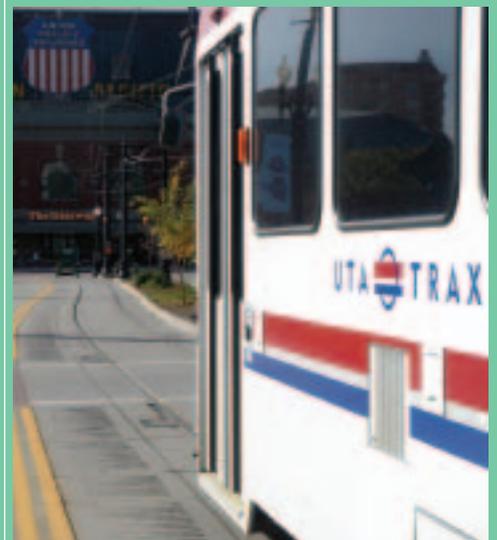
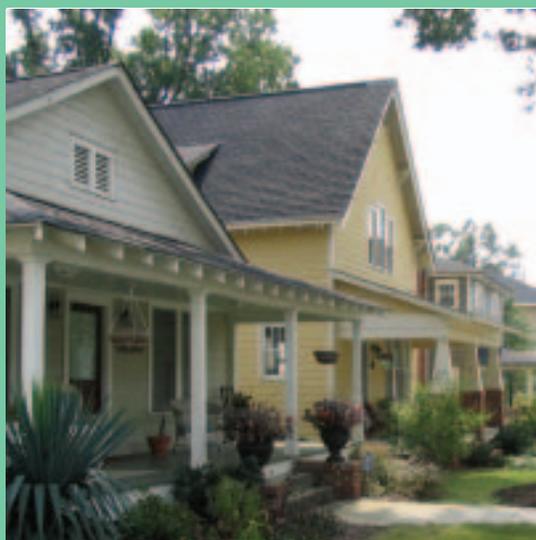


# Building Better

A Guide to America's Best New Development Projects



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**Project Coordinator:** Eric Olson

**Design:** Tim Lesle

**Research:** Eric Olson, Emily Salomon, Jimmy Terpening

**Communications:** Eric Antebi, Orli Cotel

**Field Research and Editorial Assistance:**

Cheri Briscoe, Scott Chapman, Mark Clemens, Irvin Dawid, Molly Diggins, Patty Durand, Scott Elkins, Natalie Foster, Tim Frank, Susan Gorman, JoAnne Graves, Bryan Hager, Joyce Harms, Marc Heileson, John Holtzclaw, Ed Hopkins, Joshua Houdek, Ken Hughes, Jeremy Marin, Bliss Moore, Mary Ann Nelson, Patrisha Piras, Rafael Reyes, Alice Ringer, Stephanie Schaaf, Sue Schwartz, Stephen Scott, Angela Silva, Marsha Taylor, Christa Wagner, Rosemary Wehnes, Kim Yarbray

Cover photos (clockwise, from top left): Students at the University of Washington, Tacoma, photo courtesy of University of Washington, Tacoma; outdoor diners in Windsor, California, photo courtesy of Town Green Village, LLP; a car in Salt Lake City’s TRAX light rail system, photo courtesy of Marc Heileson; homes in the neighborhood of Southside, photo courtesy of City of Greensboro, North Carolina.

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85 Second St., Second Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, (415) 977-5500  
408 C St. NE, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 547-1141

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# Milwaukee<sup>WISCONSIN</sup>



## Highland Park: Highland Gardens and Highland Homes

HOUSING AUTHORITY—CITY OF MILWAUKEE

**H**ighland Park—a neighborhood in Milwaukee—is located just northwest of downtown near the corner of West Vliet Street and North 17th Street. Two major projects are taking place in this neighborhood, mainly the dismantling of older housing authority buildings and replacing those dwelling units with better designed Highland Gardens and Highland Homes. Aside from providing better homes for local residents, the revitalization of Highland Park is viewed as an investment aimed at stimulating economic improvements in the city, particularly the commercial district near Highland Park just a few blocks away on West Vliet Street between 11th and 13th Streets.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, 2 blocks south of the neighborhood is Marquette University, which is undergoing a \$100 million renovation.<sup>2</sup> Surrounding Highland Park are revitalization projects that will improve the conditions of the entire neighborhood.

### Highland Gardens

In November 2004, the City of Milwaukee unveiled the city's first "green" public housing facility, Highland Gardens. This 114-unit building has transformed the property of two derelict high-rise apartment buildings, owned by the Housing Authority, City of Milwaukee (HACM), which previously inhabited the 1.2 acre property. The towers, which were built in 1967 were in poor condition, expensive to maintain, and densely crowded, among other problems. After assessing the property, HACM initiated the Highland Gardens project with the goal of replacing the old units in the high-rises since it was determined it would be more cost effective than renovation. This decision was met with strong community support. The towers, which were built for elderly and disabled residents, have been replaced by the completed four story building, which is 120,000 square feet. There are also a number of family units included in the building. The entire building is accessible for residents with disabilities.

### Highland Homes

On the same lot behind the two high-rise towers sat 54 "barracks-style" apartments for large families. Under the same redevelopment scheme as Highland Gardens, Highland Homes are 4 to 5 bedroom homes being built as infill on abandoned and blighted lots donated to HACM by the city. To prevent displacement of the residents living in the "barracks-style" housing, HACM will be constructing 16 low-income rental townhouses and 30 market rate single family homes which have been built on-site, and 40 low-income single family homes within a 3 to 4 mile radius of Highland Park. Of those 40 homes, 18 have been completed and the rest will be finished when the old towers are demolished, so as not to leave anyone without a home.<sup>3</sup> All the new homes will be built for the former residents of the "barracks" and they will have a choice of which plots they would like to live in for the scattered site housing. Additionally, rents will remain at 30 percent of their monthly income, the same as previous rents. Relocation costs

are covered by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

## Environmental Justice

Highland Gardens and Highland Homes are replacing what has been described as a “Superblock” because of its isolation from the rest of the community. Rather than having all dwelling units concentrated within a “superblock,” a popular model during Urban Renewal development of four decades ago, one of the overall goals of Highland Park is to create a residential neighborhood by creating streets to reconnect the neighborhood to the city’s grid system. This helps develop more community interaction, plus it provides more travel options and provides better pedestrian access. Previously there were only two entrance points into the development from the rest of the city,<sup>4</sup> exacerbating social and economic isolation of residents. The new streets serve as connecting points to downtown and a nearby shopping district. Alderman Willie Hines, chairman of HACM, says the new street plan “will do wonders for the neighborhood. It’s a tremendous development opportunity that will integrate public housing into the surrounding community. Before it was an island unto itself.”<sup>5</sup> This development provides a mix of public housing—rental and homeownership opportunities throughout Highland Park.

## Incorporating Environmental Design and Materials

Highland Gardens is one of the first efforts in an environmental initiative the City of Milwaukee is taking to make it a “greener, cleaner” place to live.<sup>6</sup> The windows, cement, wooden gym floors, and other materials from the two high rises were recycled and used in the construction of Highland Gardens. The most prominent environmental feature of Highland Gardens is the 20,032 square foot, modular green roof, “believed to be the largest vegetated roof on any residential development in the nation.”<sup>7</sup> Green roofs are composed of tiles/modules that have plants growing in them to absorb and eliminate the storm water runoff that would otherwise overload the storm and sanitary sewers that eventually drain into Lake Michigan.<sup>8</sup> Other benefits include lower energy consumption since the roof provides strong insulation for the building, and a longer roof life. The green roof is also designed to reduce the amount of heat given off, which helps mitigate poor air quality in the summer months. Two rain gardens that landscape Highland Gardens

will also help to deter water runoff.

Highland Homes have also been designed to be more environmental, with energy efficiency an important component of their construction. Some of the features in Highland Homes include energy efficient heating, ventilation and cooling, and windows; soy-based insulation, rain gardens, and rain water that empties to grade rather than into the storm sewer.<sup>9</sup>

## Good Planning and Design

HACM is implementing good design practices in the remodeling of the Highland Park neighborhood to improve quality of life by strengthening access to other parts of the city. Local residents were encouraged to participate in planning for Highland Homes and Highland Gardens at a series of public meetings. Many ideas from these meetings were incorporated into neighborhood design.<sup>10</sup> Using New Urbanism principles, Highland Park has been designed to blend in with the surrounding neighborhoods.<sup>11</sup> Entrances enter to sidewalks rather than to parking areas, and the neighborhood is developing with Highland Gardens serving as a recognizable center.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, a local bus hub abuts Highland Park at 17th Street with four major bus lines serving the area.

Developing a neighborhood in this fashion contributes toward making the community a better, more attractive place to live, makes public transportation an efficient option, and reduces the pressure on sprawling outside the city.

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## University of Washington, Tacoma

## Town Green Village Project



page 4

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, TACOMA



page 8

TOWN GREEN VILLAGE, LLP

## Highland Park

## 10 and 12 School Street



page 20

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page 22

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