

## **Sanders Consent Decree and Task Force: Record of Accomplishments January, 2005**

On December 23, 2004, the plaintiffs and defendant parties (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Allegheny County, Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA) and Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County) reached a settlement, bringing to a close the Sanders Consent Decree. Following a hearing on January 28, if no substantial objections are received, the proposed settlement will become final and the consent decree considered fully concluded.

The Sanders Consent Decree, signed in December, 1994, called for a number of initiatives to achieve its primary objectives of promoting racial desegregation in ACHA's housing programs (which were offered outside the cities of Pittsburgh and McKeesport) and increase desegregative housing choices and opportunities for African American class members and other low income residents of Allegheny County. Some of these included: the purchase of scattered site homes to replace demolished public housing units; establishment of a Fair Housing Services Center to provide mobility counseling for applicants for public and Section 8 housing including 450 desegregative Section 8 vouchers and 409 vouchers to additionally replace demolished public housing units; modernization and/or re-building of county public housing developments in the Sanders communities to provide equivalent housing conditions and amenities; and the set-aside of 25 percent of the county's federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for seven years (1996-2003) to be used to improve the housing and economic conditions in seven target communities: Braddock, Clairton, Duquesne, Homestead, McKees Rocks, Rankin and Wilksburg. These communities were selected because they contained the highest concentration of African American public housing and Section 8 residents and had experienced the greatest degree of physical decline and disinvestment.

### **Achievements--Housing Desegregation**

One of the mandates of the consent decree, which received considerable public attention and media coverage, was the efforts by the Sanders Task Force to select scattered sites,

principally in suburban locations throughout Allegheny County, for 130 replacement public housing units, which resulted from the 100 units lost at Talbot Towers in Braddock (the original impetus for the lawsuit that led to the decree) and 30 additional units lost due to efforts to reduce density and modernize other developments after the decree went into effect. These replacement homes, mostly single family and townhouse units, were all successfully purchased and renovated by ACHA and occupied by 2002.

In accordance with the decree, the Fair Housing Services Center (FHSC) provided mobility counseling to all the families considering moving into these units and continued to maintain contact with them to assist with their transition to new locations. Despite the initial skepticism, these units have been very successful, both in terms of attracting applicants and retaining occupancy. Most families have done well in their new neighborhoods, and few difficulties have been reported.

FHSC also played a primary role in distribution of the 489 desegregative Section 8 vouchers that were distributed as part of decree implementation. All of these vouchers were used by the holders to rent housing in non-racially identifiable areas throughout the county. In addition, FHSC worked with persons receiving the 409 replacement vouchers, which were provided by HUD in response to the total number of public housing units lost during 1996-1997. Many of these also resulted in desegregative housing choices being made by the voucher holder.

In an effort to carry out its housing desegregation efforts and serve the 9,000 total families that came to the FHSC through the unit offering and mobility counseling process, it also worked with ACHA to recruit many new landlords for the Section 8 voucher program. These efforts have helped to expand the affordable housing options for lower-income households in areas that traditionally have not been racially diverse.

While at the same time working to increase suburban housing opportunities, FHSC and ACHA worked to implement a "group move" program which would encourage a group of several non-African American applicants for low income public housing to accept desegregative placements, primarily in ACHA developments located in the Sanders communities. Beginning in 2003-2004, the program included monthly tours and various incentives (such as assistance with moving expenses) for applicants who selected one of the eligible sites.

Overall, during its operation, the FHSC, working with ACHA and other consent decree parties, was able to facilitate approximately 1,400 desegregative placements through the county's Section 8 and public housing developments. It is believed that these efforts represent important steps toward achieving the consent decree's long-term objective of providing more diverse housing choices for low and moderate income households and reducing the concentration of public and Section 8 housing to only a few municipalities in the Allegheny County. Under the settlement reached to end the decree, ACHA will continue to offer mobility counseling services through at least January 31, 2007 and will operate the group move program through at least June 30, 2006, when it is anticipated that most of the improvements in the neighborhoods surrounding the family public housing developments will be complete.

### **Achievements--Neighborhood Revitalization**

The consent decree created the Sanders Task Force, composed of representatives from the parties to the lawsuit, the Fair Housing Services Center and other nonprofit organizations which at various times included the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh, Just Harvest, the National Conference on Community and Justice and Womansplace. One of its principal responsibilities was the planning and expenditure of the CDBG funds, which over the seven-year set-aside period totaled about \$29.9 million. Working in partnership with public and nonprofit agencies, private developers and individual home buyers, the Task Force was able to use these funds to bring in an estimated \$30.8 million in additional monies to carry out programs for local residents and revitalize neighborhoods surrounding family public housing developments, resulting in an excess of \$60 million investment in the Sanders communities. (As will be described below, much of the physical improvements will be carried out in the next year to two years.)

Beginning in 1995, the Task Force undertook three major planning initiatives, along with several housing market studies, in order to identify community needs and feasible projects in the seven communities and target neighborhoods. It also received and considered numerous funding requests from local groups for a wide variety of projects relating to its overall mission in the Sanders municipalities. In all, between 1995-2004, the Task Force approved funding for over 100 projects and related administrative contracts. Funding was allocated for about 25 other

projects, which were subsequently determined infeasible, and the monies were re-programmed to other activities. Many of the projects are now complete or continuing with other sources of funding; others are currently underway; while several are now moving into the planning and design phases. Under the terms of the settlement agreement, Allegheny County will work to finish all remaining neighborhood improvements by the end of 2006.

In the early years of its work, the Task Force funded a range of human, workforce and economic development initiatives. These were aimed at generally increasing employment opportunities and the availability of business and community services for public housing and other low-income residents in the seven Sanders municipalities. The Task Force also approved residential "rehab-for-resale" funds for all the communities to begin to address deterioration in specific neighborhoods and increase homeownership opportunities for lower income families.

However, in 2001 the Task Force began to recognize that little progress was being made on one of the decree's key mandates: revitalizing the neighborhoods surrounding the six family public housing developments, including Mapleview Terrace in Braddock, Millvue Acres in Clairton, Burns Heights in Duquesne, Hays Manor and the former McKees Terrace (now the privately-owned Meyers Ridge) in McKees Rocks and Hawkins Village in Rankin. Starting in early in 2002, therefore, the Task Force began to narrow its focus to physically improving these neighborhoods. By this time ACHA had underway or had completed substantial re-building or modernization of all these family developments. Thus, it became even clearer that the best way to preserve or increase the long-term integration in these neighborhoods was to re-establish or reinforce them as attractive places to live, for all residents, by building and rehabilitating housing (and in the process removing blighting uses), upgrading existing infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, utilities, etc.) and improving access to community services, facilities and other amenities.

The Task Force worked with two local consulting firms, municipal officials, community development organizations and local residents to develop specific plans and physical improvement projects for each of these neighborhoods. In some cases, as in Clairton, the result will be a substantially re-built neighborhood; in others, the focus will be on helping current residents to rehabilitate their homes, providing landscaping and other buffers to protect existing

housing from surrounding commercial uses, removing remaining blighted buildings or adding a new community center to serve local residents.

When all the approved projects are completed, it is estimated Task Force efforts, throughout the seven Sanders communities, will result in the:

- construction of approximately 91 new homes,
- rehabilitation and re-sale of about 40 existing, vacant homes and
- renovation of another 75 to 80 existing, occupied homes.

It will also have helped to eliminate numerous vacant, blighted buildings (particularly in Braddock, Clairton and Duquesne), renovate older commercial buildings and encourage business development in several community business districts, build or expand community center space in five communities, and improve transportation services for public housing and other low-income residents. The following sections summarize the achievements, or anticipated outcomes, of the major improvement projects approved by the Task Force for each Sanders community and particularly the six target neighborhoods. Achievements of the various human, workforce and economic development programs, designed to serve residents in all or several of the communities, are described at the end.

### Braddock

- Construction of 13 single family, affordable, for-sale homes in the Maplevue neighborhood along with improvements (trees, sidewalks, lighting, etc.) for Verona Street
- Rehabilitation of 6-8 existing homes on Frazier Street including new sidewalks
- Installation of neighborhood parklet on Frazier behind Good Shepherd church
- Renovation of vacant commercial building at 849-53 Braddock Avenue to house county human service, employment and education programs; acquisition of adjacent vacant lots to create landscaped parking area for building
- Demolition of numerous vacant, blighted buildings on Braddock Avenue
- Rebuilding of Maple Way, between Verona and Library streets, with new lighting, landscaping and similar amenities to create safe, attractive pedestrian access between the eastern and central portions of the borough

- Acquisition and landscaping of vacant lot at corner of Braddock and Verona to provide an attractive bus shelter and new entry to Mapleview neighborhood
- Addition of trees and other planting along railroad tracks to buffer new and renovated homes
- Assistance to Heritage Health Foundation to start WorkLink van service to increase neighborhood residents' access to employment, shopping and regional facilities. Between February 2001 and December 2004 WorkLink had a total ridership of over 84,000 on its Braddock/East Pittsburgh route.
- Funding for Braddock Library to add new computer lab, messy arts (ceramic) room and exercise facility; operate summer and after-school programs; and increase its vocation-related and general reading collections

The settlement agreement ending the consent decree calls for the county to provide up to an additional \$1.25 million to implement, to the degree that funding permits, several "special projects" which the parties agreed were important to achieving revitalization goals in certain neighborhoods. In Braddock, the additional projects, in order of funding priority, are:

- acquisition and demolition (or possible rehabilitation) of one Library Street property; if demolished, site to be improved with a public parking lot and improved public infrastructure (sidewalks, curbs, street trees and lighting);
- streetscape improvements (sidewalks, curbs, street trees, buffer trees and lighting) along both sides of Braddock Avenue, first between 11th and John streets, then if funds remain, from John to Library Street; and
- funding (not to exceed \$200,000) for community center space on Library Street. If the county determines such space is feasible and has long-term viability, this project will be an intervening priority before committing funds to the John-to-Library segment of streetscape for Braddock Avenue.

#### Clairton

- Development of 44 housing units, four of which are fully accessible for disabled persons and others are designed to be "visitable" by disabled individuals. All units are currently leased by individuals who will be working to obtain a credit toward the purchase of them at the end of a 15-year rental period. At the urging of the Task Force, the developer has set up

the first lease/purchase development done in Pennsylvania with federal tax credits.

- Construction of 23 three-bedroom single family homes which will sell for approximately \$52,500 to eligible buyers
- Installation, re-building and upgrading of streets, sidewalks, utilities, lighting throughout the neighborhood
- Creation of three neighborhood parklets, street tree planting and other landscaping to provide new visual focus and appeal for the neighborhood
- Rehabilitation of 14 vacant, dilapidated homes for re-sale to mostly first-time home buyers
- Acquisition and demolition of numerous vacant and blighted structures to provide sites for new home construction
- Development of new community center providing services for neighborhood as well as other city residents
- Funding to Community Economic Development Corporation of Clairton (CEDCC) to hire Section 3 Hiring Coordinator and to operate training program, in conjunction with building contractor, which assisted 10-12 local residents to learn skilled trades and gain employment
- Three-year funding for CEDCC to hire Resident Service Support Coordinator to help link residents with employment, training and available social services
- Assistance to Heritage Health Foundation to start WorkLink van service in Clairton, which between February 2001 and December 2004, had a total ridership of over 271,000 on this route.

The Special Projects, designated in the settlement agreement ending the Consent Decree, include, as fourth and fifth priorities for the funding, additional demolition (up to \$200,000) of vacant, blighted structures in this neighborhood and offering rehabilitation services for occupied blighted housing in the vicinity of Halcomb/Mitchell and Third streets.

### Duquesne

- Rehabilitation of two homes for re-sale to lower-income buyers
- Construction of 4-6 new single family, for-sale homes on sites where vacant, blighted structures have been demolished
- Rehabilitation of possibly 20-25 existing, occupied homes in the Burns Heights area, by offering owners up to \$20,000 in grants and another \$20,000 in loans through the Multi-Community Residential Rehab Program to be administered by ACTION-Housing
- Funding, in conjunction with ACHA, for a new community center with indoor basketball court and meeting space to serve the entire Burns Heights neighborhood
- Landscaping and buffering around Burns Heights and providing entrance enhancements to the neighborhood in general
- Completion of a study which documented the substantial capital and annual operating costs to convert former JFK school building to a multi-purpose community center

Additionally, the settlement agreement ending the Consent Decree lists as the first priority among the special projects, the demolition of the JFK school (if the school district releases the site at no cost as it had previously agreed) and development of two new homes, fronting on Crawford Street, if feasible.

### Homestead

- Rehabilitation of 7 vacant, dilapidated homes for re-sale to lower income, generally first-time buyers
- Matching funds for Eighth Avenue Main Street program, operated through the Homestead Area Economic Revitalization Corporation (HERC), which helped to hire a program director for two years, implement a facade improvement program, provide workshops for local business owners and similar activities to promote the business district
- Funding to HERC to set up a loan fund for businesses locating or expanding in the main business district
- Loan, through the Sanders Equity Loan Fund, to start private child care business in Eighth Avenue corridor
- Contribution to the renovation of the historic Bost Building



- Assistance to the Port Authority to provide interim bus service to the new Waterfront development, thus increasing access to jobs and shopping for area residents (until permanent service was evaluated and established)
- Feasibility study to evaluate community service space and recreational needs and availability in the borough

### McKees Rocks

- Counseling for potential home buyers and funding to assist 14 households, including former public housing and Section 8 recipients, to repair and renovate their new homes
- Loan to Foodland grocery store operator in order to keep open the community's only full-service food store
- Funding for site acquisition and initial renovation of building for new multi-cultural center which will become a new focal and destination point in McKees Rock business district
- Funding for Focus on Renewal and its partners to establish and operate community farm marketplace
- Rehabilitation of 16 homes on Bell Avenue
- Landscaping and screening on Bell Avenue and around Hays Manor to buffer homes from surrounding commercial and industrial uses
- Rehabilitation of possibly 12-14 existing, occupied homes in the Meyers Ridge neighborhood, by offering owners up to \$20,000 in grants and another \$20,000 in loans through the Multi-Community Residential Rehab Program
- Construction of 1-2 new, for-sale homes on vacant, tax delinquent lot near Meyers Ridge
- Assistance with the development of the new Meyers Ridge community center, including equipping and operating an up-to-date technology (computer) center open to all area residents
- Provision of second mortgages to eligible buyers (up to 29) of the new single family homes in Meyers Ridge
- Development of children's play lot for Meyers Ridge neighborhood

- Reconstruction of Churchill Street

### Rankin

- Re-design of intersection at Hawkins Village to improve pedestrian safety and traffic flow and provide appealing new entrance for Village and borough along a major regional artery
- Development of 3 new single family, for-sale homes
- Assistance to the Rankin Christian Center to complete a major building expansion and updating program
- Rehabilitation of possibly 12-14 existing, occupied homes in the Hawkins Village neighborhood, by offering owners up to \$20,000 in grants and another \$20,000 in loans through the Multi-Community Residential Rehab Program

### Wilkinsburg

- Rehabilitation and sale of 4 vacant, deteriorating homes and housing counseling for potential buyers
- Funding to assist with development of new Sav A Lot grocery in main business district
- Loans to two minority entrepreneurs to start new businesses
- Funding to open community marketplace and operate for one year
- Real estate marketing services to fill vacant commercial and office space in the Penn Avenue business district

### Human and Economic Development Programs

- Partnership Institute Program, set up and operated by Community Leadership Development Institute, to offer leadership training and personal development primarily for public housing residents in the Sanders communities. Over five years, it enrolled approximately 250 residents and helped to place them in community development and service learning activities, jobs and advanced education. Utilized Sanders funding to attract other grants and in-kind contributions, including HUD-funded self-sufficiency activities and special youth programs.

- Educational and Cultural enrichment program, operated by ACTION-Housing, which each year enabled an average of about 2,000 Sanders community residents to attend performances, take classes, rent musical instruments and join regional facilities such as the Carnegie Science Center, the zoo and other museums. It also partnered with Barnes and Noble and other groups to provide books for children to promote literacy and reading. (Program operated 1999-2004 with Sanders funds and is presently continuing with County funding.)
- Sanders Microenterprise Development Initiative, operated by the Minority Enterprise Corporation, provided training for interested entrepreneurs and eventually loans and technical assistance to open 29 new businesses in the Sanders communities.
- Sanders Workforce Development Training Program, operated by the Community College of Allegheny County (through the Braddock Enhancement Task Force ) provided post secondary training and/or employment assistance for over 200 individuals living in Braddock, Rankin, Duquesne and Clairton.
- Food preparation training program, operated by Rainbow Kitchen, assisted 12 individuals to receive basic training and employment in local restaurants.
- African American Workers Union received funding to provide initial training and placement of 100 persons in skilled trade apprenticeships in the construction industry. (Contract ended after one year with no final data on achievements available.)

#### Consulting and Administrative Services

Over the about 10 years that the Sanders Task Force carried out its various functions under the consent decree, it contracted for a variety of professional services related to planning and project development, technical assistance for project implementation, project evaluation, site selection and mixed finance development consulting, marketing public housing developments, public and media communications, court reporting and daily administration and record keeping. Spending for these activities equaled slightly over \$1.95 million, or about 6.5 percent of the total CDBG set aside funds allocated under the consent decree.