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For More Information:
Catherine Bucknam
703-486-0626, ext. 131

Gates of Ballston Wins Best Project Virginia

(Arlington, VA) – AHC Inc., the largest nonprofit developer and owner of affordable housing in Northern Virginia, has won the 2008 “Best Project Virginia” award for the Gates of Ballston, a 464-unit affordable apartment complex in Arlington, VA that was built in the late 1930s. The award, presented by the Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers (HAND), was announced at HAND’s annual meeting in early June.



“Preserving this long-neglected garden apartment complex as much needed affordable housing was a real team effort,” said Walter D. Webdale, AHC President and CEO. “Working closely with Arlington County, tenants, and concerned citizens, we were able to overcome the challenges of fully renovating a historic property, meet our residents’ needs, and create a warm, vital community for more than 460 families.”

AHC acquired The Gates in 2002 through a unique partnership with Arlington County, which included a loan of \$16 million to assist with the acquisition of the property and cover the financing costs. AHC also used low-income housing tax credits, federal and state historic tax credits, tax-exempt fixed-rate and variable rate bonds to finance the acquisition and renovation.

The total cost of acquiring and renovating The Gates was \$107 million. The renovation included new kitchens, bathrooms, slate roofing, and heating/cooling systems. AHC preserved 75% of the apartments (357 units) as affordable rental housing for families earning 60% or less of the area median income and converted seventy-two units into three-bedroom apartments to accommodate larger families.

To preserve the Garden City design, AHC retained the brick facades, used authentic slate to replace the original slate roofs, and replaced windows with more historically accurate windows. Additions to create 3-bedroom apartments and the 19-unit condominium building were designed to blend with the original buildings.

AHC also built a brand new 10,000 square-foot community center for the complex. The two-story center includes a new leasing office, a fitness center, a computer center, and space for resident services such as an after-school program, teen tutoring, and ESL classes. The community center will open in July 2008.

Accommodating Residents' Needs

During the two-year renovation process, AHC had to relocate 260 households during the phased renovation, and provide space for the County's community programs so that services could continue without interruption.

AHC's property management company worked diligently to find available, onsite apartments for each of the 260 relocated families and to make each move as easy as possible for them. Because more than half the families spoke only Spanish, management staff had to be fluent in Spanish and English. As a result of their efforts, more of the original households chose to stay at The Gates than is typical at other renovation projects in Arlington.

The Gates of Ballston is an outstanding example of a community working together to preserve affordable housing and retain the historic character of a rapidly developing neighborhood. AHC worked with Arlington County, Gates residents, and concerned citizens to save The Gates from demolition and to revitalize this long-neglected community. The multi-faceted team met regularly over a five-year period to overcome every logistical, financial, and design obstacle to ensure historic integrity and meet residents' needs. From the beginning, the preservation of The Gates was a community effort.

Photo Caption: From left: John Morland, Gates Working Group representative; John M. Welsh, Director, Multifamily Division, AHC Inc.; Christopher Donald, former AHC Project Manager; Walter D. Webdale, President, AHC Inc.; Charlie Rinker, Gates Working Group representative; Richard J. Leeds, President, AHC Management LLC.

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AHC Inc. is a private, nonprofit developer of low- and moderate-income housing. AHC produces and preserves affordable rental housing; provides home-ownership opportunities; offers housing rehabilitation services; and coordinates social services to improve the quality of residents' lives. AHC owns and operates 28 rental properties, providing 3,361 apartments, including 2,702 that are affordable to more than 6,000 low- and moderate-income residents. Our home improvement and homeownership programs have helped over 1000 families rehabilitate and repair their aging homes, assisted 300 families in buying their first home, and built more than 50 new affordable homes.

Founded in 1975, AHC continues its mission to ensure quality affordable housing for **all** our neighbors.