



# The Viable Futures Center

*Embraced by communities who turn challenges into opportunities.*

## Enhancing Services and Maximizing Public Dollars in Nevada

Washoe County and the City of Reno have challenged themselves to find innovative ways to respond to the economic downturn. **Despite the fiscal climate – or perhaps because of it --** a variety of public and non-profit organizations have worked in partnership to co-locate and offer new services at community centers. This has allowed the County and City to more effectively meet the needs of underserved populations, intergenerational and multi-cultural interaction has been enhanced – and, at the same time, public dollars are going farther. *“The message is a simple one,”* Washoe County Commissioner Bonnie Weber said. *“Partnerships between the community and local government do make positive changes in the lives of our residents and are essential to our efforts to continue providing needed services during these challenging economic times.”*

### Sun Valley Center – More Space, Lower Operational Costs, Expanded Services

In Washoe County, the Department of Senior Services recently relocated its Senior Center in Sun Valley to a county-owned building, located within a community park. The building was being vacated by Washoe County Regional Parks because of budget cuts, but the move did more than keep the building open. The new location has a number of advantages for seniors. First of all, the building has more space for activities and classes; secondly, the move to a county owned building saves the Department \$20,000 per year in operational costs, allowing it to expand services for seniors. But even more importantly, the new location allowed the Department to develop new partnerships with several agencies that are able to assist seniors, and serve multiple generations of Sun Valley residents.

*“Sun Valley has one of the largest concentrations of seniors in Washoe County, many who live alone”* Senior Services Director Grady Tarbutton said. *“But it is also a community where neighbor supports neighbor, and where residents were looking for ways to become active and help people of all ages. As a result, the new Sun Valley Community Center has become a focal point of services for all generations. All people, not just seniors, gain access to those services AND have an opportunity to give back. Washoe County Senior Services is dedicated to providing a facility where we can partner with other community agencies to provide a home for the kind of intergenerational programming that is so important to the health of any community.”*



*Intergenerational story time at Sun Valley.  
Photo courtesy of Washoe County.*

The County Sheriff's Office opened a new sub-station at the center. The Washoe School District's Family Resource Center and Project Head Start's early childhood education program also operate out of the building, and the Northern Nevada Food Bank offers several programs at the park. The Sun Valley General Improvement District has found new opportunities to partner with all the agencies involved, creating a new, vital community dynamic.



Planting bulbs at Sun Valley Center. Photo courtesy of Washoe County.

Sharing the new location with agencies such as the Family Resource Center and the Project Head Start program provides new opportunities for multi-generational activities. Residents of all ages are encouraged to take part in daily Bingo, senior center chess wizards challenged local teens to join them for games during the summer months, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program members read to students in the early childhood education program located there, and in the early fall, Head Start students and seniors worked together to plant hundreds of spring bulbs donated by a local Home Depot.

### Neil Road in South Reno – ARRA Funds at Work

The Neil Road Recreation Center is fulfilling the long term vision of the City and County to reach the Hispanic community in South Reno. By partnering, they were able to make optimal use of an existing site – and provide resources to underserved families, youth and seniors.

The City of Reno and Washoe County have planned an expansion to the Neil Road Center for five years -- to create the first senior center south of Interstate 80. The partnership allowed the City and County to offer a broad array of activities and services, including a location to provide congregate meals to seniors in this community. This important new effort was made possible through 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, and was supported by U.S. Senator Harry Reid.

*“The Neil Road senior lunch program is a giant leap in our efforts to provide essential services to the large population of seniors in this community,”* Tarbutton said. *“By partnering with the City of Reno, we are able to provide these seniors with meal service in their neighborhood for the first time.”* The new meals program will also help broader efforts to reach Reno’s growing population of Hispanic seniors.

The center is a hub of activity and a central place for families and youth to find resources. There is ample room for youth activities on the 10-acre recreation center grounds. A variety of community agencies are now located at the recreation center, including Hispanic Services of Nevada, Juvenile Services, St. Mary’s Health Clinic, and a police sub-station. Plans are in the works to develop additional services and organized activities that respond to the needs of the community.

### Providing Benefits for All – It Works!

*“These centers both have layers of benefits for the residents of Sun Valley and South Reno,”* Tarbutton said. *“Families, seniors, caregivers, youth and others in need will have greater access to community services so that more people may be served. All of this could not have been accomplished without our partners, who have so willingly contributed to these shared solutions. In many ways, **we are adapting to the communities, instead of asking the communities to adapt to us.** And, it works!”*

## Resources:

Washoe County Senior Services: (775) 328-2575 or visit the Senior Services Department page at [www.washoecounty.us](http://www.washoecounty.us)

## Equitable Allocation of Stimulus Funds: Minnesota Leads the Way

A coalition of more than 70 community organizations in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota is working to ensure that public investments in infrastructure and renewable energy help **lift people out of poverty, reduce racial disparities and contribute to healthier communities for everyone**. HIRE Minnesota is a campaign to create a new green economy -- and to do it in a way that generates new jobs, reduces global warming pollution, and builds opportunities for low-income people and people of color.



At the "missing persons" rally. A "missing persons report" was filed with the MN Dept of Transportation to alert them that hiring goals for women and people of color have been missed for 18 consecutive years. Courtesy of Alliance for Metropolitan Stability

The passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) presents new opportunities to change business as usual by organizing across racial, cultural, geographic and issue boundaries to ensure that all communities experience economic recovery equitably. According to a recent study by the Kirwan Institute at Ohio State University

(<http://fairrecovery.org/Building%20Opportunity.pdf>), communities of color across the country are bearing the brunt of tough economic times. The ARRA represents a crucial opening to invest in hard-hit areas and demonstrate that government action can result in public good. To build public trust and community level ownership, steps must be taken to ensure transparent and accountable allocation of the Recovery Act's

resources. To be effective, the investments must be targeted, clearly address structural equity issues, and include tracking and accountability measures.

Minnesota is slated to receive approximately \$4.6 billion over the next 24 months from the ARRA in a variety of programs that include investments in infrastructure, weatherization programs and other renewable energy industries. The state had an alarming unemployment rate of 7.1 percent as of September 2009, and the unemployment rates in low-income communities and communities of color are much higher. Despite diversity hiring goals and decades of growth in Minnesota's minority population, state projects in these areas have not reflected the inclusiveness important to a diversifying state. Although the ARRA has been hailed as an expeditious way to put people back to work and to invest in jobs that also address our environmental problems, the rapid expenditure of these funds without the active engagement of those most vulnerable sets the stage to perpetuate existing inequalities in state training, hiring, and contracting practices.

*"There's been a lot of talk about the benefit of the stimulus," said Jennifer Jimenez-Wheatley of the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability. "We want to make sure those investments don't bypass our communities. In the past, many low-income communities and communities of color have been left behind as change occurs. We want it to be*



Mock graveyard at the Minnesota Department of Transportation to mourn for 18 years of failure to hire people of color. Courtesy of Alliance for Metropolitan Stability

*different this time. If change is coming, then we want to be a part of that change.”*

## **HIRE Minnesota – “Changing the Tone at the Capitol”**

Enter HIRE Minnesota. Social justice organizations, environmental organizations, workforce training organizations, political organizations, faith-based organizations and grassroots organizations all united in a common purpose. Some key members include:

- **Summit Academy**, which spearheaded the coalition -- a non-profit educational and vocational training center which empowers adults and prepares youth residing in the most economically depressed neighborhoods in the Twin Cities to become educated, employed and contributing members of their community
- **Alliance for Metropolitan Stability** - a coalition of grassroots organizations that advances racial, economic and environmental justice in the way growth and development occurs in the Twin Cities region
- **Family and Children’s Service** – whose mission is to build strong families, vital communities and capable children
- **Office for Social Justice, Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis** -- which works to strengthen families, end poverty and advocate for justice in the Twin Cities.
- **Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance** – which unites Unitarian Universalists in the Twin Cities metropolitan area in working toward justice and resolution of the affordable housing crisis.
- **Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota** – which works in collaboration with communities to create equitable, healthful and sustainable futures for all generations.
- **ISAIAH** – a faith-based organization that organizes congregations to build power for a worldview that prioritizes racial and economic justice.
- **Will Steger Foundation** – one of the founding members of HIRE Minnesota, led by famed polar explorer Will Steger. The Foundation seeks to inspire and be a catalyst for international environmental leadership to stop global warming through exploration, education and action.



*Rally at the State Capitol. Courtesy of Alliance for Metropolitan Stability*

Since late 2008, the coalition has engaged thousands of people through town hall meetings as a vehicle to educate community members and start harnessing community voices to influence decision makers to support green jobs and hiring equity. The coalition also sponsored rallies, community gatherings and hearings at the State Capitol.

*“We changed the tone at the Capitol this year,”* said Louis King, HIRE Minnesota co-chair and president of Summit Academy OIC. *“Legislators have told us that they have never seen so many regular people showing up at the Capitol day after day until the legislation was passed.”*

After months of organizing, outreach and education, the HIRE Minnesota coalition achieved a major victory in May, 2009, when the energy programs bill -- with a total of \$2.5 million for green jobs training for low-income people and outreach programs -- was signed into law. The bill allocates \$1 million for training of low-income people for weatherization jobs, \$1 million for training of low-income people for other renewable energy jobs, and \$500,000 for programs to perform energy-efficiency outreach in the community. Language is included that allows the state to give preference to disadvantaged businesses and businesses in economically disadvantaged areas.

The bill also allocates \$200 million in federal stimulus funding to weatherize low-income homes and public buildings and to invest in other renewable energy and energy efficiency programs, making it a big win for the environment and for people struggling to pay utilities bills. This is 13 times more funding for state weatherization programs than they typically receive in a year. Weatherization can reduce the energy required to heat and cool a home by 20 to 30 percent annually, dramatically decreasing a household's costs, as well as reducing its contribution to climate change.



*A search crew was sent to a Minnesota Department of Transportation site to search for missing workers. Courtesy of Alliance for Metropolitan Stability*

HIRE Minnesota's objective is not only to create new green jobs, but to hold public agencies accountable to their hiring and training goals. The bill requires that the state agencies administering funds will have to frequently report to the community on their progress toward training and hiring low-income people and people of color. Coalition members are currently watching carefully to make sure that stimulus and other public monies are allocated properly on the ground.

*"It's not good enough that we passed this legislation," said Jeff Bauer of Family and Children's Service. "The real measure of success will be how many people get jobs."*

### **The Coalition:**

#### **Building on Individual Missions Makes the Whole Greater than the Sum of its Parts**

What are the contributing factors to why such a diverse coalition of organizations was able to come together and accomplish so much in such a short period of time?

- Capitalizing upon an **historic moment** with the grassroots energy after the election of Barack Obama as president, the passage of the ARRA and the emerging national focus on a green economy and healthy communities.
- Seizing the opportunity to **create systemic change** -- to counter long-standing inequities in job training and hiring and ensure that low-income people, women and people of color are included in well paying jobs.
- Agreeing on **common goals** of ensuring equity in spending of public dollars and holding elected officials and government agencies accountable.
- Viewing the campaign as **integral to the mission** of each organization – e.g. training low-income residents, people of color, and women in the skills of the future; working for equity across boundaries; engaging families and youth.
- Recognizing that participating in this movement would **enhance the goals of each organization** by building economic opportunities for the broader community.
- **Organizing people** who would be positively affected by policy changes (or negatively effected if no changes were made) and who could contribute personal stories about how the campaign affected their everyday lives.
- **Utilizing the expertise** of coalition members and dividing responsibilities – e.g. policy and legislative skills at the Capitol; turning out the grassroots; finding compelling personal stories; making media connections.
- Willingness of individual organizations to step up to the plate and **dedicate staffing and resources**.

## Next Steps:

Passing the legislation was just the first step. HIRE Minnesota's summer and fall have been spent pushing the Minnesota Office of Energy Security to actually implement and enforce the provisions the coalition fought so hard to achieve. The coalition also spent much of the summer pressuring the Minnesota Department of Transportation, which is spending millions of dollars in stimulus money on new road projects, to meet its workforce development goals for women and people of color.

*"We have been incredibly successful in a short period of time, but we know our work is just beginning,"* said Patrick Ness of the Office for Social Justice. *"Our challenge is to keep organizing affected communities and building power so that we can carry our momentum forward and create real change in Minnesota".* As the next legislative session approaches, attention will be turned to strengthening the coalition, developing broader community support and securing new opportunities for low-income people and people of color, so that Minnesota is as strong as it can be.

## RESOURCES:

### Hire Minnesota

<http://www.hiremn.org/Home.html>

### Summit Academy

<http://www.saoic.org/Home.html>

### Alliance for Metropolitan Stability

<http://www.metrostability.org/>

### Family and Children's Services

<http://www.everyfamilymatters.org/>

### Catholic Charities

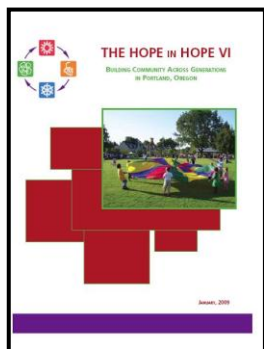
<http://www.ccspm.org/>



Rally at the State Capitol.  
Courtesy of Megan Dobratz

## New Columbia in Portland, OR -- A New Community Two Years Later

During 2007, the New Columbia housing development in North Portland, OR, a Hope VI project, served as a demonstration site for a planning process using the *Viable Futures Toolkit*. We visited their work two years later to take a look at the ongoing influence on the development and implementation of programming at New Columbia – and how new ways of thinking and collaboration have benefitted residents, local government, community-based agencies and the surrounding neighborhood. For more information about New Columbia and how the toolkit was used, see the case study, “The HOPE in HOPE VI”.



New Columbia, a project of the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP), is an innovative mixed-use development with housing units serving some of Portland's poorest and most ethnically diverse citizens, interspersed with privately owned homes of higher-income families. The planning process coincided with the need to build community among the 2,500 diverse residents --- children, seniors and

single adults – who had moved there over the past two years, and also engage new partners in community development. Coordinated by Multnomah County Aging and Disability Services (the area agency on aging) in partnership with HAP, discussions centered on developing opportunities for intergenerational and multi-cultural engagement, enhancing environmental awareness and building the capacity to adapt to the evolving needs of the community.

Even though over the past two years there have been changes in key staffing and partners, today the following progress is evident at New Columbia:

- **Culture change** in terms of intergenerational and multi-racial sensitivity and involvement.
- **Children with improved attitudes** toward older people.
- **Older adults with improved attitudes** about youth.
- Enhanced awareness of **environmental stewardship**.
- Increased comfort level with **community safety**.

### ***Sustaining Efforts at New Columbia:***

- New Columbia now has six new **Resident Community Builders**. These individuals all live at New Columbia, and include both youth and older adults. They are working to build a strong community through projects that include youth programs, helping out at the Trenton Place senior residence, activities of the Boys and Girls Club, leading the Saturday litter patrol, assisting with newsletter distribution, and participating on event committees.



*New Columbia kids learn about rain gardens.  
Photo courtesy of New Columbia/Housing Authority of Portland*

- A community evaluation called “**Community Speaks**” has recently been completed. The project allowed residents to share what they would like to see for New Columbia’s future. It included a survey that asked residents about living at New Columbia, hosting focus groups (Latino, African Immigrants, seniors, youth, parents and homeowners) to go deeper into the survey questions, and creating a report that sums up all of the results. Some of the top recommendations include:
  - ✓ Foster and promote parental responsibility for attending to unsupervised children.
  - ✓ Develop opportunities for adult engagement with youth. Create opportunities to build trust between generations.
  - ✓ Establish norms and enforce standards for litter and trash, as well as general community upkeep.

HAP, along with the residents of New Columbia, is implementing a plan to respond to these recommendations. At the same time, a considerable level of activity at New Columbia is underway to address these and other community needs, as the following examples show.

## **Keeping New Columbia Green, Healthy and Vibrant**

- New Columbia has an **Adopt a Raingarden Campaign** in partnership with the City Bureau of Environmental Services (BES), to maintain the over 100 bioswales on its property. BES is educating residents about the rain gardens and involving them in upkeep. Seniors who participated in a rain garden education workshop will work together with youth from the Rosa Parks School to replant rain gardens by the school and main park. The Boys and Girls Club on the New Columbia Campus wants to "adopt" a rain garden. This stems from the BES hosting a few games and activities focused on stormwater management and then working in rain gardens near the Club and by a pocket park - so the kids could see that what they learned applied to their neighborhood, to their school and to them. This project could be planting the seeds for future environmental scientists!



*Rain garden workshop. Photo courtesy of New Columbia/Housing Authority of Portland*

- Volunteers from the University of Portland participated in a **Neighborhood Clean-up** in collaboration with BES, CREW (a youth and teens program) and New Columbia residents, to help prepare the Rosa Parks School and Boys and Girls Club for the new school year. One group of volunteers worked outside weeding the rain gardens, edging the lawn, and picking up debris -- and another group painted rooms in the school's classrooms as well as rooms in the Regence Boys & Girls Club. The students from the University volunteered in this day of service to build a connection with New Columbia and to familiarize themselves with the neighborhood.



*Working on the beautification squad. Photo courtesy of New Columbia/Housing Authority of Portland*

- New Columbia neighbors participate in a **Beautification Squad** led by a New Columbia resident and community volunteer. This group is comprised of multi-general residents who want to keep New Columbia clean and green. Several large dumpsters were rented during Autumn Clean-Up Days to encourage residents to get rid of couches, beds, mattresses, paints and anything else they needed to dispose.

## **Enhancing Intergenerational and Multi-Cultural Experience**

- Throughout the summer, Reach and Teach **Pocket Parks and "Courtyard Events"** were held on an almost daily basis. Their purpose is to bring local agencies to New Columbia to share resources and support for the community -- and to provide families the opportunity to get to know one another. The events are for people of all ages and include a variety of activities such as: puppet shows; airbrushing tee shirts; sharing musical talent and folk dance; bookmark and doll-making; parachute games; and soccer. Some of the agencies that participate in the Pocket Parks are: Portland Women's Crisis Line, Children's Relief Nursery, Center for Family Success, Positive Youth Development, Bureau of Environmental Services, YWCA Senior Services, DJ Slim & DJ Academy. A special focus last summer was on the Somali families living in the area.

- **K-Ching! (Kids Creating Harmony in Neighborhood Growth)** is the Youth Employment Program – one for 12-15 year olds and one for 16-18 year olds, which has Urban League involvement. The program mentors youth, places them in job sites around New Columbia, and prepares them for a job in the real world. Youth attend an orientation, suit up for a job interview and are assigned a job. While some youth learn how to work at the front desk of the Boys & Girls Club, others help seniors with cleaning and tasks at Trenton Terrace. New Columbia resident, Terry McLain, age 67, provides a tremendous amount of mentorship and advice to these youth.

## Community Safety

- New Columbia worked with community partners and residents to put together a large **National Night Out** event. The event promotes the ideals of a safe and strong community and creates solidarity as residents join together in activities. Community Builders, Portland Parks and Recreation Staff, and the Office of Neighborhood Involvement jointly put this event together with support from a wide array of city agencies, local businesses and non-profit organizations.



*Helping keep McCoy Park clean.  
Photo courtesy of New Columbia/  
Housing Authority of Portland*

- Residents are taking action in their community by starting a **Neighborhood Watch Program**. This is a program of the City's Office of Neighborhood Involvement which increases safety and security in neighborhoods by involving as many households as possible in a united crime prevention effort. Some activities being planned include: work parties to help neighbors in securing their homes; helping seniors or other neighbors who might need assistance with trimming shrubbery or installing lighting; organizing a clean up or a graffiti removal day; adopting a pocket park or rain garden and keeping it free of litter; and forming a Neighborhood Emergency Team to respond to disasters.

While each of these activities is valuable singularly, what matters most is how, together, day by day, action by action, they build the bonds among many relatively new and diverse residents, all of whom share a vested interest in their neighborhood's strength and vitality.

**Contacts:** Molly Gray: [mollyg@hapdx.org](mailto:mollyg@hapdx.org)

**Websites:** [www.newcolumbia.org](http://www.newcolumbia.org)

<http://multnomah.or.networkofcare.org/aging/home/index.cfm>

## Opportunities/Grants

### Intergenerational Shared Site Excellence Awards

Generations United will honor organizations throughout the country that demonstrate exemplary practices with the 2010 MetLife Foundation/Generations United Intergenerational Shared Site Excellence Awards (formerly the Shared Site Best Practices Awards). These awards champion the best practices of intergenerational shared site programs, raise the visibility of intergenerational shared sites, and encourage the development of new program models. Nominations are due **December 15, 2009**. <http://www.gu.org/SharedSitesAwards.asp>

### Relatives as Parents Seed Grants

The Brookdale Foundation has announced the Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) Local, Regional, and State Seed Grant Initiatives for the year 2010, designed to encourage and promote the creation or expansion of services for grandparents and other relatives who have taken on the responsibility of surrogate parenting due to the absence of the parents. The program awards seed grants of \$10,000 over a two-year period in three categories: local, regional, and state public agencies. The deadline for submission of local and regional proposals is **Thursday, December 3, 2009**. The deadline for submission of state proposals is **Thursday, January 7, 2010**. <http://www.brookdalefoundation.org/RAPP/rapp.html>

## Upcoming Conferences

### New Partners for Smart Growth

Date: February 4-6, 2010

Location: Seattle, WA

<http://www.newpartners.org/>

### Transforming Race: Crisis and Opportunity in the Age of Obama

Date: March 11-13, 2010

Location: Columbus, Ohio

<http://kirwaninstitute.org/events/>

### ASA/NCOA Annual Conference

Date: March 15-19, 2010

Location: Chicago, IL

<http://www.agingconference.org/>

### American Planning Association

Date: April 10-14, 2010

Location: New Orleans, LA

<http://www.planning.org/conference/>

### Congress for the New Urbanism Annual Conference

Date: May 19-22, 2010

Location: Atlanta, GA

<http://www.cnu.org/cnu18>