

SMART GROWTH IN ACTION

Abyssinian Neighborhood Project Harlem Community Revitalization

MANHATTAN, NEW YORK

Through partnerships with The Abyssinian Baptist Church, City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the Urban Technical Assistance Project at Columbia University and the Office of the Manhattan Borough President, Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC) developed a strategy to expand the housing and commercial options for central Harlem. Over 200 affordable housing units were built with an additional 200 affordable units planned. These include 25 units of transitional housing for homeless families, 68 rental units reserved for formerly homeless families, and 135 rental units to accommodate low- and moderate-income families. The Abyssinian Neighborhood Project created 15,000 square feet of commercial space for five local businesses, which has helped revitalize the central Harlem business corridors.

A key element of the project was to address the social and economic needs of the community. Comprehensive programs were developed to link education, job training, and cultural enhancement. For example, ADC established an award-winning Head Start educational institution, constructed a state-of-the-art educational facility, and helped to create and support five block associations and a neighborhood leadership group. Additionally, ADC has implemented Youthbuild, a workforce development program that has provided on-the-job construction trade training for 40 teens and young adults.

Neighborhood revitalization achieved multiple positive environmental outcomes by building near available infrastructure; cleaning up abandoned buildings and vacant lots; and creating new green space. This type of infill development minimizes the impact of stormwater runoff by reusing existing paved surfaces when compared to greenfield development. Residents now have ample access to biking and walking routes and public transit, which improves air quality when compared to places that rely solely on automobiles for daily travel. Benefits derived from improving economic opportunities, environmental quality, and the physical character of the community create a model of community-based planning that can be replicated to serve other communities.

"As a client of ADC and a resident of The Abyssinian Neighborhood, watching the transformation taking place here is truly inspiring. To be able to live, work and shop in my neighborhood, gives me and other residents a renewed sense of engagement, ownership and most importantly, community."

— Kisha Spence, Harlem Community Resident

QUICK FACTS

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Location: Harlem, New York
Website: www.adcorp.org
Implemented: 1989



Winner, 2007
National Award
for Smart Growth
Achievement—
Equitable
Development

SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES ABYSSINIAN REVITALIZATION

#1	Includes Mixed Land Uses	★
#2	Exhibits Compact Building Design	★
#3	Provides Range of Housing Types	★
#4	Promotes Walkable Neighborhoods	★
#5	Exhibits a Distinct Sense of Place	★
#6	Preserves Open Space	✓
#7	Utilizes Existing Development	★
#8	Provides Transportation Choices	★
#9	Practices Fair Decision-making	★
#10	Promotes Stakeholder Participation	★