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## **OAKLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY WINS FIVE NATIONAL “AWARDS OF MERIT” FOR ITS INNOVATIONS AND LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC HOUSING**

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), the nation’s largest membership organization for associations and individuals providing public housing in the country, awarded the Oakland Housing Authority five “Awards of Merit,” at its national conference in Portland, on July 17, 2009. Present at the conference and ceremonies were members of OHA’s Board of Commissioners and Executive Director Jon Gresley.

The NAHRO “Awards of Merit” help inform the public of the best in housing and community development and create a resource bank of information on improvements in housing development. Winning projects are used to inform HUD and Congress of the achievements of NAHRO members.

“We are honored to be recognized for providing inspiration, fresh ideas and leadership to the field,” said Moses L. Mayne, Jr., Chair of the Board of Commissioners.

Oakland Housing Authority’s Awards of Merit were given for the following programs:

**Children’s Book Giveaway Program** has distributed over 35,000 free books to youth whose families apply for or live in public housing or Section 8 housing. Relying exclusively on donations of new and gently used books, the year-round program is run entirely by volunteer employees who have spent personal time to secure and distribute books. OHA has recently begun a new collaboration with Civicorps, to further increase the number of books distributed to young people.

**Building Envelope and Preservation Program** is designed to help protect and conserve many of the authority’s scattered site properties. Due to its MTW status with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), OHA was able to move from the comprehensive rehabilitation model to one that addressed specific repairs. Using RFPs and unit prices for each type of work, repairs were recently made to over 190 sites which positively affected the lives of nearly 1200 families.

**Lion Creek Crossings Transit-Oriented Housing** is a mixed-income development that has transformed one the City’s neighborhoods along with an underutilized industrial area, into an acclaimed high-density, mixed-income housing development. A four-phase development with 467 affordable homes and apartments, the 22-acre development is just steps away from one of the Bay Area’s major transit hubs (BART, Airport Shuttle, Amtrak, AC Transit). A revitalized six acre city park, with a grassy athletic field, along with the restoration of a previously channeled creek, is a centerpiece of the development.

**Model Unit Vacancy Turnovers** are bringing many of OHA's housing units to a "private market" standard following the Federal mandate to transition to an asset management approach. Staff and residents collaborated to create a "model market rate" apartment. Considered were product durability and life span, tenant maintenance requirements, among many factors. The new OHA standard includes brighter interior paint, improved lighting fixtures, hardwood patterned linoleum, mirrored closet doors and when price is competitive, granite counter tops.

**Video Security Systems** have been tested by OHA to respond to the concerns of residents and housing officials. Along with other crime prevention measures, this new concept has employed new security cameras at three senior sites and five administrative facilities. OHA police are able to monitor camera feeds, follow up on reports from residents, inform officers in the field and address disturbances. Since the implementation of this program, there has been a drastic decrease in theft, crime-related nuisance activity and vandalism-related incidents.

Winners of the 2009 NAHRO "Awards of Merit" are eligible to be considered for NAHRO's top national prize, the "Award of Excellence," which is presented annually and is slated for October, 2009 in Washington, DC.

Oakland Housing Authority recently celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of providing quality, affordable housing to Oakland's residents. It has revitalized neighborhoods, offered life-enrichment services to its residents and has contributed to the local economy. OHA provides housing for approximately 10 percent of Oakland's families, with 3,221 public housing units in its stock. 11,142 of Oakland families, elderly and disabled rent with Section 8 vouchers, which is a public/private partnership allowing clients choice in the private rental market. The average income of OHA families is about \$15,000.

For more information on the Oakland Housing Authority call 510-874-1512 or visit [www.oakha.org](http://www.oakha.org)