



Rebuild America Success Stories highlight partnerships working to improve communities by practicing energy awareness and investing in energy-saving measures.

- New Building Design
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Creating Affordable Housing in the Northwest

Partners Collaborate to Build Model Housing Complex

Spokane County, Washington was grappling with the challenge of providing affordable housing for thousands of residents. Sixteen percent of renter households in the County were spending a disproportionate amount of their income – more than one-third – on housing, according to a study by the Spokane Partnership for Affordable Housing. This includes more than 17,000 low-income households in the City of Spokane. With the marketplace serving only 1 percent of Spokane's lowest income households, there was a strong demand for decent, reasonably priced housing in the region. Through a grassroots effort of more than 70 partners, the Sustainable Housing Innovation Partnership is helping to solve this problem by building an affordable, multifamily housing complex incorporating sustainable building materials and practices.

The Challenge

Spokane Neighborhood Action Programs (SNAP) is dedicated to creating affordable, decent housing. In 1997, SNAP sponsored a program to build an affordable rental home using straw bales as a structural component. With the success of the project, many of the project's partners kept asking "when can we build sustainable, affordable residences on a larger scale?" Although there were several sustainable multifamily housing projects throughout the Northwest, few existed in the Spokane area. With several challenges ahead, from maintaining a large, diverse partnership to keeping construction costs in check, SNAP stepped up to the plate to lead the effort.

The Solution

With resounding support from the community, SNAP formed the Sustainable Housing Innovation Partnership (SHIP) in 1999. Its partners – made up of individuals, trade groups, businesses, government, universities and financial institutions – are working to create Riverwalk Point, a model for sustainable, affordable community housing.

The goal from the start was to prevent up-front expenses from rising more than 10 percent above that of a conventional project – that is, to keep the "sustainable" features to 10 percent of construction costs. The emphasis was on up-front costs – construction and appliance purchases, primarily – because those are the overwhelming focus of financial institutions, whose horizons do not take into account life-cycle costs.

The first phase of Riverwalk Point, completed in spring 2003, is a 52-unit housing complex in five buildings on a plot of land near the Spokane River, next to

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Partnership Facts:

Name of Partnership:

Spokane Neighborhood
Action Programs (SNAP)

Targeted Buildings:

Public & Multifamily Housing

Space Completed:

64,000 square feet (Phase I)

Annual Energy Savings:

50% savings over comparable
properties (projected)

**Amount Invested in
Energy-Saving Initiative:**

\$541,000

Project Facts:

Riverwalk Point (Phase I)
Cost of New Complex: \$ 5.8 million
Capacity: 52 units
Site: 9 riverfront acres

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For more information about
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a recreational trail. The complex, built at a cost of about \$5.8 million, is designed for households of one to six members with incomes ranging from \$9,780 to \$27,050 a year. The development is a model of energy efficiency - it is expected to use about half the energy of a traditional development of similar size and scope.

Partners

Washington State University Energy Program, a partner to this project, provided technical assistance to the design team, reviewed and made recommendations for the ventilation system and assisted in on-site inspection of the energy-efficiency measures. The university's Energy Program will continue its technical support by monitoring the energy performance of the complex.

The project is being financed by the State of Washington Housing Trust Fund, Spokane County Community Development, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the National Equity Fund, Foundation Northwest, the U.S. Bancorp Foundation, Washington Mutual Bank & Foundation, Impact Capital, AVISTA Corporation and the Paul G. Allen Charitable Foundation.

Key Technologies

- High-efficiency gas-fired heaters in four units and a geothermal heat pump in the fifth unit
- Structural insulated panels
- Better framing, with room inside it for more insulation
- Compact fluorescent and T8 fluorescent lighting
- Buildings are oriented to maximize daylighting without overheating the units
- Awnings, roof overhangs and deck overhangs help shade the units from the summer sun
- Minimum of glazing on east and west walls to help reduce summer thermal loads
- All appliances will have an ENERGY STAR® rating
- Comprehensive air sealing
- Low-flow plumbing fixtures
- Energy conservation education once for each new occupant.

What the Future Holds

After SHIP studies the results of Phase I, plans call for two additional phases to be built between 2005 to 2007.

To learn more visit: www.eere.energy.gov.

A Strong Energy Portfolio for a Strong America

Energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy will mean a stronger economy, a cleaner environment, and greater energy independence for America. Working with a wide array of state, community, industry, and university partners, the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy invests in a diverse portfolio of energy technologies.

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