

# Sustainable Communities

## *Keeping low-income neighborhoods strong*

Current conditions around the economic downturn, rising foreclosures and environmental priorities have created the perfect storm in America's low- and moderate-income communities. The long-term health and sustainability of these communities is at risk and requires the nation to be smart about how it designs, rehabilitates and builds affordable communities. We know that building for tomorrow is critical today – that the vitality of some of our most vulnerable communities depends on making the right choices now.

NeighborWorks' **Sustainable Communities Initiative** is a forward-looking, nationwide effort to create affordable, healthier, energy- efficient homes and integrate sustainable practices in how we revitalize communities across the country. The initiative focuses on:

- ▶ Extending the benefits of green technology to low-income families to reduce costs and create safer, healthier living environments.
- ▶ Transforming communities through conservation practices and better management of resources to create vibrant, sustainable places to live and work for people of modest means.
- ▶ Leading efforts within the community development industry to advance environmental responsibility, helping these organizations reduce costs and contribute to a better environment in the communities they serve.

Through our partnerships with the 235 outstanding nonprofit organizations that make up the NeighborWorks network, the **Sustainable Communities Initiative** reaches urban, suburban and rural communities to provide technical assistance and investments to:

- ▶ Develop new single-family and rental properties using greener practices of energy efficiency, water conservation and healthier indoor air quality to provide low- and moderate-income families with less costly and healthier homes.
- ▶ Support green improvements to the 77,000 rental units owned and managed by our network, providing more energy-efficient and healthier homes for residents and enhancing the value of these properties for owners and investors.
- ▶ Acquire foreclosed homes in distressed communities and rehabilitate them with green materials and appliances to create a more vital and environmentally sound community.
- ▶ Support programs to educate and engage residents in green neighborhood activities, create model projects or establish long-term environmental programs.



*Residents in Christianburg, VA plant gardens to create a more environmentally friendly community.*

At NeighborWorks, we work closely with our network of 235 local affiliates to support and enhance local and national efforts to stabilize communities. Our programs are nationally recognized and impactful. In the last year alone:

- ▶ More than 20,000 residents directly benefited from our green activities. This includes:
  - ✓ Over 4,500 homes weatherized
  - ✓ Over 4,000 new green homes built
  - ✓ Nearly 17,000 affordable apartments were created or preserved
- ▶ NeighborWorks launched a new Web site to help develop and implement more effective solutions in communities hard hit by foreclosure: [www.stablecommunities.org](http://www.stablecommunities.org). The website is a one-stop shop for information and strategies on community stabilization for practitioners working in the field.
- ▶ NeighborWorks America and three of the other major national housing partners formed an unprecedented partnership to create the National Community Stabilization Trust. The Trust supports the development of strong local programs that can stem the decline of communities with high concentrations of vacant, foreclosed properties by coordinating the transfer of real estate owned (REO) properties from lenders, loan servicers and investors to local housing organizations, in collaboration with state and local governments. This creates a more efficient and cost-effective way to transfer properties so they can be rehabilitated and made available for sale and for rent – primarily for low- and moderate-income families.

**Sustainable communities are the foundation of stable lives for people of modest means. With its partners, the NeighborWorks Network has:**

- ▶ Repaired **40,000 units** in FY '09
- ▶ Awarded **72 Grants for \$2.1 million** in FY '09
- ▶ Created or preserved **21,000 rental units** in the last three years and **3,200 sale units** in FY '08