



► **PLANNING 101**
WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE
CDC MODEL OF COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT. 2



► **LIHTC TO THE RESCUE**
A LOCAL DEVELOPER BRINGS
LOW AND MODERATE INCOME
HOUSING TO NORTHEAST CONWAY
USING LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX
CREDITS 3



► **HIGH DESIGN FOR LESS**
AFFORDABILITY AND MODERN
DESIGN GO HAND-IN-HAND AS
ARCHITECTS BRING THEIR CRAFT
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Conway planning

BALANCING OUR BOOM IN DEVELOPMENT WITH SOUND PLANNING POLICY TO PLANT THE SEEDS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

Recovering from a crime problem that plagued the neighborhood for decades, residents of the Pine Street area begin the rebuilding process with hopes of bringing new development while keeping the neighborhood affordable and maintaining its unique history and identity.

New Approach, Old Problem A Neighborhood in Transition Tests the CDC Method of Community Development in Conway



In January, the City of Conway's Planning and Development Department began an in-depth study of the Pine Street neighborhood's demographics, infrastructure, zoning, and land use patterns. The Pine Street neighborhood has received considerable media attention in recent months due largely to

Unfortunately, by the time the crime rate began to fall, many residents had moved away from the area, leaving abandoned houses and vacant lots scattered among blocks of habitable but deteriorating single-family houses.

interest from community activists and university classes, as well as Hendrix College's plans for a traditional neighborhood adjacent to the area. Further, plans to expand the Old Conway Design Overlay District to include the entire Pine Street neighborhood promise

to change future development patterns in the neighborhood. Over the coming months, the Planning and Development Department intends to create a long-range neighborhood plan for Pine Street.

The Pine Street neighborhood is unique in Conway's history as a traditionally working-class African-American neighborhood. Though the neighborhood once boasted stores, blacksmiths' shops, doctors' offices, and its own schools, recent times have seen large portions of the neighborhood fall into disrepair. A police substation built in the 1990s curbed the crime wave that swept through the neighborhood in the 1980s. Unfortunately, by the time the crime rate began to fall, many residents had moved away from the area, leaving abandoned houses and vacant lots scattered among blocks of habitable but deteriorating single-family houses.

Today, the Pine Street neighborhood is home to many elderly, long-time residents who still remember when Pine Street was the bustling center of African-American life in Conway. Linda Paxton, Faulkner County

Justice of the Peace and long-time Pine Street neighborhood resident, worries that the neighborhood's decline coupled with nearby large-scale residential development will make the Pine Street neighborhood vulnerable to redevelopment that does not take the history of the neighborhood or the desires of long-time residents into account. Paxton, along with other neighborhood residents and community leaders, formed the Pine Street Area Community Development Corporation (CDC) in 2003 in order to seek much-needed federal and state funds for housing development and rehabilitation projects in the neighborhood.

Though some CDCs handle commercial or industrial redevelopment, most are focused on home construction or rehabilitation; homes sold or rented by CDCs are affordable for low and moderate income households, and most CDCs typically partner with banks to offer low interest loans for home buyers. Government funds, private donations, and the sale or rental of rehabilitated houses provide revenue for the CDC, allowing it to expand its scope of services.

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More about...

Community Development Corporations

Community development corporations (CDCs) are citizen-driven nonprofit organizations that revitalize neighborhoods through public and private investment. While most CDCs are primarily concerned with creating affordable housing through construction and rehabilitation, some have a broader focus, engaging in a range of activities as diverse as property management, commercial and industrial development, transportation, employment assistance, health clinics, daycares, organizing and advocacy, small business assistance, and housing counseling. It is difficult to find an exact number of CDCs active across the United States due to differing definitions of what constitutes a CDC. Harvard University's Center for Public Leadership puts the number of CDCs as high as 3,600, while the clearinghouse for CDCs, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), counts some 2,800 members. Community development corporations can be found in communities of every size in both urban and rural areas throughout the United States. More than 85 percent of CDCs are engaged in housing development projects.

Nationally, Dudley Street Neighbors, Inc., in Boston is perhaps the best known community development corporation. Since 1988, Dudley Neighbors has constructed some 150 new homes and two community centers in Boston's Dudley Street neighborhood. Locally, the Argenta Community Development Corporation in North Little Rock has rehabilitated more than 60 houses and owns 87 rental units. Presently, the Pine Street Area Community Development Corporation is the only active CDC in Conway.

Additional Resources



The Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC) is a national clearinghouse for CDCs. More information about LISC and the community development corporation model can be found online at www.lisc.org.

NeighborWorks America is a national nonprofit organization created by Congress to provide, technical assistance, financial support, and training for community-based revitalization efforts. More information about NeighborWorks is available online at www.nw.org.



Perhaps the best known Arkansas CDC is the Argenta CDC in North Little Rock. More information about the Argenta CDC is available at www.argentacdc.org.

New Approach, Old Problem

In 2007, the Pine Street Area CDC was awarded enough funding by the City through its Community Development Block Grant to purchase its first fixer-upper. When the project is complete, the sale or rental of the house will provide the CDC with a small source of income, which when added to future grant proceeds will allow the CDC to purchase more houses and lots.

The Pine Street Area CDC has to look no further than North Little Rock for inspiration. There, the Argenta CDC has spent \$12 million since 1992 to rehabilitate more than 90 deteriorated properties and develop mixed-income housing opportunities, including the 87-unit Argenta Square apartment complex. Additionally, a private firm recently developed an upscale new urbanist housing development called Enclave at the Riverfront on Argenta's south side. Through the CDC's efforts and public-private partnerships, Argenta has become home to a demographically and economically diverse population, while retaining the historic charm of the neighborhood. Similarly, as the City of Conway begins to engage residents and community groups in the Pine Street neighborhood planning process, the challenge for all involved will be to find the best methods to revitalize the area and offer new housing choices while maintaining the neighborhood's historic character.

In the coming months, the Conway Planning and Development Department will hold a series of public meetings, where residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in the Pine Street area can share their own visions of the community's future with planners and other city officials. The Pine Street Area CDC will be an integral part of the planning process. Keep checking this newsletter and other local media sources for more information on those meetings.

An overview of the community development corporation model of neighborhood revitalization can be found in the e-text *Fiscal Issues in Community and Economic Development*. The chapter "The Community Development Corporation Model," authored by Conway City Planner Donald Anthony, is available online at: <http://umdrive.memphis.edu/casanto/www/ch6.htm>.



Above: Abandoned houses and vacant lots are prominent throughout the Pine Street neighborhood.

Below: Pine Street residents cite the numerous churches in the area as cornerstones that have helped sustain the neighborhood--spiritually and physically--through difficult times.



Old Morrilton Highway Study Underway

The Conway Planning and Development Department has begun an extensive study of the Old Morrilton Highway area. The study is the first part of a long-range Old Morrilton Highway - Lower Ridge Road corridor plan. Representatives of city departments including Streets, Sanitation, and Parks joined Mayor Tab Townsell, City Council members Jack Bell, Mark Vaught, and Shelley Mehl, and Planning Commissioners Junior Storie and Terry Sossong on April 1st to discuss zoning, land uses, and other planning issues related to Old Morrilton Highway.

Stakeholders—including residents, property owners, business owners, recreationalists, commuters, developers, and others who have an interest in the area—are invited to offer their comments and ideas at a series of upcoming public events.

Public Kick-Off

Introduction to the Old Morrilton
Highway Planning Process
Thursday, April 24th, 6:30 PM
McGee Center

Old Morrilton Highway Public Workshop

Saturday, April 26th, 9:00 AM
Ruth Doyle Intermediate School

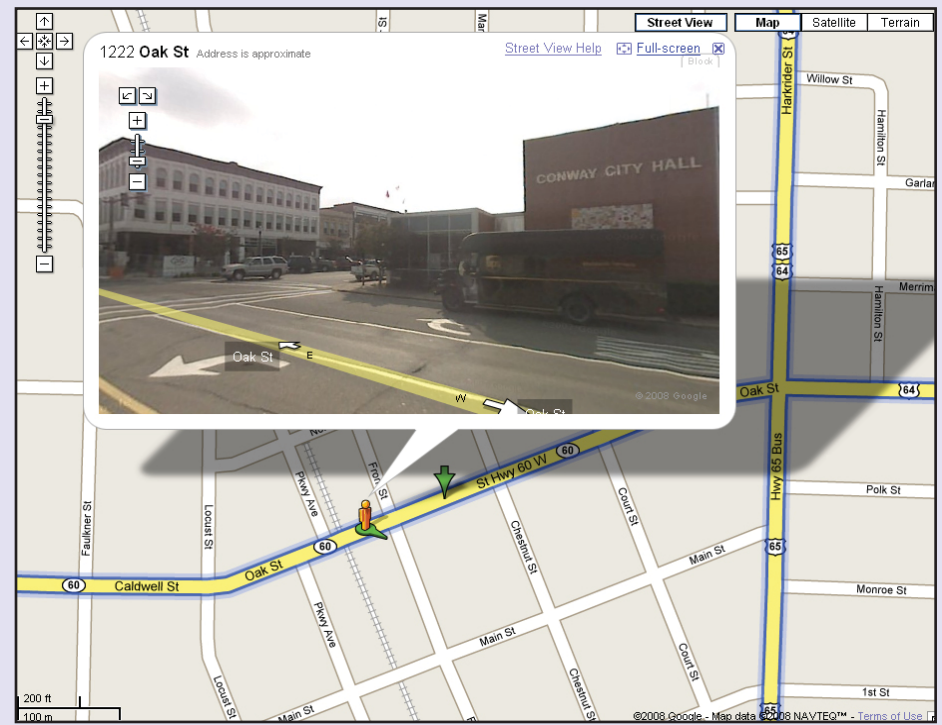
Public Comment Period

April 28th - May 2nd, 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Conway City Hall

Visual Preference Survey

April 28th - May 2nd
Available online at www.conwayplanning.org

The Lower Ridge Road study will begin in May and will follow a similar time line to that of the Old Morrilton Highway study. Keep reading this newsletter for more details.



A new service from the people who brought us Google Earth, SketchUp, and Gmail promises to revolutionize the way we look at street maps. Above: Street view imagery of the Oak Street and Front Street intersection in Conway from Google Maps.

Googling Conway

Online Map Service Offers New View of Conway

Have you visited Google Maps lately? Central Arkansas is one of the first areas in the nation to be included in Google's new "street view" feature, which gives site users a 360-degree view of selected areas. According to Google, "Street View imagery is gathered by vehicles equipped with advanced imaging technology, driving on public streets."

Google's collection of street view imagery includes both major streets and neighborhood-level streets in the portion of Conway east of Interstate 40, as well as most of northwest Conway and southwest Conway. At this time, neighborhood streets in the central portion of the City are not included, though major streets such as Donaghey, Harkrider, and Oak are. Portions of surrounding communities such as Mayflower, Greenbrier, and Vilonia are also included. Presently, the Central Arkansas patch of street-view imagery extends from Clinton to Pine Bluff.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credits are among the tools developers use in building low-to-moderate income housing. One Central Arkansas developer plans to use these credits to create a mixed-income multi-family development in northeast Conway.

Rich Smith Development Plans Two New Apartment Complexes Park Ridge Phase 2 to Feature Affordable Housing Units

North Little Rock's Rich Smith Development LLC plans to construct two new multi-family housing developments near its existing Park Ridge complex at East German Lane and Rumker Lane in northeast Conway. The developments—Park Ridge Phase 2 and The Pointe at Conway—will offer residents of various income levels amenities ranging from a car care center to garages and covered parking.

The developer was granted a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit for its Park Ridge Phase 2 complex. Low-Income

Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) are offered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through designated state agencies; in Arkansas, the Arkansas Development Finance Authority (ADFA) is the designated agency. Arkansas receives an annual LIHTC allocation of approximately \$5 million.

The tax credit granted to Park Ridge Phase 2 will ensure that the units remain affordable for low and moderate income families for at least 30 years. Park Ridge Phase 2 will consist of 48 units in three buildings, along with

a clubhouse, pool, basketball court, and car-care center.

The Pointe at Conway will include seven buildings with 168 market-priced units. Among the features of the Pointe at Conway are gated entry, optional garages, covered parking, a clubhouse, and pool. Plans for both Park Ridge Phase 2 and The Pointe at Conway are currently being reviewed by the Conway Planning and Development Department as part of its development review process.

In cities throughout the U.S., innovative architectural concepts are bringing new life to affordable housing. From large cities such as New York to rural areas such as Jackson Hole, Wyoming, architects are making affordable housing units unique and fashionable.

Architects Bring High Design to Affordable Housing

Ben Casselman, *Real Estate Journal*
December 31, 2007

Public housing used to mean fortress-like blocks and soulless rows of cheaply built townhouses. But now there's a new model: privately developed homes and apartments that are well-designed, well-built and attractive enough to win over wary neighbors. A growing number of architects, from established stars to ambitious up-and-comers, are looking to such projects as an opportunity to do innovative work.

A single-room-occupancy building that opened in Chicago in March was designed by Helmut Jahn, internationally known for his glass-sheathed skyscrapers; the 96-unit SRO, where most residents pay less than \$160 a month in rent, resembles a train, with its long, narrow shape, curved roof and glass-and-steel exterior.

In Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood, a group of young architects teamed up to build nine two-family homes for families with modest incomes. Completed in March, the homes feature unconventional

materials such as corrugated aluminum and unpainted cedar siding. And in Santa Monica, Calif., a recently completed 41-unit apartment building, designed by Pugh + Scarpa Architects, incorporates green design elements. It is partially clad in blocks made of recycled crushed aluminum cans and has a sail-shaped metal screen that helps shield the building from the sun.

Groundbreaking architecture still makes up a relatively small percentage of the thousands of units of low- and moderate-income housing that are built in the U.S. each year. Most of the design is "competent," says James Stockard, curator of the Loeb Fellowship at the Harvard School of Design and an expert in the field. Even that, however, is progress. Until the 1980s, almost all low-income housing in the country was built by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, designed with an eye to quantity, not quality.

Today, most affordable housing is built by private developers or local agencies, with a mix of public and private funding; many projects receive government subsidies to keep rents or purchase prices lower than market rates. The shift is due in large part to reduced federal funding: HUD's \$36 billion budget in 2007 is a fraction of what the agency received in 1978 -- \$123 billion in today's dollars.

The interest in design comes as affordable housing is increasingly being mixed in among middle class and even luxury homes. And as costs have soared in many urban neighborhoods, more communities

have adopted "inclusionary zoning" ordinances that require developers to set aside units for families of modest means.

The biggest developers in the field -- such as Denver-based Mercy Housing, which breaks ground on 1,500 to 3,000 units of affordable housing a year -- stress thoughtful design in their projects. So do many public-housing agencies, which are increasingly turning to design competitions when selecting architects.

Until last year, Jeff Page, 42, was living in a rescue mission in Los Angeles. He says he'd had a couple of opportunities to move into subsidized apartments, but turned them down, calling them "old and decrepit." Then a new building opened up on San Pedro Street: Rainbow Apartments, developed by the nonprofit Skid Row Housing Trust in downtown L.A. With its sharp angles and bright red window frames that jut out from the otherwise flat, concrete exterior, the 89-unit building stands out from traditional apartment buildings in the area.

The slashes of color, in particular, made an impression on Mr. Page, who moved into the building last year. "Skid Row is so dim and dismal," he says. "The bright color, it kind of wakes up my soul to the point that it makes me excited to come home, rather than hang out on the street."

Michael Alvidrez, director of the housing trust, says that was the sort of reaction the organization was hoping for when it hired architect Michael Maltzan to take on the project. "Good design actually has therapeutic value," Mr. Alvidrez says. For his part, Mr. Maltzan says the chance to do interesting, creative work may now be more common on affordable-housing projects than market-rate ones.

Green design elements are also being incorporated into affordable housing, where advocates say it's most needed. Efficient buildings can save residents 25% or more on their heating bills and natural materials are less likely to give off fumes that can trigger asthma, a common problem in many inner-city neighborhoods.



Jackson Hole, Wyo.
Shervin Building

Twenty one-bedroom and studio apartments, plus retail space and parking, completed in 2004.

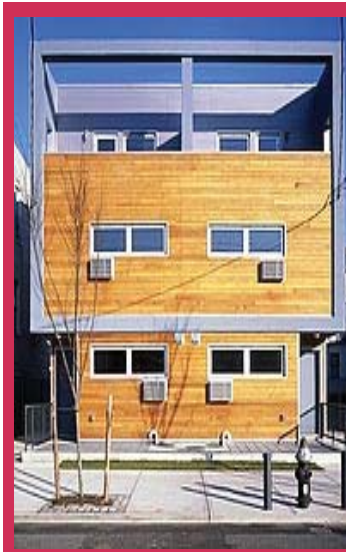
The Design: Affordable housing is scarce in this resort town. And this site, a former gas station, didn't leave much room to play with. Architect Mitchell Blake's solution: Shifting the second floor onto stilts over the parking lot and planting grass on the exposed roof of the second-floor garage. That satisfied the town's open space requirement, provided residents with an elevated backyard, and made the building more interesting than the straightforward box that had originally been planned. The green roof also improves energy efficiency by insulating the floors below.

"I believe issues of sustainability are more important in the affordable-housing field than in the luxury field," Mr. Stockard says. Big builders are embracing that philosophy, too. Enterprise, one of the largest financial backers of affordable-housing projects nationwide, promotes sustainable building through its Green Communities Initiative; launched in 2004, the program helps developers pay for features such as solar panels and rainwater capture systems.

Architecture is also being used as a wedge against NIMBYism. Marcus Johnson, a public-relations professional and a lifelong resident of Oakland, Calif., was initially opposed to a low-income housing complex being planned for his West Oakland neighborhood five years ago. Mr. Johnson, 54, went so far as to speak out against the project, proposed by San Francisco-based nonprofit Bridge Housing, at community meetings. "I was really skeptical," he says. "It was going to be a hangout for drug dealing."

But after seeing renderings of the building -- a geometric, modernist structure with a charcoal-colored exterior -- Mr. Johnson began to change his mind. Rather than looking like the drab public housing he expected, the building was sleek and contemporary, and enhanced the already improving area. "It sort of represents what the future of the neighborhood is starting to look like," Mr. Johnson says. After the building opened in 2004, Mr. Johnson returned to a meeting of the West Oakland Project Area Committee -- a local planning agency -- to applaud the developers. "It's actually transformed that particular area," he says.

Unconventional approaches won't work everywhere, however. Bridge Chief Executive Carol Galante recalls an architect who proposed a "hip" modern building for Irvine, Calif., where many of the homes featured stucco and red tile roofs. "We just said no," Ms. Galante says. "It needed to fit in with the neighborhood."



Brooklyn, N.Y.
Glenmore Gardens

Nine two-family homes, completed in 2007, each with a rental unit and an owner-occupied unit, sold to New York families earning up to \$70,000.

The Design: When New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development asked for proposals to develop affordable housing on city-owned land in the East New York section of Brooklyn, Jared Della Valle jumped at the opportunity. Mr. Della Valle and his firm, Della Valle Bernheimer, acted as both architects and developers, and recruited several other local firms to design homes for the project as well. The buildings use a shared set of materials—including unpainted cedar and corrugated aluminum—but have distinct designs. "It was important to us to develop a project where each homeowner could have their own identity," Mr. Della Valle says.



Santa Monica, Calif.
Broadway

Affordable housing complex with 41 two- and three-bedroom apartments and underground parking, completed in 2007.

The Design: Many of the distinctive design elements on this project, by local firm Pugh + Scarpa Architects, also make it more sustainable. The colorful blocks on the ground floor are made from crushed aluminum cans, taken from local recycling companies. The perforated metal "sail" on

the façade acts as a sun screen, cutting down on cooling costs. Outdoor staircases over the main courtyard are meant to encourage socialization among residents -- and also cut down on elevator -- and energy -- use.

Brooklyn, N.Y.
Schermerhorn House

Eleven-story, 217-unit apartment building in Brooklyn's Boerum Hill neighborhood to be completed in 2008.

The Design: Schermerhorn House will be surrounded by luxury condominiums and townhouses, so developers Common Ground and the Actors Fund knew good design was vital to winning local support. They interviewed top architects, and in a sign of growing interest in affordable housing, nearly all of them expressed interest. "I was even worried if they were going to take my call," says Nadine Maleh, Common Ground's director of design and construction. The developers chose Polshek Partnership, a New York firm known for high-profile projects such as the Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock, Ark., and the new planetarium building in New York's Museum of Natural History.



Oakland, Calif.
Mandela Getaway

A 168-unit rental development plus retail space and communal areas, in West Oakland, completed in 2004.

The Design: The front and back of Mandela Gateway are drastically different. The front of the project, along a commercial street and across the street from a subway station, has a modern industrial look, with a sleek, multicolored concrete skin and inset windows. The back, which faces private residences, is more traditional; the façade is broken up to resemble townhouses. Carol Galante, chief executive of developer Bridge Housing, says the versatile design was a response to neighborhood concerns. "There are some places where you can create that new dynamic aesthetic ... and there are some places where you need to blend in," she says. "It's about context."





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Please contact any member of the planning staff with questions or comments regarding planning, zoning, subdivision, or any other land-use policy within the City of Conway.

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