

BOSTON HOUSING AUTHORITY AND REBUILD BOSTON ENERGY INITIATIVE



With affordable housing in short supply, about 10 percent of Boston's residents live in a **Boston Housing Authority (BHA)** property. As the largest public housing authority in New England, BHA strives to provide quality affordable housing to a large population.

Like other housing authorities in large cities, BHA properties have had long-standing water and energy-efficiency problems. To tackle this issue, the housing authority teamed up with the Rebuild Boston partnership to reduce energy use while improving tenant comfort.

Rebuild Boston provided technical assessments and developed a performance contracting system with BHA to install the most cost-effective measures. With additional help from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, BHA entered into two performance contracts with Northeast Energy Services, Inc.

By using future energy savings to pay for improvements the housing authority will benefit from new heating and residential hot water systems, low-flow toilets, faucets and showerheads, and energy-efficient exterior lighting.

In addition to the energy performance contracts, the housing authority developed an energy- and water-efficiency master plan for all its properties to identify more opportunities to save energy dollars.

Results

Since partnering with Rebuild America, BHA has completed energy- and water-efficiency improvements in 2,700 apartments funded by the \$16 million performance contracts. Annual energy savings are expected to reach \$2.7 million.

Healthy Public Housing

Interest is growing in studying the connection between indoor air quality and respiratory illnesses. While asthma affects about one in 20 Americans, in recent years some Boston neighborhoods were reporting rates of up to 30 percent. Two BHA properties had self-reported rates of 20 percent to 45 percent.

Rebuild Boston helped advance the idea that energy-



Rebuild Boston helped improve Morville House, a seniors housing complex in Boston.

efficiency upgrades could be coupled with improvements to indoor air quality. Cost savings from energy-efficient systems and practices could help pay for improvements that will benefit resident's health.

In response to the health concerns, BHA joined the Healthy Public Housing Initiative (HPHI), a Boston-based partnership comprised of Boston Public Health Commission, South Boston Community Health Center, local schools of public health and medicine, and public housing residents among others.

The five-year initiative focuses on reducing pollutants—cigarette smoke, pollen, dust, rodent and pet dander—that trigger asthma attacks. Researchers will investigate whether energy-efficiency improvements in HVAC systems and maintenance, along with better pest control, can improve the health of those residents with respiratory conditions. BHA has committed grant funds and staff time to HPHI and pilot studies have been completed.

Green Housing

Boston Housing Authority is advancing its commitment to sustainable public housing by redeveloping the 60-year-old Maverick Gardens housing complex in East Boston. With involvement from the housing residents, BHA held a design charette for the multi-use, mixed-income project being funded in part by a \$35 million Hope VI grant. BHA is working to adapt the project to LEED Green Building Rating System™ standards, with Rebuild America providing technical and process assistance. Construction will begin in spring 2003.