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Affordable Design

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development sponsors or cosponsors three annual competitions for innovation in affordable design: The Innovation in Affordable Housing Student Design and Planning Competition; the American Institute of Architects – HUD Secretary’s Housing Community Design Awards; and the HUD Secretary’s Opportunity & Empowerment Award, co-sponsored with the American Planning Association. This Cityscape department reports on the competitions and their winners. Each competition seeks to identify and develop new, forward-looking planning and design solutions for expanding or preserving affordable housing. Professional jurors determine the outcome of these competitions.

Annual HUD Secretary’s Opportunity and Empowerment Award: Family Scholar House, Louisville, Kentucky

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For the past two decades, HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) and the American Planning Association (APA) have partnered to recognize planning development projects that have truly transformed the community into one that is livable and resilient. The HUD Secretary’s Opportunity and Empowerment Award recognizes communities that have implemented creative and effective strategies to improve the quality of life for low- and moderate-income residents. The award emphasizes how creative housing, economic development, and private investments can be used in or with a comprehensive community development plan to build social equity and empower individuals and families who reside in that community. Nominees must demonstrate how they respond effectively to those challenges while simultaneously and effectively addressing community needs; this is done by expanding affordable housing and transportation options and enhancing economic competitiveness through sound and equitable development practices. PD&R recently completed a review of the nominations for the annual HUD Secretary’s Opportunity and Empowerment Award. The jury received six applications, deliberated in late fall, and recommended the Family Scholar House (FSH) in Louisville, Kentucky, as this year’s award recipient.

FSH was selected, in large part, because the HUD-APA jury was particularly impressed with the wide array of programs offered to area residents and their families to help lift them from poverty. FSH is a nonprofit organization that offers programs that range from helping single mothers find

permanent employment to providing education and job opportunities for youth transitioning from foster care. In the past year, 504 families have taken advantage of the various educational and career-oriented services that are offered by FSH, and of that number, 215 families currently reside in one of the five FSH multifamily properties.¹



The Parkland Family Scholar House in Louisville, Kentucky.

Founded in 1995, the program has a broader mission to end the cycle of poverty and transform the community by empowering families to achieve financial independence. The FSH model has expanded to help participants locate low-cost housing, provide transportation and childcare options, and offer job training and opportunities for the underemployed. The program has added a variety of supportive services ranging from mental health assessments to food assistance and a host of financial services around credit repair and asset building.

The success story of the FSH centers on the continued commitment from the program's public and private partners. FSH and Marian Development established an impressively diverse funding portfolio for the \$10.5 million program, successfully leveraging low-income housing tax credits, HOME investment funds, Community Development Block Grant funds, and foundational support. An Affordable Housing Trust Fund, along with state and federal historical tax credits, were used to develop the five FSH multifamily housing developments in Louisville and one affiliate location in Covington, Kentucky. The partnership implemented an ambitious funding campaign to raise an

¹ According to the most recent annual report from FSH, supportive services are available for adults and children, particularly single parents, who are looking for opportunities to complete their education, seek better jobs, and programs that help stabilize housing conditions for themselves and their children. The annual report is accessible at the following link: <https://familiescholarhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/by-the-numbers.pdf>.

additional \$1.2 million. The projects met several local planning goals, including the creation of an additional 324 affordable housing units across all its satellite properties, a robust homelessness prevention initiative, and onsite supportive services for residents.

The FSH program's success is further evidenced by the high percentage of participants who have exited the program to stable housing and suitable employment. According to the organization's most recent statistics,² for example, nearly 80 percent of participants have found permanent employment, and all have located stable, affordable housing. A recent *Washington Post* article noted that more than 500 families have lived in one of the FSH satellite centers over the course of the past decade. The average tenure is about 3 years, and every family has found permanent, stable housing (Kolodner, 2018).



The education center at the Louisville Family Scholar House location (pictured above) provides an array of educational and job training services.

Each of the five FSH developments uses an operating subsidy in the form of project-based Section 8 vouchers or Moving to Work housing choice vouchers. The jury found that these projects met several local planning goals related to the creation of affordable housing, economic and community development, homelessness prevention, and creation of specialized pre-residential and residential services.

² See the "By the Numbers" annual report released by FSH at the following link: <https://familyscholarhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/by-the-numbers.pdf>.



One of the newer FSH centers is housed at Riverport Landings, also located in Louisville, and is an “intergenerational living” community that offers senior housing and services, childcare services, and housing for single moms.

To learn more about the HUD Secretary’s Opportunity and Empowerment Award, go to https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/hud_583_2015.pdf.

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Reference

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