

1 of 2 DOCUMENTS

US States News

March 25, 2008 Tuesday 3:34 AM EST

NEBRASKA CELEBRATES 2008 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WEEK

BYLINE: US States News

LENGTH: 1154 words

DATELINE: LINCOLN, Neb.

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development issued the following news release:

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) today marked the contributions of the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program during the past several years.

The ceremony was one of several events across the nation celebrating Community Development Week this week. Gov. Dave Heineman presented a proclamation declaring March 24-28, 2008, as Community Development Week in the state.

"Here in Nebraska, the CDBG program has been an invaluable resource for more than 30 years to communities looking to update infrastructure, plan for future development, and attract new jobs," Gov. Heineman said. "I can think of few investments than those that are made in our communities, our economy and that help preserve Nebraska's small-town heritage and keep communities strong."

During the past five years, \$54.1 million in CDBG funding has been invested in 348 projects throughout Nebraska, leveraging an additional \$219.2 million in state, local and private investments. Of the total yearly CDBG funding that Nebraska receives, 33 percent goes toward economic development projects that include \$17.8 million that has created or retained 1,553 jobs according to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED).

National Community Development Week was started in 1986 to remind Congress of the value of the CDBG program. To celebrate Nebraska's involvement in CD Week, Gov. Heineman presented the following awards for outstanding efforts by communities in the areas of economic development and community revitalization:

The 2008 Governor's Showcase Community Award went to the city of Burwell (pop. 1,082) in Garfield County. Burwell's accomplishments include passing LB840, the Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act that increased the city's sales tax with the additional proceeds going toward establishing an economic development office and hiring a full-time director; creating a professional office building that now houses five businesses (four that were

newly recruited); publishing and distributing Escape to Calamus and Scenic Loup River Valley Nebraska travel guide; building a new track and combination baseball/softball complex, and a new playground; and developing a new industrial park with nine available lots.

Atkinson was recognized with the 2008 Honorary Showcase Community Award.

Also featured during the celebration were projects in the cities of Lincoln and Omaha.

* Located three blocks from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus at 2124 Y St., Turbine Flats, a Research and Development (R&D) incubator was recognized as the first private R&D project within the Antelope Valley Research and Development Corridor, and the first to actualize the 2015 Vision Group's R&D pillar for Lincoln's future.

Turbine Flats involves an investment of \$37,614 in CDBG funding, \$71,270 in Tax Increment funding, and more than \$1 million in private funding, allowing it to provide a "first home" to entrepreneur businesses for little or no cost. In turn, this allows "resident entrepreneurs" to fully focus on crucial idea development related to their products and services as opposed to worrying about costs related to starting up a business. The resulting local investment and development of high-growth businesses is projected to slow "brain drain" as well as attract other entrepreneurs. Studies have shown that "resident entrepreneurs" are typically more invested in their home communities than outside owners or corporate employees, and are generous with their donations of time and money to their communities.

Turbine Flats' use of an existing building and its surrounding infrastructure in Lincoln also saved tremendous costs.

Receiving awards in Omaha were Family Housing Advisory Services; the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority; and the U.S. Housing and Urban Development and Brighton Construction Company.

* For more than 40 years, Family Housing Advisory Services has provided homeownership classes and financial counseling, helping low-income households secure and maintain affordable housing. Last year alone, FHAS helped 168 families become homeowners. Since the beginning of 2008, FHAS has provided counseling to more than 150 clients faced with foreclosure and helped 23 families save their homes. FHAS also has addressed the growing problem of homelessness, helping 158 homeless families secure permanent housing, and 228 families secure temporary housing in 2007.

Classes, such as "Housing Matter-Education on Tenant Rights and Responsibilities", fair housing workshops, and homeowner financing education offered by Omaha 100 are just some of the crucial services that FHAS provides.

* Similarly, the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) has dedicated itself to providing low-income residents of Omaha with safe, affordable housing.

NIFA's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, created as part of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, helps create affordable rental housing by establishing a tax credit for investors who provide equity to a qualified development. In turn, the housing's owner promises to maintain affordable rents and rent only to households whose incomes are below 50 or 60 percent of the Area Median Income.

During the past five years, NIFA has helped create a variety of 17 affordable rental developments (single-family, rent-to-own, senior units, special needs units, and historical building rehabilitation) in Omaha with just over \$7 million in allocated tax credits and \$94 million in total project costs. Further translated, this has resulted in 723 low-income housing units charging average rents at or below 42 percent of the Area Median Income for the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area.

* The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in partnership with Brighton Construction Company, recently completed America's first PATH Concept Home, featuring more than 60 efficient, sustainable and flexible products and systems.

PATH (Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing) demonstrates a blueprint for the future of housing across America in that it meets ENERGY STAR, Environments for Living, Green Building and Federal Housing Administration accessibility criteria.

The city of Omaha donated a site for the PATH Concept Home to be built on a corner lot nestled among new affordable homes and historic bungalows, convenient to the downtown and Creighton University.

The development of the PATH Concept Home in Omaha, was the result of many partnerships, principle among them the partnership between the U.S. Department of HUD and Brighton Construction Company based in Lincoln, Neb. Together, they created a model home, not only for its accessibility, efficiency and flexibility, but also for its affordability and ease to maintain and renovate.

Contact: Patty Wood, 800/426-6505, 402/471-1559, patty.wood@ded.ne.gov

LOAD-DATE: March 26, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newswire