

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS 2014 CONFERENCE REPORT



2014 Choice Neighborhoods Grantee Conference Report: Sharing early successes in learning, leveraging, and leading



Community development expert, Reese Fayde, facilitates a conversation on the critical role of anchor institutions in neighborhood revitalization with Choice Neighborhoods Director Mindy Turbov and India Pierce Lee of the Cleveland Foundation.

Key Report Sections

- Local government plays a vital role
 - No one can do this work alone
 - Community engagement creates a force for sustaining neighborhood gains
 - Looking ahead
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Choice Neighborhoods is designed to enable communities to revitalize struggling neighborhoods that have distressed public or other HUD-assisted housing. Local leaders, residents, and other stakeholders, such as public housing authorities, city agencies, schools, police, business owners, nonprofit organizations, and private developers create a Transformation Plan that guides the revitalization of the distressed housing and the surrounding neighborhood. Since the program's start in 2010, 56 Planning Grantees and 12 Implementation Grantees have been spearheading new approaches to solve complex community challenges.

In June 2014, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) held a Choice Neighborhoods Grantee Conference to share and build upon grantees' early successes and lessons. Over 200 participants attended, including representatives from all current grantees. These participants heard from more than 50 fellow grantees and nationally recognized experts in a series of workshops and peer exchanges. Workshops were organized by tracks, including partnerships, community engagement, public safety, education, and data and results. Satisfaction surveys showed that 94% of respondents felt that the conference met or exceeded their expectations and will inform their Choice Neighborhoods work.

This report highlights early successes and lessons presented at the conference, as well as an outlook on what's next for the program. The majority of the examples described here are from Choice Neighborhoods grantees, with a few examples from nationally recognized, featured speakers.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLAYS A VITAL ROLE

For many years, practitioners in the community development and housing fields have pointed to the importance of local government leadership. Local governments have resources, expertise, and influence to contribute. They are often viewed by the community as a natural authority to lead a revitalization that includes the broader neighborhood. Additionally, local governments control barriers – such as zoning and building codes – that could slow or halt progress if the city or town administration is not familiar or on-board with a project.

Local governments are playing leadership roles in Choice Neighborhoods across the country. Grantee representatives highlighted a number of ways

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE EITHER A LEAD OR CO-LEAD OF 21 CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS GRANTS.

in which local officials have been instrumental in moving revitalization efforts forward:

- **Convening local players and facilitating decision-making.** Local governments can play a leadership role in convening the key parties, facilitating decision-making, and resolving disagreements. Grantee representatives from Boston described how the former Mayor created two project committees for the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant, one made up of relevant city departments, and the other comprised of city and neighborhood representatives. Each met regularly, often with the Mayor or his staff leading the discussion. These meetings, and the Mayor's strong interest in making progress, moved the Quincy Heights project along when challenges arose. For example, the Mayor resolved a months-long disagreement among stakeholders over how to spend Choice Neighborhoods Critical Community Improvements funds by establishing guiding criteria and facilitating decision-making.

To learn more about the Boston Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant Team and their process for selecting Choice Neighborhoods Critical Community Improvements see the [Promising Practice Guide: Boston's Critical Community Improvements](#) and [Webinar](#).

- **Validating the project "vision" to attract other partners.** City leadership can play an important role in validating the neighborhood vision and building consensus and support for it. In Spartanburg, SC, the current and former Mayors agreed to help the community planning process and leverage their influence by forming an advisory committee of community institutions, including a hospital and new medical school that were both located in the Northside neighborhood. Because of this local government leadership, a small city's initiative was able to gain the support of a local foundation, form a nonprofit development organization, and secure a Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant.

HOW TO ATTRACT LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT: A HOUSING AUTHORITY'S PERSPECTIVE

FEATURED SPEAKER: Sandi Henriquez, Assistant Secretary of Public and Indian Housing, HUD

Sandi Henriquez, HUD Assistant Secretary and long-time former Executive Director of the Boston Housing Authority (BHA), discussed how housing authorities can play an effective role in neighborhood revitalization, including how they can attract local government support.

When she took over leadership, the BHA was in receivership and had a negative public image. At the same time, she knew several neighborhoods with BHA public housing were being crippled by poverty, crime, and disinvestment. She and her team knew the Housing Authority would need the support of local government and other partners to address these neighborhoods. To gain a foothold with the City, BHA first needed to build internal support and public credibility. They started with engaging BHA residents and staff to build support for a shared vision. They also focused on getting their own house in order. BHA drastically stepped up maintenance work order turnaround times. As a result, heat and hot water were functioning well, basic repairs were made, and the City saw a huge drop in tenant complaints.

BHA also engaged the Mayor early on by showing that the Housing Authority was now not only a credible partner, but also a valuable partner that could further city goals. For example, the City wanted to increase affordable units, so BHA worked towards putting its 1,100 vacant units back online. When BHA was requesting the only tax credits available to the City, BHA issued Project Based Vouchers to help the City stimulate rental production in other areas and released RFPs with the City. BHA also provided outreach for homeless applicants to help the City achieve their homelessness reduction goals. Henriquez emphasized that housing authorities are often the largest landlord in their city or town and should not underestimate their contribution to city-wide priorities.

Henriquez recognized that a housing authority should not be the leader of broader neighborhood revitalization but that it has an important role in contributing to that revitalization and catalyzing the leadership of local government and other partners. In the end, the City, BHA, and their partners were able to successfully transform HOPE VI neighborhoods – creating well-designed mixed income housing, reducing crime, building on vacant lots, creating a new school, and drawing private reinvestment and community assets back to neighborhoods.

Click the link to see a [Video of the 2014 Choice Neighborhoods Grantee Conference Presentation](#).



■ **Bringing local resources that can then leverage additional resources.** Most local governments have access to discretionary funds that can be applied to community projects. Their commitment is also often vital in securing support from other sources, such as state agencies, banks, foundations, and other funders. In Columbus, OH, the City is matching the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant dollar-for-dollar, committing \$30 million to the effort. Meanwhile, other funders have helped to raise the total project "pot" to over \$180 million. Two things helped the partners raise this money from the City and local funders. First, the community developed a shared goal of collaboration, called "the Columbus Way," which motivates local funders to put the community interest ahead of individual interest. Second, the partners involved members of the city administration—including City Council, which approves budgets—on program planning committees.

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS GRANTEES
HAVE ATTRACTED SIGNIFICANT
LEVERAGE FROM THEIR PARTNERS –
LEVERAGING OVER \$7 FOR EVERY
\$1 OF CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS
GRANT FUNDING.

NO ONE CAN DO THIS WORK ALONE

Neighborhood transformation demands that grantees piece together a variety of neighborhood, housing, and people strategies. No one organization is ever equipped to take on the scale and scope of this work alone. As Sandi Henriquez, HUD Assistant Secretary and former Housing Authority Executive Director, said at the conference, housing authorities cannot be the only entity driving the agenda, and cannot be all things to all people. They need partners, like local government and other stakeholders, to take a leadership role in addressing complex neighborhood challenges. Mindy Turbov, the HUD Choice Neighborhoods Director, also emphasized that the work cannot be seen as belonging to one entity, and that stakeholders must feel that the project is a joint effort.

The importance of partnerships was a consistent theme throughout the conference. Grantees are working with a range of partners, including local governments, schools,

police, businesses, anchor institutions, and nonprofits. Even a single piece of the work often involves multiple partnerships. In Philadelphia, We are Mantua! led by Mount Vernon Manor, Inc. is working with several law enforcement agencies, the Mayor and other city agencies, LISC, the local university research department, university police, community nonprofits, community members, churches, and other faith-based institutions to address neighborhood crime.

Grantee representatives also acknowledged that forming and maintaining partnerships is hard work. Even representatives from the City of Boston, a grantee that has established highly effective partnerships, pointed out that it took time and patience to build trust and establish roles. Many grantee representatives shared their experiences on how to attract partners, overcome growing pains, and build successful partnerships:

■ **Creating a coordinating entity organizes and sustains the work.** In Columbus, OH, the City, Housing Authority, and The Ohio State University, created a dynamic coordinating entity called "Partners Achieving Community Transformation" or PACT. This vehicle facilitated the contributions of approximately 100 members during their Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant process, including residents and community stakeholders, to develop the goals and plan for the Columbus Near East Side neighborhood. In June 2011, PACT formed five subcommittees to cover the core plan elements of: Jobs and Economic Impact; Safe, Vibrant, and Accessible Neighborhoods; Health and Wellness; Education; and Housing. These subcommittees met monthly and developed detailed reports that guided the planning team's final recommendations. Additionally, the City, Housing Authority, and The Ohio State University hired a full-time staff dedicated to run the coordinating



Small groups present ideas for successful stakeholder and community meetings with coaching from facilitation expert Kelley Gullely.

LEVERAGING PARTNERS' SELF-INTEREST: EXAMPLES FROM FOUNDATIONS AND ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

FEATURED SPEAKER: India Pierce Lee,
Program Director for Neighborhoods, Housing and
Community Development, The Cleveland Foundation

India Pierce Lee, Program Director for Neighborhoods at The Cleveland Foundation, described how a foundation played the role of a convener and tapped into the self-interest of anchor institutions to promote neighborhood revitalization.

University Circle, a neighborhood four miles east of downtown Cleveland, contained hospitals, universities, and cultural institutions that supported 60,000 full-time jobs, yet the area unemployment rate was 24 percent. In 2005, the Cleveland Foundation used their role within the community to convene the CEOs of about a half-dozen local institutions to discuss these institutions' goals and the neighborhood's challenges. Through a series of meetings, it became clear that these institutions had a self-interest in ensuring the neighborhood's success – the better the neighborhood looked and performed, the easier it would be to attract consumers, students, faculty, and visitors.

As a result, the Cleveland Foundation formed the Greater University Circle Initiative with anchor institutions, local philanthropies, financial institutions, community groups, and the City of Cleveland. The Initiative continues to this day and has made significant neighborhood improvements. One innovative piece of this work involved developing local businesses to meet the product and services needs of anchor institutions. The Initiative realized that local institutions spent significant sums of money on goods and services procured outside of the community. To keep those dollars in the community and employ local residents in good paying jobs, the Initiative created local cooperatives for laundry, solar energy, and urban gardening services to meet these procurement needs.

Click the links to see the [Cleveland Foundation's Greater University Circle Initiative's Video](#) and a [Video of the 2014 Choice Neighborhoods Grantee Conference Presentation](#).

entity, ensuring that staff would not be pulled away for other duties and that the entity would be seen as an objective party. Now, an expanded, coordinating entity will sustain their work during and beyond the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant.

- **Consistent coordination builds trust and "buy-in".** Getting people with diverse interests to work together is not easy. A

number of Choice Neighborhoods grantees pointed to the importance of regular meetings to gain support and build relationships. In Spartanburg, SC, in 2010, the City, the Housing Authority and 14 other key stakeholders met for a year to educate themselves about the Northside neighborhood and develop a vision. Because of the relationships and understanding that was built, partners were ready to commit to the current Choice Neighborhoods Planning process. For example, the City Council approved allocating over a quarter of its CDBG funds to this one neighborhood because they understood the greater impact on the city; the Housing Authority dedicated \$1.2 million of their Housing Replacement Funds; and, in response to the City's \$250,000 commitment, the partners in this small city committed \$3.5 million.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CREATES A FORCE FOR SUSTAINING NEIGHBORHOOD GAINS

Sandi Henriquez, HUD Assistant Secretary and former Housing Authority Executive Director, emphasized that when you engage residents of the target housing and neighborhood well, they become a powerful force to drive the vision. Without that strong community support, she added, their revitalization plans would not have survived.

Many grantees echoed the value in engaging public and assisted housing residents and other community members not only because it was right, but also because it was effective. Residents and community members' knowledge is critical to developing successful neighborhood strategies—from what's working and not working to why problems persist. Meaningful engagement is also essential to ensure that the community will help maintain the conditions for well-managed properties, safety, and neighborhood marketability. As a police sergeant with the Springfield, MA Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant underscored, the resources grantees have now will one day run out. Sustaining outcomes, such as improved safety, will depend on the continued investment of residents and other community members.

Participants and speakers repeated again and again just how tough it is to engage the community well and how much persistence it takes. In several workshops, residents and practitioners from Choice Neighborhoods and HOPE VI efforts shared lessons for effectively engaging with residents and other community members:

- **Tapping into existing community and resident networks.** Building and broadening community engagement can be challenging. Above door knocking and other traditional methods, several grantees suggested that identifying existing community and resident leaders was one of the



most successful ways to make inroads. They explained that leaders might include representatives in formal resident councils or neighborhood associations, as well as individuals who hold no official leadership role but are trusted and respected by others. For example, to tap into existing networks and broaden relationships with residents, in San Francisco, the South Potrero Planning Grantee asked a local resident to walk with her and point out the "shot callers," or influential community members. In another example, during resident meetings, representatives from Baton Rouge specifically looked for residents who facilitated discussion among their small groups or had recruited other residents to attend meetings. These folks in turn "opened doors" to engaging other residents and community members in the process.

- **Recognizing and responding to where people are.** Choice Neighborhoods have often experienced decades of disinvestment, crime, and a host of other challenges. A normal reaction to constant exposure to these challenges can be mistrust, anger, or hopelessness. The South Potrero Planning Grantee developed five principles to effectively engage the community in this environment. These include being consistent with meetings and programs, and building positive interactions with and among residents by making meetings and activities resident-led and resident-centered. For example, the South Potrero Planning Grantee created peer to peer activities that residents expressed interest in, such as a walking club and parent-child activities. Over time and with grantee support, residents built their capacity to lead these activities.
- **Building trust through transparency and consistency.** Residents and other community members have often seen outside organizations abandon their neighborhoods or promise change and then never deliver. In this environment, representatives of several grantees, including resident leaders, emphasized that trust can be lost in an instant if you over promise or are less than upfront with the community. They encouraged organizations to be honest about difficult topics, such as what their organization's agenda is and why they are here. The South Potrero Planning Grantee also emphasized the need to be consistent and transparent. They stated that part of building trust includes residents knowing that programming, meetings, and interventions will be consistently there for the long term, and that anything residents do (such as completing a survey) will be built upon and brought back to the community. For this reason, they have even turned away organizations who wanted to do one-off, one-year projects. They also pointed out that the consistency of activities allows residents to more easily take on leadership roles because residents become familiar with the routines.

LESSONS FROM HOPE VI: BUILDING INCLUSIVE MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITIES

GRANTEE SPEAKERS: Jocquelyn Marshall, Harmony Oaks Resident Leader & Esther Shin, Executive Vice President, Urban Strategies

After mixed-income housing is built, residents must navigate an environment in which there are often differences in cultures and norms. Resident leader Jocquelyn Marshall and Esther Shin, Vice President of Urban Strategies, emphasized the need to recognize these dynamics and intentionally plan for inclusive mixed-income communities.

Using their experience from a New Orleans HOPE VI project, they outlined three phases of developing inclusive communities:

1. **Beginning:** Create the community vision and plan with residents and other community members. Be selective when choosing speakers to present sensitive issues, and use terms that everyone will understand.
2. **During:** Work closely with the community throughout the entire planning and implementation process. Provide leadership training that addresses leaders' capacity to function within a mixed-income setting. Prepare residents and community members for life after redevelopment by providing appropriate social service supports and transforming community perceptions. Develop site management policies that represent compromises between different cultures and norms.
3. **After:** Build cohesion among neighbors by transitioning the Resident Council to a Neighborhood Association, allowing the public and assisted housing residents to decide how they will be represented. Maintain transparency through consistent meetings, engage in outreach, and create on-going community building activities.

In New Orleans, it was hard work to transition to a mixed-income community, but that work paid off. Residents and other community members challenged their misperceptions of each other and worked with developers to establish rules for the new developments. They also created a neighborhood association that includes board positions specifically for market rate, public housing, and tax credit resident representatives.

LOOKING AHEAD

These lessons from the 2014 Choice Neighborhoods Grantee Conference highlight some early successes from Choice Neighborhoods grantees, as well the challenges of neighborhood revitalization work. To ensure success, grantees are:

- Securing local government leadership, which can convene key partners and local departments, facilitate decision-making, and commit and attract significant leverage. Successfully attracting local government might start by showing that you have "your own house in order", have built internal support for the vision, and can be a valuable partner by contributing to local government priorities.
- Working with partners because no one can revitalize a neighborhood alone. Productive partnerships have grown from creating and staffing a coordinating entity, organizing consistent meetings to build trust and "buy-in", and leveraging partners' self-interests.
- Effectively engaging residents and other community members, so that they will become a force for sustaining neighborhood gains. Grantees have been most successful in engaging the community when they tap into existing community networks, recognize the impact neighborhood challenges have on the community, create activities that foster positive interactions, and build trust through transparency and consistency.

In addition to these lessons, the conference delved into two critical neighborhood challenges: public safety and education. The Choice Neighborhoods program recognizes that public safety and access to quality schools are strong drivers of neighborhood success. Neighborhood safety is often one of the first aspects people consider when deciding where to live. Meanwhile, improving school quality boosts the surrounding housing market and makes the neighborhood a viable place for families to stay.

Through the Promise Zones Initiative, HUD has been working closely with the Department of Education, Department of Jus-

tice, and other agencies to coordinate investments in these and other areas. As a result of their efforts, 9 Choice Neighborhoods have Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods grants, and 9 Choice Neighborhoods have received Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation grants. At the conference, Choice Neighborhoods grantees demonstrated that they are finding ways, with coordinated federal funding and local alignments, to achieve safety and education goals:

- **Reducing crime by building community-police relationships.** The City of Springfield, MA, a 2011 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grantee, secured a 2013 Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Planning and Implementation Grant. This award will enable Springfield to replicate a highly successful, local, community-oriented policing model in the South End neighborhood. Adapted from counter-insurgency tactics, this model recognizes that community members have the intel police need to disrupt gang and drug activity and are the only ones who can maintain safety gains after the funding ends. First, specific police officers are assigned to a hot spot and work solely in that neighborhood. These officers then build a relationship with the community by reaching out through people the community knows and respects, responding consistently and thoughtfully to police calls, and working with community-based organizations to address underlying problems. The model has already been used in another Springfield neighborhood, where crime has dropped by 67%.



Sergeant Brian Elliott from the Springfield Police Department responds to a question about aligning public safety efforts with other revitalization strategies.

THREE CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS (IN SAN ANTONIO, PHILADELPHIA, AND LOS ANGELES) ARE ALSO INCLUDED IN AREAS DESIGNATED AS PROMISE ZONES.

- **Creating an educational pipeline when children attend multiple schools.** In Norwalk, CT, the Norwalk Housing Authority (NHA) and their partners are tackling the challenge of improving the educational outcomes of children living in public housing when they attend multiple schools. When NHA received the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant, they took that opportunity to further align their educational activities with Norwalk ACTS – a city-wide coalition of local leaders and 45 organizations that strive to improve educa-

To see another example of how a Choice Neighborhoods grantee is creating a cradle to career educational pipeline view the [Promising Practice Guide: Placing School Improvements and Student Achievement at the Center of Neighborhood Revitalization](#) and [Webinar on the Seattle Implementation Grantee](#).

tional outcomes from cradle to career. In the area of early learning, NHA and their partners have secured slots for NHA children in high performing early learning programs, provided parents with van transportation to and from preschool, and will be building an early learning center in the heart of the community. In K-12, prior to the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant, NHA developed after school tutoring programs with certified literacy teachers, and are now further aligning them with school curriculum. They are also supporting K-12 reforms, sharing data, and participating in collaborative problem solving.

Since the conference, the momentum has continued. On June 30, 2014, HUD announced four new Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grantees. Two of the grantees, Norwalk, CT and Columbus, OH, were former Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grantees, demonstrating the value of the two-year, local planning process that Planning Grants support. With the addition of these new grantees, Choice Neighborhoods now has a total of 12 Implementation Grantees and 56 Planning Grantees. As the conference demonstrated, these grantees are tackling highly complex neighborhood challenges with innovative strategies, local leadership, and strong partnerships.

HUD continues to provide grantees with technical assistance and forums to share innovations and solve neighborhood problems. During Fiscal Year 2014, HUD hosted three regional convenings and the annual conference, held five webinars, published two Promising Practice Guides, and provided individual technical assistance to four grantees. Materials and videos from these events can be found at www.hud.gov/choiceta. More information and a number of [Videos from the 2014 Choice Neighborhoods Grantee Conference](#) are also available on the conference tracks of: partnerships, public safety, education, community engagement, and data and results.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

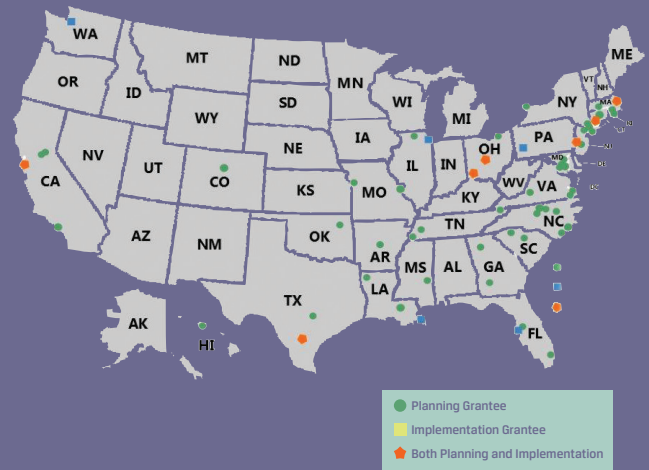
Special thanks to the HUD staff that directs and administers the Choice Neighborhoods program, especially Mindy Turbov and Jessica Rosenberg; Reese Fayde, Principal, Reese Fayde & Associates; and Kenya Crumel, Director of Community & Social Innovation at BCT Partners. This guide also benefitted from significant contributions by Kyleen Hashim and Jessica Rosenberg at HUD.



BCT Partners and the Center for the Study of Social Policy are the lead technical assistance providers for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods program.

What is Choice Neighborhoods?

Choice Neighborhoods is HUD's signature place-based initiative and is a central element of the White House's Promise Zones Initiative, which builds on a federal partnership to transform high poverty neighborhoods into places of opportunity and economic growth. Choice Neighborhoods enables communities to revitalize struggling neighborhoods with distressed public housing or HUD-assisted housing. Local leaders, residents, and stakeholders, such as public housing authorities, cities, schools, police, business owners, nonprofits, and private developers, create a plan that revitalizes distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in the surrounding neighborhood. Through these grants, communities are replacing obsolete, distressed housing with vibrant mixed-income communities, leveraging investments to develop new retail and businesses, turning around failing schools, strengthening early education, preventing crime, improving transportation, ensuring basic neighborhood assets, and increasing access to jobs.



Why Choice Neighborhoods?

Over 11 million Americans live in neighborhoods with a poverty rate of 40% or more. Many of these neighborhoods struggle with rampant crime, failing schools, and the impact of decades of disinvestment. High poverty neighborhoods also collectively have 105,000 units of distressed public and private HUD-assisted housing. Choice Neighborhoods recognizes the need to support local leaders in turning around these neighborhoods so that they can become centers of opportunity and economic growth.

What does Choice Neighborhoods do?

- **Builds upon two decades of HOPE VI innovations.** Choice Neighborhoods builds upon the bipartisan HOPE VI public housing revitalization program launched in 1993. HOPE VI has developed nearly 100,000 units of mixed-income housing in 260 communities. Many HOPE VI sites have not only rebuilt some of the most severely distressed public housing, but have also experienced sharp drops in poverty, crime, and unemployment; large rises in income and property values; and new investment, business growth, and jobs. Urban Institute has estimated that, with these gains, one typical, large HOPE VI redevelopment could save taxpayers \$22 million more than if HUD did nothing.
- **Transforms distressed housing and creates mixed-income communities.** The 12 Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grantees will replace and rehabilitate 3,624 obsolete, isolated public and private HUD-assisted housing units with new, mostly privately managed units. These replacement units will be mixed with 7,790 new affordable and market-rate units to ensure communities attract a sustainable mix of incomes. For many grantees, construction is already well underway. For example, Boston has completed 80% of its housing construction, which is replacing a distressed Section 8, HUD-assisted housing site with 129 new and reconfigured units. San Antonio has also completed 208 new mixed-income units, including 49 replacement public housing units.
- **Catalyzes neighborhood transformation.** Choice Neighborhoods Grantees develop a comprehensive neighborhood plan that addresses the broader needs of the community, including nearby vacant private housing, public safety, local schools, employment, economic development, and other critical community improvements. Grantees can use up to 30 percent of their award to leverage these investments. For example, with \$500,000 in Choice Neighborhoods funds and \$13.5 million in leverage, the City of Boston and its partners converted an abandoned factory

across the street from their housing site into a multi-tenant food production facility. This facility will support over 50 businesses and create more than 100 new jobs within the first three years of operation. Along the same street, Boston will make strategic façade improvements to 10-15 businesses. These and other physical investments will be complemented with improvements in residents' education, safety, health, and employment.

- **Leverages other funding.** Choice Neighborhoods Grantees have leveraged over \$2.65 billion, more than 7 times their total grant award. This total includes new and refocused funds from private investors, banks, cities, universities, foundations, and a range of local partners.
- **Engages key stakeholders.** Mayors, local governments, nonprofits, tribal entities, developers, and public housing authorities can apply for Choice Neighborhoods Grants. In addition to applicants, Choice Neighborhoods Grantees have also formed partnerships with a range of local players, such as private investors, Chambers of Commerce, school districts, police departments, community health clinics, faith based organizations, and Workforce Investment Boards.
- **Builds capacity through Planning Grants.** It takes years to plan a neighborhood transformation effort and build a strong coalition of stakeholders. For this reason, Choice Neighborhoods provides smaller, two-year Planning Grants. Planning Grants include competitive preferences for rural communities and communities that have a Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods Grant.