

PROJECT PROFILE

Project Name **Maya Angelou Community Initiative** Location **Boise Neighborhood, Portland,**

Owner **Housing Our Families** **Oregon**

Project Use(s) **Community revitalization and affordable rental housing**

Project Size **42 units on one city block** Total Development Cost **\$1,508,592**

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) **(of apartments only) \$209,026**

Date Initiated **August 4, 1993** Percent Completed, December 2, 1994 **100%**

Projected Completion Date (if appropriate) **completed**

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

Application submitted by:

Name **Gretchen Dursch**

Title **Executive Director**

Organization **Housing Our Families**

Address **5315 N. Vancouver Ave., Portland, Oregon 97217**

Telephone (**503**) **335-0947**

Key Participants (Attach an additional sheet if needed)

Organization	Key Person	Telephone
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Agencies City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury Portland Development Commission	Erik Sten	(503) 823-3028
	Neyle Hunter	823-3272
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Developer Housing Our Families	Gretchen Dursch	335-0947
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professional consultants: Architect Andrews Architect	Martha Andrews	239-4387
Landscape architect Same		
Urban designer N/A		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Financial packager Planner- Gabriele Development	Thomasina Gabriele	227-4968
Lawyer Greene & Markley	Ward Greene	295-2668
Other Construction Manager-Housing Development Center	Will White	335-3668
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community group(s) Maya Angelou tenants Maya Angelou Project Coordinating Committee	Corlin Beum	335-8343
	Kris Smock	335-0947
Boise Neighborhood Improvement Association	Soyna Tucker	225-5386
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sponsor Housing Our Families		

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

[] mailing [] media [] previous RBA entrant [**x**] other **Public agency**

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Signature

Gretchen M. Dursch

Project Name MAYA ANGELOU PROJECT

Location Boise Neighborhood in inner North/Northeast Portland, Oregon

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

The Maya Angelou project is a comprehensive strategy for urban renewal that used the renovation of a key apartment complex to leverage broad community revitalization in the surrounding neighborhood. It's success was the result of a unique partnership between community residents, public agencies and Housing Our Families (HOF) that operated throughout the design and implementation of the project. As a result, an apartment complex known as a center of drug and gang activity in Portland became the focal point for the transformation of an entire neighborhood. Some keys to our success are:

- * input from over 130 neighbors, tenants, churches and community organizations into the architectural design and property management plan of the property; and
- * over 200 community participants developed the Maya Angelou Community Action Initiative through a process of identifying neighborhood needs, prioritizing them, and developing projects to meet those needs. This was done in a series of individual meetings, community forums, and committee meetings facilitated by HOF's VISTA volunteers. The result has been an tremendous amount of activity planned and carried out by neighborhood residents, including paint-a-thons, home repair, clean ups, block watches, neighborhood parties, etc.

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?

The project addressed two needs: the need for affordable rental housing for families in a predominately minority, low income neighborhood and a need for broad community revitalization in a neighborhood torn apart by drugs and violence.

Both these goals were integrally linked because HOF utilized the creation of the affordable housing and the renovation of the property to ignite the belief in the neighborhood that things could change in their community. This new hope empowered them to develop and implement projects that have stopped the swell of crime, drugs and physical deterioration that had taken over their homes and neighborhood.

-When tenants and neighbors came together to discuss their concerns about the neighborhood and prioritize problems, they selected crime, youth, physical revitalization and people getting to know and trust each other again as their four priorities. Undoubtly, they could have picked more. However, the process HOF led them through helped them select those that were most fundamental to their quality of life.

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

The funding of the acquisition and rehab of the property had two key elements that made it successful: coordination and risk taking. Because of the property's history, it was initially viewed as too risky by private lenders. In addition, HOF needed cash to take advantage of the sheriff's auction. As a result, the City provided 100% of the property's financing up front. The City also began to focus other public dollars in this neighborhood, including building code enforcement and community policing, to support their investment in the Maya Angelou project. This project became a model for what the City now calls their "targeting" approach to coordinating their efforts in an area. After the completion of major renovations, a consortium of private lenders stepped in to refinance half of the City's original loan. This process provides an excellent model for the use of public dollars. Public housing dollars can be used to take the initial risk on a critical project, and other public agencies can work together to support that investment. Later, when the project is a success, private lenders will step in and the returned public funds will fund another project. In this manner, a revolving loan fund of public monies can be created to be used to take advantage of real estate opportunities that have high risk but also immense potential to transform a distressed neighborhood.

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

- * The project is a model of a community being transformed and crime and physical decay being halted through the effective use of the rehabilitation of an apartment complex as the catalyst for comprehensive community revitalization.
- * The whole community -- tenants, neighbors, community groups, churches, businesses -- were involved in the entire project.
- * The community process utilized HOF's unique consensus and partnership building model. This model allowed a diverse group of participants to develop their own voice and leadership skills.
- * This project was a major undertaking for a young organization with limited experience. HOF was able to take this bold step by clearly articulating its vision, goals and processes.
- * The project's architectural design successfully increased security and a sense of community. It radically changed the perception of this property from a haven for drug and gang activity to the neighborhood's focal point of positive change.
- * The project was extremely cost effective. The total acquisition & renovation of the property was \$30,000 per unit. Community organizing was done with small grants and hundreds of volunteers.