Phase II)</u>	<u>Mike Fletcher</u>	<u>421-1313</u>
Other <u>Banking: BLHD Bank Loan Consortium</u>	<u>Bob Alexander</u>	<u>579-2389</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community group(s) <u>Betts-Longworth Historic Group</u>	<u>Louis Smith</u>	<u>421-7469</u>
Sponsor		

Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award in Urban Excellence.

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Signature Mark K. Jones City of Cincinnati

ABSTRACT

Project Name: Betts-Longworth Historic District (BLHD)

Location: Cincinnati, Ohio

1. Describe briefly the project's design and implementation.

The Betts-Longworth Historic District (BLHD) is a ten-block subneighborhood of the West End, located just one block north and west of Cincinnati's downtown. Both its historic Italianate and Queen Anne architecture and the neighborhood history make it an extremely important part of Cincinnati's history. Developed in the early 1800's by Revolutionary War veteran William Betts, and Cincinnati's notable Nicholas Longworth, the District contains among its historic buildings: the oldest brick home in Cincinnati (Betts farmhouse, 1804), the home of James Gamble (founder of Procter and Gamble), and the oldest Jewish Cemetery west of the Alleghenies (1819). Home to middle-class merchants and urban workers, the area flourished in the 19th Century. In the 20th Century, this area--known as Queensgate--was part of a thriving Black West End. World Heavyweight Champion Ezzard Charles had his gym there in the 1940's and a broad boulevard is named after him.

The BLHD redevelopment plan sought to create a new mini-neighborhood by preserving the historic buildings, building new homes, and avoiding past mistakes. Its unique aspects were: the Wagon Train/Land Rush rehab program; the public relations campaign; and City-developed new housing.

Under the Wagon Train/Land Rush concept, local banks, redevelopers/investors, and the City joined efforts to preserve and rehab the BLHD's historic buildings. New infill, homeownership townhouses (Longworth Square) were developed by a partnership of Provident Bank, CDP-BL (a nonprofit developer), the Ohio Housing Finance Agency, the Drees Company, and the City. Financed by a tax-free revenue bond, Longworth Square is the first municipally owned, financed, and managed homeownership housing project in Ohio.

Efforts to redevelop the neighborhood struggled against a public perception of failure due to years of unfulfilled redevelopment plans. To reverse this perception, the City took the unusual step of hiring a professional firm to conduct a marketing/public relations campaign to promote the neighborhood and its successes. The resulting media stories, promotional material, and advertising helped change the public image and reinforced development successes. The "Land Rush" was a key aspect of this campaign. The neighborhood was marketed as a scarce, desirable resource, and an "in" place with only a few openings for investors/developers, residents, and homeowners.

A more conventional City contribution was infrastructure improvements--several millions were spent improving streetscapes, replacing utility hookups, and building new parking lots to alleviate a shortage of parking.

Today, the BLHD is becoming downtown Cincinnati's most charming and attractive residential neighborhood. Historic rehab is flourishing; 200 apartments and homes are under construction or completed. Another 100 homes and apartments are being added in 1993. The apartments and homes are renting up and/or selling as fast as they can be completed. Fifty-seven new homes were sold even before they were built. Recognizing this success, the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) held its fall 1990 Show Home Tour in the BLHD.

2. What local urban issues did this project address? What were its goals? Were there issues that, in your judgement, might have been addressed but were not?

Through the combined efforts of the City, community leaders, and local lenders, the BLHD development has revitalized one of the City's most historic inner-city neighborhoods. In the 1950's and 1960's, Urban Renewal and the construction of an interstate highway devastated this neighborhood. Yet, after millions in public/private investment and years of repeated attempts at redevelopment, Betts-Longworth contained only a handful of rehabbed buildings by the late 1980's.

The major local urban issues addressed were historic preservation, slum and blight removal, revitalization of a dead neighborhood, affordable housing, economic and social integration, and minority involvement in urban revitalization. In the process of restoring historically significant buildings, making apartments and homes available at affordable prices, bringing new residents into a community, and revitalizing a neighborhood, the City had success in involving the City's minorities as developers, homeowners, contractors, and residents in the process. It was not merely gentrification at the expense of someone else. In addition, through gifts of City buildings in BLHD to the local public housing authority, economic diversity was assured through development of scattered site public housing.

A local urban issue not well addressed was fulfillment of the City's initial promise that the Queensgate I and II plans (of which the Betts-Longworth plan is a partial successor) would compensate the West End neighborhood for the destruction of their neighborhood. The construction of the I-75 interstate and Urban Renewal destroyed what was once a vital, although poor, West End. Thousands were relocated and their homes and neighborhood demolished. The revitalization of ten blocks of historic buildings could never compensate for years of unfulfilled City promises to offset for this destruction of 20 years ago. Some past residents are part of today's Betts-Longworth success, and leaders in Betts-Longworth's revitalization. But any benefits available from the revitalization of Betts-Longworth are far too small to compensate for the magnitude of changes in the West End 20 years ago due to Urban Renewal, etc.

3. Describe the financing of the project. Do you think it could be replicated?

Financing: \$ 3.8 million tax-free City revenue bonds (Longworth Square); bonds backed by Provident Banks and Ohio Housing Finance Agency
 1.8 million Capital Improvement Program (local tax dollars--Longworth Square)
 3.5 million local Bank Loan Consortium loans to developers
 7.0 million local bank/S&L loans to developers
 12.4 million Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) loans/ grants to redevelopers, infrastructure improvements, and misc. City support of project.

 \$30 million

The City has committed significant funding for revitalization of BLHD. Through working with developers/investors, local lenders, and other public agencies in a partnership approach, significant other financing was attracted to the project. Though commitment of such significant amounts of CDBG money is probably not reproducible, using the partnership/cooperation model is very transferrable. Other communities may have access to other tax and/or housing dollars. Including all the participants--lenders, public agencies, developers, residents, etc.--on one team working towards common goals significantly increases the prospects for success.

One of the unique aspects of the private financing is the BLHD loan consortium. At the beginning of the Wagon Train Plan, lenders individually were skeptical about BLHD prospects. The City did persuade them to become joined in a loan consortium, and thereby limit each bank's exposure on any one loan. The loan consortium then became an integral part of the Wagon Train, enabling the project to move forward with rehab loans.

4. Why does the project merit the Ruby Bruner Award for Excellence in the Urban Environment?

The City of Cincinnati's BLHD redevelopment effort transformed a deteriorated, blighted, and largely vacant neighborhood into a resurgent, livable, historic community. Historic buildings, which were literally falling down from neglect have been preserved. They have become cultural/historical assets and quality housing. Longworth Square is turning underutilized land (formerly noted only for its dilapidated buildings and high weeds) into an outstanding homeownership development.

The past problems were the result of public action--Urban Renewal and repeated failures of City redevelopment efforts in the 1970's and 1980's. It took learning from the mistakes of the past and a partnership or team approach to create success. The City joined all the necessary players--City, lenders, community, development/construction professionals, and investors--on the same partnership. Everyone went forward energized by the same vision that the BLHD contained the raw ingredients (historic buildings, vacant sites, and location) which could be reworked into a unique and charming historic community. Perception is often reality and communicating each small success as it occurred in a professionally conducted public relations campaign reinforced the momentum of success. This created a climate where greater successes became possible.

As part of the predominantly poor and minority West End, the BLHD serves to help economically and socially integrate the neighborhood. The heavy concentration of public housing next to the BLHD had been a negative factor in the public's acceptance of BLHD. But by working with neighborhood leaders and residents, BLHD is successfully coexisting with its West End neighbors.

"Find Your Place in History" was just a marketing slogan for Longworth Square, but it truly communicates the important historical significance and multicultural character and heritage of this neighborhood. The diverse character of BLHD renters and home buyers reflect this.