

Housing Co-ops



THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 4,600 HOUSING CO-OPS, with 1.2 million units and approximately 3 million residents. In their communities, housing co-ops donate meeting space, sponsor recycling and youth programs, and work to keep senior citizens in their homes. Here is a sampling of their commitment to community.

Caring for the Community

NORC Supportive Services Center, New York, New York. After housing co-ops in New York undertook programs to serve senior residents in inter-generational communities, the Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities Supportive Services Center was developed to replicate the program around the country.

These programs now help more than 50,000 seniors remain in their homes among family and friends. The NORC Supportive Services Center is now using a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop NORC programs around the country.

Greenbelt Homes, Inc., Greenbelt, Maryland. With help from the NORC Supportive Services Center, the co-op launched a program serving Greenbelt seniors. The program offers services to allow seniors in the co-op and elsewhere in the city to continue living independently.

Amalgamated Housing Cooperative, Bronx, New York. Education and community involvement are priorities for the co-op. It sponsors a parent-run cooperative nursery school, a day camp, a fitness club, and an international committee to foster good will among the community's diverse cultures. An annual festival brings together neighborhood residents for a day of multi-cultural education. The co-op also sponsors a NORC program providing information on public benefits, entitlement programs, and social services for seniors. The NORC program was one of the models for the NORC Supportive Services Program.

Studies Show Impact of Cooperative Housing on Neighborhoods

A paper presented at the Urban Affairs Association Conference last year indicated that limited equity cooperatives in urban neighborhoods maintain the affordability of housing for lower-income residents, reduce displacement of working families, and contribute to diversity. The paper by Susan Saegert and Melissa Extein looked at the rapidly gentrifying Clinton neighborhood of New York City. A year earlier, Saegert and two others, Gary Winkel and Charles Swartz, published an article in *Housing Policy Debate* showing that cooperative homeownership can reduce crime in neighborhoods. That article also focused on New York City.

Atlanta Cooperative Development Corporation, Atlanta, Georgia. Atlanta housing co-ops supported the development of the Atlanta Cooperative Development Corporation, which is using \$1 million from the Department of Health and Human Services to set up individual development accounts for low-income residents. Participant saves \$50 a month from earnings received from working in a food or landscaping cooperative. The savings are matched four-to-one with grant funding. The IDAs can be used for a down payment on a home, college enrollment, or to capitalize interest in a cooperative business.

Stone Soup Cooperative, Chicago, Illinois. The co-op offers meeting, event and conference space to many local and national nonprofits, including Amnesty International and the Chicago Mutual Housing Network, a support organization for housing co-ops throughout the city.

Caring for the Environment

1st Rochdale's Green Apple Initiative, New York, New York. 1st Rochdale Cooperative, an energy cooperative founded by New York City housing co-ops, offers a renewable power product for consumers. The electricity comes from a blend of three renewable sources: wind power, bioenergy, and small hydro-electric generators. Consumers pay a premium to support electricity coming from these sources. The Environmental Resources Trust certifies that the product meets environmental standards.

University Students Cooperative Association, Berkeley, California. This cooperative of student housing co-ops has an ambitious recycling policy, including education about waste consciousness, recycling, and conservation. Each of the 20 co-op houses must appoint a resident waste reduction manager who implements recycling policies and educates other residents.

Committed to Children

Walton Park Manor Cooperative, Pontiac, Michigan . The co-op partnered with United Way and Michigan State Cooperative Extension to support the Pontiac Neighborhood Youth Initiative, which provides community center services. The Extension office trains co-op members to go door-to-door recruiting youths and conducting surveys to determine the services needed. A youth center at the co-op is used by Big Brothers & Big Sisters, the Boy and Girl Scouts, and others.