

Norwalk, Connecticut

Lead Applicant: Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk

Co-Applicant: Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

Target Public Housing: Washington Village

Total Units Planned: 273

Target Neighborhood: South Norwalk

Number of Targeted Public Housing Units: 136

Grant Amount: \$30,000,000

Key Partners:

Trinity Financial

Housing Opportunities Unlimited

Stepping Stones Museum for Children

Norwalk Community College

Norwalk ACTS

City of Norwalk

Career Resources, Inc.

Community Health Center, Inc.

Norwalk Community Health Center

Key Committed Funders:

Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

Connecticut Housing Finance Agency

City of Norwalk

TD Bank

City of Norwalk

Housing Leverage Committed: \$16.5 million

People Leverage Committed: \$18.8 million

Neighborhood Leverage Committed: \$4.2 million

Project Summary:

South Norwalk is ready for significant change precipitated by persistent flooding from the Norwalk River and exacerbated by Superstorm Sandy in October 2012. The storm caused severe flooding at the Washington Village public housing development and the temporary displacement of its residents. With portions of the neighborhood within the 100-year flood plain, Sandy's damage was a wake-up call for immediate action that includes new storm-resilient infrastructure and housing. This fact, coupled with growing demand for private development along the river, has rallied the entire Norwalk community around revitalizing this key neighborhood.

The Choice Neighborhoods target neighborhood of South Norwalk is located in the southernmost tip of Norwalk's urban core which has been the focus of the City's redevelopment efforts. The vision for South Norwalk is one of opportunity for all – for current and future residents of all incomes who want high quality housing in a safe and welcoming neighborhood, for businesses along Washington and South Main Streets that want to be part of a thriving commercial district,

for service providers seeking better ways to connect with those in need, and for children and parents who want high-quality learning experiences that serve as the foundation for personal growth and economic opportunity. The South Norwalk Transformation Plan provides the roadmap for obtaining this common vision, building a better future for current residents and welcoming new households and businesses dedicated to bringing new vitality to the area.

Today, South Norwalk is considered the City's only truly walkable area, and "SoNo," as the area around Washington Street is referred to, is a regional dining and entertainment destination. Despite these successes, the community has not yet achieved its full potential. Its commercial corridors continue to struggle with vacancies, fears about crime deter private investment, inconsistent property maintenance detracts from the neighborhood's visual appeal, and persistent, property-damaging flooding in the eastern portion of the neighborhood impedes redevelopment. South Norwalk remains one of the most socio-economically distressed areas of the City, with higher poverty and unemployment rates, lower educational attainment, and lower incomes.

The 136-unit Washington Village was constructed in 1941. While it was built to last, it is now obsolete, no longer meets current codes, is not energy-efficient, and its durable construction makes it extremely difficult to address structural, system and infrastructure deficiencies. Most importantly, the development in its current form is significantly impacted by flooding from the Norwalk River. The Transformation Plan calls for rebuilding the 136 public housing units into a new 273-unit mixed-income development on three adjacent parcels – the current Washington Village site and two City-owned vacant properties immediately north. The proposed five buildings on these three parcels will include an integrated mix of 50% public housing units, 25% workforce units, and 25% market-rate units. This mix will preserve and create additional affordable housing, which is critical to this community given the high cost of living.

To address State and FEMA floodplain regulations, the new housing units will be raised 6.5 feet above the floodplain, with on-grade parking under the residential structures. New infrastructure will mitigate the recurring flooding, funded with City and FEMA funds. Ryan Park, a beloved community park adjacent to Washington Village, will be redesigned to be storm-resilient and more responsive to community needs, with soccer fields, community gardens, fitness trails, and playgrounds. Community policing is underway and will be supplemented with bicycles for officers, security cameras, and a local crime watch. A homeowner rehabilitation program, small business loans, and a new Business Improvement District will help current owners and businesses maintain and improve their properties.

