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Utah Division of Housing and Community Development to Be Recognized at National Conference

Housing Initiative Named Best Practice

SALT LAKE CITY-The Utah Division of Housing and Community Development's Olene Walker Housing Loan Fund will share the results of an initiative that creates more community driven housing projects at the annual Council of State Community Development Agencies (COSCDA) Manager Conference in Washington D.C. on March 16, 2010.

COSCDA is recognizing the Division of Housing and Community Development and its partners for a "best practice" arising from the initiative that creates more community driven housing projects. The Division's efforts began three years ago to support the Governor's Utah Workforce Housing Initiative and have expanded statewide from the original five pilot communities: Boulder, Logan, Moab, South Salt Lake City and Vernal.

Most recently, the Division and partners have targeted South Salt Lake City and West Jordan City for technical assistance and funding applications for almost 130 units of housing for senior citizens. Vernal City has also been targeted for 40 units of workforce housing that will help house new teachers, police and firefighters, and the employees of local businesses.

"By working with various community organizations, we are better responding to each local community's unique housing needs," said Gordon Walker, Division of Housing and Community Development, director. "We appreciate being recognized nationally for this leadership role."

"We could not have done this without the participation from various Utah-based partners," said Walker. "We want this effort to translate into the actual construction of new units to help each community's target population."

The Division went back to each of 149 communities across the state to better assess their housing needs, help develop quality affordable housing plans, and open the door to technical assistance and funding opportunities from the partners.

Partners include Lotus Community Development Institute, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Utah League of Cities and Towns, and various banks.

"This is truly a tool box that enables a ground up effort by local citizens and community leaders to vision and plan sustainable living environments that the community will both embrace and benefit from well into the future," said Marci Milligan, President LCDI.

The Division and its partners assist communities with the necessary planning, development, and construction to create new affordable housing units.

The partners have created a guidebook on affordable housing development for local elected officials, city planners and citizens; a software demand analysis model which is utilized by local municipalities and non-profits to size and prioritize market needs and funding gaps; and provided grant funding to deliver project technical assistance on a statewide basis. The partners have provided nearly 4,000 hours in volunteer technical assistance and \$300,000 to support capacity and project development. To date \$60 million in projects have been funded.

Utah's Olene Walker Housing Loan Fund supports construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing units state-wide with federally and state funded low interest loans and grants. The fund is managed by the Division of Housing and Community Development under the Utah Department of Community and Culture with special focus on multifamily developments for lower income populations.

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