

A Stronger Alignment

WHEDA Awards Housing Credits for 'High Impact' Projects

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) has awarded low-income housing tax credits (LIHTC) to four developments selected in its first separate competitive funding round for "high impact" projects.

Two of the four projects will target veterans. The credit awards were announced in October.

WHEDA Executive Director Wyman Winston said this was the first time the agency has held a separate LIHTC application round just for "high impact" projects. A similar round is expected in 2014.

WHEDA set aside \$1.45 million – or 7% of its total 2013 nine percent low-income housing tax credits – for a new High Impact Project Reserve (HIPR). The credits were made available for proposed projects meeting certain special criteria outlined in the agency's 2013 qualified allocation plan. The agency accepted applications July 15-30 in a separate competitive round, as well as considering qualified applications submitted previously in WHEDA's normal competitive funding round that didn't receive a credit award.

Stronger Alignment

According to Winston, WHEDA decided to reserve some of its 9% housing credits to award to high impact projects to achieve a "stronger alignment" between the agency's LIHTC program and its strategic plan. "The idea of doing the HIPR," he says, "was that we would make awards to a small number of projects that would be examples to the marketplace but also education to WHEDA. And the alignment was our strategy on job creation and economic development."

Says Winston: "We wanted to see if we could marry the requirements of producing affordable housing with the demand for supporting or creating jobs and employment."

According to Winston, the criteria for high impact projects melded the best of WHEDA's LIHTC program requirements with its strategic goals to foster job creation or support employment areas in the state.

The criteria required applicants to demonstrate how their project would contribute to local job growth while benefiting residents of the housing. Requirements included: proximate links to area job growth, job training, employers, or a major employment center; location in an area with few affordable housing options; immediate high impact for potential residents, improving the housing stock, or addressing foreclosures; financial support commitment from an employer, nonprofit, or government body; a larger redevelopment plan of which the project would be a part; and a plan for using organizations to hire local workers, train jobless or underemployed individuals, address skills gaps, and/or provide employment opportunities to persons who have difficulty succeeding in the workplace. Proposed veterans projects had to demonstrate how they would address the employment and/or counseling needs of veterans.

Selected Projects

WHEDA received 15 applications and picked four high impact projects, awarding them a total of \$1,440,599 in housing credits. The four projects are:

- **Community for Returning Women Soldiers, Milwaukee.** Developer: Common Bond Communities. Credit Award: \$333,217. This new construction development, containing a mix of 26 one-, two-, and three-bedroom homes, will serve households at risk of homelessness. Services available through the development will address potential issues of job training, post-traumatic stress, alcohol and drug abuse, reuniting families, and sexual violence. The state Department of Veterans Affairs and county agencies will serve as referral sources for the development. The county will provide project-based vouchers for at least half the units.
- **Green Bay Veterans Manor, Green Bay.** Developer: Cardinal Capital. Credit Award:

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\$350,000. This 50-unit permanent supportive housing development will give preference to veterans, with all units subsidized by project-based vouchers. The Center for Veterans Issues will provide supportive services for residents, including counseling and educating residents about VA benefits and facilitating access for them. The site is minutes from a new Veterans Administration outpatient clinic now under construction.

- **The Grand Central Plaza, Superior.** Developer: Gerrard Corporation. Credit Award: \$407,382. Located in the central part of the city, this 50-unit development will be near shopping, churches, commercial facilities, and services, and across the street from the

University of Wisconsin-Superior. Residents will have access to university facilities including the library, indoor track, and swimming pool.

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- **Milwaukee Prosperity – Harambee, Milwaukee.** Developer: Brinshore Development, LLC and Maures Development Group, LLC. Credit Award: \$350,000. Brinshore Development and Maures Development Group are partnering with the city of Milwaukee to acquire and renovate foreclosed and vacant homes in the Harambee neighborhood for use as 35 rental housing units. The project is an expansion of WHEDA's ongoing effort to address foreclosures and blight in Milwaukee's urban core neighborhoods. *(For article on project, see p. 4.)* **TCA**



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