



RHD Rural Delivery

New York State Rural Housing Coalition, Inc.

April, 2005

State Budget Update

Albany, March 29th: Members of the New York State Legislature are expected to finish up work this week on budget bills that will result in the State's first on-time budget in over twenty years. Over the past two weeks, ten Conference Committee meetings were held. Working over the Easter weekend, Legislative staff put together bills that reflect agreements reached by both houses in those meetings.

The Legislature's budget will restore \$7 million in funding to the Rural and Neighborhood Preservation Programs returning them to funding levels of 2003 and restoring RPCs and NPCs to the \$65,000 level.

As Legislators press to meet the April 1st deadline, it is apparent that several issues will not be resolved in this budget for a lack of agreement with the Governor. Spending on Social Services and Environmental projects are the principle unresolved issues but this will not prevent the Legislature from passing the remaining budget bills.

Reports suggest that legislative action will add as much as \$1.5 billion to the \$105.2 billion plan put forward by the Governor in his Executive Budget. Governor Pataki, who has hosted a number of five-way leader's meetings, has, in recent weeks, threatened to veto portions of the Legislature's budget. However, it does appear that there is agreement between the Governor and leaders of the Legislature on some of the parts of the spending plan.

Senate Housing Chairman John Bonacic and Assembly Chairman Vito Lopez participated in the Conference Committee process and both were instrumental in restoring funds for the State's housing programs.

The agreement will also add some \$27 million of capital funding for the State's Housing programs. Included is an additional \$10 million each for the Housing Trust Fund and the Affordable Housing Corporation. RESTORE will get an additional one million dollars. The budget agreement will also fund the Rural Area Revitalization Program at one million and Urban Initiatives at \$1.5 million. The tax and revenue panel of the Legislature agreed to allocate \$2 million for the State Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program.

Federal Budget Fight Not Over

Congress reconvenes April 4th and Senators and Representatives will begin ironing out the differences between the House and Senate budget resolutions. When and if a single budget reso-

lution is completed, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees will know the amount of funds they have to divide among their respective subcommittees. If a final budget resolution is

Dolbeare Dead At 78

Affordable housing pioneer Cushing Dolbeare passed away at the age of 78 on March 17th. The Founder and Chair Emeritus of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Cushing was a remarkable person whose influence permeates every aspect of the low income housing movement. She was a dedicated advocate for housing issues in Washington right up until the end, appearing on a panel discussion on affordable housing policy at the recent Housing Assistance Council Conference.

Two events to remember Cushing are scheduled:

A Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, April 23 at 2:00 PM at the Friends Meeting House at Florida Avenue and Decatur Street, NW, in Washington.

A "Celebration of Cushing" for members of the housing community is scheduled on Monday, May 2 at 6:00 pm at the Capital Hilton Hotel, 1001 16th Street NW, Washington, DC (Congressional and Senate Rooms).

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not negotiated, the Appropriations Committees may use the President's requested, and inadequate, funding level as their base. Visit www.nlihc.org to follow this story.

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Rural Delivery

Rural Delivery is published by the New York State Rural Housing Coalition, Inc. a nonprofit membership organization. The Coalition is a statewide membership organization dedicated to strengthening and revitalizing rural New York by assisting housing and community development providers.

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Bits and Pieces...

Section 533 Housing Preservation Applications Due

USDA will be accepting applications for the Section 533 program until May 13th. The 533 program provides public agencies and non-profits grant funds to assist very low and low income rural homeowners to repair or rehabilitate their homes. Approximately \$8.8 million is available nationally for this program. For more information, visit: <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20051800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2005/05-4775.htm>.

Jamestown To Host Main Street InSTITUTE

The New York Main Street Alliance will host the Spring 2005 Main Street Institute at the Jamestown Holiday Inn on April 27th through 29th. Workshops on over 25 topics will be presented at the conference, and will include walking tours of downtown Jamestown, highlighting many recent improvements in the community. Hotel rooms are available at \$59 per night, and reservations may be made by calling (716)664-3400. For more information, contact: Timothy A. Cullenen - AICP, CMSM, Extension Associate CaRDI, 43 Warren Hall - Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. Phone (607)254-4688, or visit www.cardi.cornell.edu.

Green Building Seminar Online

LISC will host an Experts Online webcast on *Green Building: It's Affordable* on April 21st at 2:00 PM. The discussion will focus on how Community Development Corporations can routinely integrate environmentally friendly building concepts into their affordable housing projects. To sign on, visit: www.lisc.org/resources/2005/04/affordable!_7800output.asp.shtml, no more than 30 minutes prior to broadcast, and click on the access link under 'How To Access The Event'.

Federal and U.S. military employees can support the Rural Housing Coalition through the annual Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). If you are a federal government or military employee and would like to donate through the CFC, please enter CFC code #9614 on your pledge card during the next fund drive.
Thank You!

New York Main Street Program Applications Due

The Housing Trust Fund Corporation (HTFC) invites eligible applicants to respond to this Notice of Funding Availability and submit a proposal for funding through the New York Main Street (NYMS) Program.

Program Purpose: The purpose of the NYMS program is to provide financial/technical resources to help communities with their efforts to preserve and revitalize mixed-use (commercial/civic and residential) main street/downtown business districts. The NYMS program will provide grants to stimulate reinvestment in properties located within mixed-use business districts located in urban, small town, and rural areas consistent with Articles 16A and 17B of the Private Housing Finance Law (PHFL).

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants include not-for-profit community-based organizations, business improvement districts, and other entities incorporated pursuant to the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law that will serve as **Local Program Administrators (LPAs)**. LPAs will assume administrative responsibility for evaluating and selecting projects to be assisted, ensuring that NYMS funds are expended in accordance with all State and local laws, and for meeting the program's public purpose. Such entities shall have been in existence for at least one year prior to contract execution. NYMS funds will be awarded on a competitive basis, with a maximum per contract of \$200,000. Applicants will be given a period of up to two years to complete their contract.

Eligible Areas: The local NYMS program must be carried out in a concentrated target area (generally no more than three contiguous blocks) that has experienced sustained physical deterioration, decay, neglect, or disinvestment, and has a number of substandard buildings or vacant residential or commercial units. The target area must be lo-

cated in a service area in which more than 50% of the residents earn less than 80% of the median income of the surrounding community, or which has been designated by a State or federal agency as an eligible area for the purposes of a community or economic development program. Buildings within the district or the district itself may also be eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places or for local or state historic designation. Proposed service areas that are within officially designated service areas of Neighborhood or Rural Preservation Companies, for example, are considered eligible.

Eligible Activities: The following activities can be funded in part through the NYMS Program:

Façade Renovation - Matching grants of up to \$10,000 per building, but not to exceed 50% of total cost, can be provided to owners for façade renovations.

Building Renovation - Matching grants of up to \$50,000 per building, but not to exceed 50% of total cost, can be provided to owners for renovation of commercial/civic space on first floor and residential units above.

Downtown Anchors - Matching grants of up to \$100,000 per building, but not exceeding 25% of project cost, can be provided to owners to help establish or expand cultural or business anchors that are identified in a local plan as key to the revitalization effort. Developments that incorporate residential units on the upper floors will receive priority for funding.

Streetscape Enhancement - grants of up to \$25,000 for programs to plant trees and other landscaping, install street furniture and trash cans, provide appropriate signs in accordance with a local signage plan, and other appurtenant activities. Street lighting may be eligible for funding where applicants can sat-

isfy all feasibility issues. A streetscape enhancement grant will only be awarded if it is ancillary to a program providing building renovation or downtown anchor grants.

Application Requirements - Application forms became available from the Housing Trust Fund Corporation in early March, 2005. Application requirements are detailed in the Request for Proposals. An original and two (2) copies of the application must be received by 5:00 PM, EDT, Monday, May 2, 2005 at the NYS Housing Trust Fund Corporation, Hampton Plaza, 1st Floor, 38-40 State Street, Albany, NY 12207. Individuals' hand-delivering applications must have picture identification and a transmittal letter on organization letterhead stating their name and the purpose of their visit. Applications delivered by commercial carrier must have a complete, legible, return address. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in items not being accepted.

Available Funds: It is expected that \$10 Million will be available for the NYMS in 2005. HTFC reserves the right to fund all or a portion of the requested amount, based on the feasibility of the applications received and the total request for funds. Selections are also made in compliance with all pertinent statutory requirements and a policy to achieve an equitable geographic distribution of funds to meet community renewal needs throughout the State. Individual applicants that submit multiple applications may be limited to a total award of \$200,000.

Any questions regarding this application should be directed to the DHCR Regional Office which serves the county in which the proposed program is located. You may also visit the program web site at: www.nymainstreet.org.

GOSC TA Funding Supports A Wide Variety of Projects

In February, Governor Pataki announced that the Office for Small Cities (GOSC) awarded more than \$470,000 in Technical Assistance (TA) grants to 25 eligible communities across New York State. The funding will provide these communities with grants of up to \$25,000 to help them create strategic plans for important local development projects.

“These new grants will help these communities devise strategic plans for important projects that are vital to their future growth and development,” Governor Pataki said. “By providing municipalities with the resources for planning and strategic development, we are helping them take positive steps to create jobs, revitalize neighborhoods and improve the overall quality of life for local residents.”

Glen King, Director of the Governor’s Office for Small Cities, said, “Technical Assistance funding provides local municipalities with a vital and important resource in developing their own vision for their communities. Since Governor Pataki championed the federal government to assume control of the Small Cities program in 2000, we have awarded over \$250 million in community development funds, and we look forward to assisting small communities across the state to build a brighter future for their residents.”

TA grants assist communities in identifying steps to achieve specific development goals and objectives, focusing on research, analysis and overall community development, and provide resources to develop a strategic plan that provides a “vision” for the future of the community. The strategic plan addresses pressing community needs, and is used to determine local economic conditions, potential development opportunities, and preferences about future community characteristics. The strategic plan also identifies attainable

goals and actions for a step-by-step process for improving economic conditions and describes potential funding resources from a wide variety of state, federal and private sources.

This year, the GOSC received 50 applications for TA funding. The GOSC provides funds to eligible towns, villages and cities with a population under 50,000, and counties with a population under 200,000 for projects that focus on strategic planning, housing improvements, public facilities, and economic development. The funds are provided to New York through a federal grant. For more information on the Small Cities Program, please visit the Governor’s Office for Small Cities website at www.nysmallcities.com or call (518) 474-2057. The winning TA grants are: City of Cohoes—\$19,000: The City of Cohoes will develop a plan to revitalize its Western Gateway into the city, addressing needs such as streetscape, public infrastructure, property maintenance, and housing and inter-municipal cooperation.

Village of Alfred—\$9,245: Following up on the Comprehensive Plan that the Village of Alfred completed in 2004, this strategic plan will lay the groundwork for preserving the historical nature of the business district and create a foundation for economic revival.

City of Salamanca—\$25,000: Looking to capitalize on the new casino that opened in May 2004, the City of Salamanca will commission a study that focuses on promoting local business development and other economic development opportunities.

Cayuga County—\$16,800: The Weedsport/Brutus Strategic Plan will enable Cayuga County to extend its NYS Route 31 Corridor planning initiative in Mentz, Port Byron and areas eastward. The Plan will identify and enhance economic growth, historic preservation and inter-municipal coop-

eration opportunities between Weedsport, Brutus, Mentz and Port Byron.

Chenango County—\$25,000: In an effort to streamline various economic development efforts in Chenango County, an economic development strategic plan will identify opportunities to promote the county’s economy, identify and describe potential funding sources, and provide an opportunity for broad participation. Village of Valatie—\$15,000: To document and trumpet the rebirth of the Village of Valatie’s Main Street, the Village will create an economic development report for prospective businesses that highlights its success over the past five years.

Village of Deposit—\$25,000: The Village will create a Downtown/Main Street Plan to determine needs and strategies to address infrastructure and streetscape, business retention, growth and recruitment strategies and an organization plan.

Town of Jay—\$15,000: In an effort to revitalize the Main Street in the Central Business District, the Town of Jay will implement a strategic plan that will look at streetscape improvements, second floor residential units, parking and senior housing.

Village of Catskill—\$15,000: The Village of Catskill will undertake a pedestrian enhancement study of its business district comprised of Main Street and connecting West Bridge Street/Route 9W corridor. The study will investigate the current and future effects of growth and development, research transportation alternatives and develop methods to promote pedestrianism in the Main Street area.

Village of Mount Morris—\$18,000: In an effort to capitalize on the recent highway reconstruction project that enhanced community development opportunities in the downtown business district, the Village of Mount Morris will

SRO Support Services Increased in FY 05-06 Budget Proposal

Governor Pataki has amended his 05-06 budget proposal to increase the SRO Support Services Program line by \$1.52 million, to a total of \$15.06 million. This increase will fund approximately 1,000 units of supportive housing statewide. The SRO Support Services Program funds counseling and case management for 11,044 tenants currently living in 131 projects across the state.

Leviticus Loans Available

The Leviticus 25:23 Alternative Fund lends for the development of affordable and supportive housing projects and community facilities throughout New York. For smaller projects, the fund can provide full financing, while for larger projects, pre-development loans, acquisition loans, bridge or gap financing is also available. Leviticus provides loans up to \$700,000 with rates from 5-7% and with terms up to 10 years with longer amortizations. Leviticus support has been critical in the development of needed community facilities, such as day care centers, in many communities. For more information, call (914) 237-3306.

TANF Extension Signed

On March 25, President Bush signed into law the "Welfare Reform Extension Act of 2005" (HR 1160). This act extends the authorization for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program through June 30th. This is the ninth extension of the 1996 law, originally set to expire in October, 2002; the latest extension will expire on March 31, 2005. Congress is working on legislation to reauthorize TANF.

USDA Rental Locator Now Online

The US Department of Agriculture has inaugurated an online locator for USDA-funded rental housing projects. This locator should be useful for lower income families seeking affordable rental housing in rural communities, or housing counselors assisting families in need of housing.

To visit the apartment locator, visit: http://rdmfhrentals.sc.gov.usda.gov/RDMFHRentals/select_state.jsp.

HAC Publishes Public Relations Guide

Rural housing organizations can benefit from a new public relations guide that has been issued by the Housing Assistance Council. The manual defines public relations concepts and gives a step by step guide with a checklist and timeline suggestions. The guide also includes lists of public relations tools, templates and case studies. The guide is available for \$5 in hard copy by contacting Luz Rosas at (202)842-8600 or is offered free online at www.ruralhome.org.

Upstate Symposium Slated

The NY/Puerto Rico District of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation will hold a one-day symposium *Rebuilding Upstate New York: What Works?* on May 2nd. The symposium will run from 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM at the OnCenter in downtown Syracuse. The keynote speaker will be Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and featured speaker will be Representative James T. Walsh. For more information see the brochure at: www.nw.org/network/training/calendar/documents/whatworksfinal.pdf.

Amazon Non-Profit Innovation Award

Amazon.com is proud to announce that it is now accepting applications for the first Amazon.com Nonprofit Innovation Award, which recognizes and rewards nonprofit organizations whose innovative approaches most effectively improve their communities or the world at large. If your nonprofit is powered by breakthrough ideas, you are encouraged you to read more about Amazon's program and how to apply for the award on the firm's website. Ten organizations selected as finalists will have a unique opportunity to raise funds and awareness for their programs on Amazon.com. All 10 finalists will be profiled on their own Amazon.com pages, where customers will be invited to vote for their favorites by making monetary donations. The organization that receives the largest amount of customer contributions by the deadline will receive the award, along with a matching grant of up to \$1 million from Amazon.com. The selection of semifinalists and finalists from the pool of eligible entrants will be based on criteria that include:

- **Need:** the urgency, relevancy and complexity of the problem the organization seeks to address.
- **Gap analysis:** clear evidence of a gap between the targeted problem and existing solutions.
- **Innovation:** the extraordinary inventiveness of the solution and how it breaks from traditional approaches.
- **Results:** clearly defined metrics and a measurable record of improvement for at least two years.
- **Perpetuation:** a well-developed plan for promoting continued innovation.

Applications must be received by April 28th. For information, visit: www.amazon.com and click on *Giving at Amazon.com* in the lower left hand corner.

Access to Home Grants Due

The Housing Trust Fund Corporation announces the availability of funding for the Access to Home program. The Access to Home program will provide up to \$10 million to not-for-profit organizations to administer local programs to make the homes and apartments of low and moderate income New Yorkers with disabilities more Accessible. Under the program, home adaptations and alterations will be made to enable persons with disabilities to remain or return to their own homes rather than enter or stay in more costly and more intrusive institutional settings. Providing assistance with the cost of adapting homes to meet the needs of those with disabilities will enable individuals to safely and comfortably live in their residences and avoid institutional care. This assistance will also allow individuals currently living in institutional settings to transition back to their homes once the homes are appropriately adapted. Grants will be made to eligible not-for-profit entities with substantial experience in adapting or retrofitting homes for persons with disabilities. Adaptation work must meet the needs of those with physical disabilities and seniors with an age-related disability.

Homeowners and renters may qualify for Access to Home assistance through the not-for-profit entity under the following criteria: the occupant is physically disabled or has substantial difficulty with an activity of daily living because of aging; the dwelling unit is a permanent residence, or will be a permanent residence after modifications

are completed; and, total household income does not exceed 80 percent of area median income. The HTFC will seek applications that also include a transition and diversion component that targets individuals either currently living in institutional settings, or are at risk of such placement without adaptations being made to their current home.

Application packages have been available since March 2nd. The application package will include a Request for Proposals and all forms necessary to apply for Access to Home funding through the Housing Trust Fund Corporation. Application materials are available at NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal Regional Offices, and the Division's website.

Applications for locally administered Access to Home programs must be received by the Housing Trust Fund Corporation (HTFC) by 5:00 PM, Monday, May 2, 2005. Individuals delivering applications in-person must have picture identification and a transmittal letter, on organization letterhead, stating their name and authorizing that person to deliver the application. Applications delivered by commercial carrier must have a complete and legible return address. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in applications not being accepted. Applications will be accepted **only** at the following address: NYS DHCR, 38-40 State Street, 1st Floor, Albany, NY 12207. For more information, visit the DHCR website at www.dhcr.state.ny.us.

Technology Grants Available

The Beaumont Foundation of America provides grants of technology equipment to non-profit and government organizations that offer programming in the areas of affordable housing, homelessness, and people with disabilities among others.

For the 2005 funding round, online letters of interest must be submitted by April 22nd.

For more information, visit the foundation website at: www.bmtfoundation.com/bfa/us/public/en/grants/community/apply.html.

SuperNOFA Announced

HUD recently announced this year's "SuperNOFA," a notice that makes available \$2.26 billion in funding through 53 grant opportunities. HUD's Fiscal Year 2005 Notice of Funding Availability significantly reduces the paperwork burden on grant applicants while moving toward President Bush's goal of creating a more citizen-focused, user-friendly electronic government. With the exception of those applying for funding through HUD's Continuum of Care homeless assistance programs, HUD now requires all applicants to submit their funding requests electronically through www.grants.gov. Potential applicants are urged to review the submission requirements early at the Grants.gov website, as it takes some time to get properly registered.

HUD will be providing training for potential applicants via satellite and webcast. To determine the schedule for applicant training, visit HUD's website or contact the HUD field office nearest you for details on how to view these sessions via satellite.

The SuperNOFA covers a variety of HUD programs, including Housing Counseling, Section 202 and 811, Brownfields, Housing Choice Voucher program, the Assisted Living Conversion program, Rural Housing and Economic Development, Youthbuild, Continuum of Care and HOPWA.

Agencies interested in applying for Continuum of Care funding are encouraged to contact John Grover at the Rural Housing Coalition for background on the program and assistance in developing a Continuum of Care plan for your community for next year's SuperNOFA funding round.

For more information on the SuperNOFA, visit HUD's website at: www.hud.gov/offices/adm/grants/fundsavail.cfm.

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develop a visionary plan for downtown revitalization goals and objectives.

Village of Fultonville—\$18,000: To recapture their identity, the Village of Fultonville's strategic plan will focus on economic issues impacting the community, specifically the Main and River Street Corridors, with a special emphasis on identifying economic potential from the canal and its' proximity to the Village.

City of North Tonawanda—\$25,000: Developing a comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of downtown commercial cores will be the primary focus of the City of North Tonawanda's strategic plan, with an additional focus on developing a site plan and analysis for the Roblin Steel site.

Village of Remsen—\$25,000: The Village of Remsen's planning efforts will focus on the development of a mixed-use commercial/residential/historic recreation project on Depot Street.

Village of Bloomfield—\$16,000: The Village's Main Street Revitalization Strategy will outline approaches to attract small businesses to vacant storefronts, improve the appearance of downtown properties, encourage the redevelopment of abandoned industrial eyesores, and recruit new companies to underutilized commercial Main Street sites.

Village of Manchester—\$24,000: This strategic plan will address Main Street revitalization for the Village of Manchester through planning efforts that develop public services in the Central Business District, resolve commercial vacancy

GOSC TA Awards, Cont'

issues, and determine the optimal configuration of open space, residential, commercial and industrial lands.

City of Fulton—\$20,000: The City of Fulton will complete its community development implementation strategy that promotes economic vitality, advances neighborhood stability and improves quality of life for local residents.

Village of Castleton-on-Hudson—\$25,000: In an effort to identify and address the needs of the Village of Castleton-on-Hudson, a strategic plan will be developed that identifies demographic characteristics, the extent of needed improvements, the condition of aging infrastructure, the need to convert specific areas from commercial to residential and methods for attracting businesses.

Village of Hoosick Falls—\$18,000: The Town of Hoosick and the Village of Hoosick Falls will utilize a joint economic development strategic plan to encourage a vital business environment, with special emphasis on the downtown Main Street area of the Village and on the establishment of new business enterprises.

Town of Ballston—\$12,000: Looking to capitalize on the influx of new jobs due to construction of the Luther Forest Technology Campus, the Town of Ballston will create the Industrial and Development Strategic Plan for the Route 67 Corridor, focusing on an underutilized commercial and industrial district.

City of Mechanicville—\$24,000: The City of Mechanicville will develop a

Strategic Revitalization Plan to aid in the creation of a realistic vision for the City's future and develop achievable initiatives for downtown revitalization.

Village of Schoharie—\$18,000: The Village of Schoharie's strategic plan will address retention of vital services in the downtown area by increasing job opportunities and incomes, and expanding the tax base through economic development and the revitalization of Main Street, while simultaneously preserving its' historic character.

Town of Varick—\$17,200: The Town of Varick will produce a strategic plan that will identify impediments to investment in the hamlets of Varick and Fayette by addressing housing, water and sewer infrastructure needs.

Town of Gouverneur—\$15,000: The Town of Gouverneur will develop a strategic plan to bring high-speed broadband telecommunications capability to an isolated rural area north of the Adirondacks in an effort to bring needed businesses into the downtown area.

Village of Lyons—\$15,000: The Village of Lyons will develop a strategic plan with specific implementation steps that will focus on revitalizing the downtown Main Street area, with a secondary focus on identifying and quantifying housing and other community development needs.

Wayne County—\$15,000: Wayne County will complete a strategic plan that ties together the goals of individual towns, villages and the county to maximize the use of acreage within the area's designated Empire Zone.

HAC Announces SHOP Support

The Housing Assistance Council in Washington has announced the availability of \$12.4 million in loan funds to support the Self-help Home-ownership Opportunity Program. The loan funds help local organizations to acquire land

and develop sites for new rural housing for low income home-buyers. The 49 groups receiving the 2004 funding will develop 853 self-help homes. Since 1996, HAC has received and loaned over \$60 million in HUD funds for this

program. If production goals and other requirements are met, the loans to the project sponsors may be forgiven, and the funds used as further subsidy for the projects. For more information contact HAC at (202) 842-8600, ext 141.

Upcoming Training Opportunities

The Rural Housing Coalition Announces the 2005 Training Academy

The Rural Housing Coalition is pleased to announce the 2005 Training Academy, to be held on April 13th in Rochester, and April 15th in Schenectady. The Training Academy is an opportunity for Rural Preservation Company managers and non-profit executives to come together and learn in-depth about vital issues currently impacting housing agencies across the state. The topics at the Rochester and Schenectady trainings are:

Beyond Collaboration: Options for Corporate Restructuring. Presenters: David Watson, Esq., and Doug Sauer. Increasingly, non-profit agencies are looking for effective ways to improve their service delivery in the face of looming funding cuts. This workshop will explore the various methods

of working with one or more other agencies with compatible missions, either through joint ventures, collaborative efforts, partnerships and even merger.

Both emerging and well “established” nonprofits are therefore challenged to go beyond low risk coordination and collaboration strategies to models that result in consolidations, mergers, dissolutions and transfer of assets, and/or the creation of subsidiary corporations.

Fundraising: Choosing The Best Strategy For Your Organization. Presenter: Linda London. This training will enable workshop participants to identify new methods of fundraising in the community, and new potential funding partners.

Both trainings will run concurrently from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM each day. Thanks to the underwriting of this training by the Division of Housing and Community Renewal, there is no charge for this training. *Rochester Location:* Crown Plaza Hotel, 70 State Street, Downtown Rochester. *Schenectady Location:* College Park Hall, Union College, Nott Street, Schenectady.

A buffet lunch is available for a fee of \$12.00 per person in Schenectady, or feel free to bring a bag lunch. Lunch will be on your own in Rochester- there are plenty of restaurants in the vicinity of the hotel. For more information, or to receive a registration brochure by email, contact David Rustin at (518) 458-8696, ext 10, or at david@ruralhousing.org.

visit our website at www.ruralhousing.org

Anything But a “Debtor’s Bill of Rights” What the Federal Bankruptcy Bill Has in Store for Americans

On March 13, 2005, the Senate passed the bankruptcy bill, S.256, by a vote of 74 to 25. All 55 Republicans voted in favor of the bill, joined by a disappointing 17 Democrats. Senator Schumer remained one of the strongest opponents of the bill. Senator Clinton was not present for the vote (the vote took place on the day of her husband’s surgery). The House has not yet voted on the bill. Although it has been expected that the bill would sail through the House following passage in the Senate, massive media attention on the legislation and what it means for consumers gives some measure of hope that consumer advocates may be able to stop, or at least delay, passage of the law. (Should the House pass the bill, it is anticipated that President Bush will sign it immediately.) The bill goes into effect 180 days after signed by the President.

Although titled a “Debtor’s Bill of Rights”, the bill provides virtually no additional substantive protections for consumers. The bill does provide a host of protections and rights, however, for creditors to make it more difficult for consumers to discharge their debts through bankruptcy. Today’s Bankruptcy Code was enacted in 1979 to provide a fresh start to Americans who have fallen into financial distress. A law school professor of mine once described it as “one of the greatest civil rights statutes” because it gives debtors a chance to return to the playing field with a clean slate. Just like Congress enacted Chapter 11 of the bankruptcy code (the chapter filed by businesses like Enron and the airlines), to encourage folks to take risks in starting businesses without the risk of losing everything, Congress enacted provisions for individuals to file for bankruptcy so that they too wouldn’t fall into total financial ruin.

Much research has been done in the past few years regarding who is filing for bankruptcy. Contrary to what the credit industry has lead Congress to believe, bankruptcy filers are not generally folks who decided to spend lavishly on luxury

goods and have put too many sweaters and Nintendo games on their credit cards. A study published in the journal Health Affairs, rather, found that almost half of the bankruptcies filed today are the result of medical debt, and mostly by middle class Americans who had insurance (75.7% had insurance). The second biggest cause behind people filing is divorce. Less than 1% of bankruptcy filings were due to credit card debt.

The changes in the law are numerous, and too many to go into in this article. One of the major changes, however, is the implementation of a means-test. Currently, a debtor filing Chapter 7 generally can be assured of discharging most of their unsecured debt (debt not secured by a security interest such as a mortgage or a lien on their car; unsecured debt includes medical, most utility and credit card debt). With the new bill, a debtor’s income and expenses will be measured against pre-determined budget amounts based on the Internal Revenue Service’s National Standards and Local Standards, *not* a debtor’s actual expenses. Similarly, the debtor’s income is based on the debtor’s average prior 6 months income, rather than on their actual current income. If it is determined that the debtor *should* be able to pay their unsecured creditors, then the debtor will be forced into a payment agreement through the bankruptcy court, regardless of whether they can afford it, and will not be allowed to discharge that debt.

The bill makes filing for bankruptcy more expensive. Currently, the filing fee is around \$200 for either a chapter 7 or 13 (based on local rules). Hiring an attorney for a basic filing can cost between \$500 and \$1,500. The means-test means that creditors will be filing more motions that need to be responded to by the debtor and will increase attorneys’ costs for debtors. (It is notable here that the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys opposes the bill.) The means-test will only apply to debtors whose incomes fall above a median fam-

ily income (based on Bureau of the Census information) and will luckily not apply to the lowest-income filers. However, all debtors will be required to undergo pre-bankruptcy credit counseling as a condition of filing and post-bankruptcy education as a condition of discharge. Consumer advocates fear that this requirement will create a market for unscrupulous credit counseling agencies to emerge, subjecting debtors to deceptive practices and excessive costs. Post-filing financial management courses do not currently exist and there is no funding provided in the legislation to develop programs, yet the requirement will take effect immediately.

Other problems with the bill include a threat to child support, as other creditors will be entitled to payment by debtor’s and there will be less available to go to child support judgments, the bill makes it easier for residential landlords to evict tenants in bankruptcy, makes saving homes or cars through a Chapter 13 plan more difficult and allows millionaires to continue to shelter assets in bankruptcy. It is also notable that the bill is virtually devoid of any added protections for consumers. The bill nominally regulates creditors and the information they disclose to consumers when billing, however it doesn’t require full disclosure of terms such as the total amount of the debt owed, or the time it will take consumers to pay off the credit card debt should they continue to just make the minimum payment.

For more information on the bankruptcy bill and what how it will adversely affect consumers, go to the websites of the National Consumer Law Center’s at www.nclc.org, Demos at www.demos-usa.org, or the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys at www.nacba.com.

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HUD Releases Continuum of Care SuperNOFA

HUD released its FY05 Super Notice of Funding Availability (SuperNOFA) on March 21st. The section on Continuum of Care (CoC) Homeless Assistance Programs, covering the Supportive Housing Program (SHP), Shelter Plus Care (S+C), and the Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Single Room Occupancy Program for Homeless Individuals (SRO), continues the Administration's shift in funding priorities from the homeless population at large to chronically homeless individuals. HUD defines someone as chronically homeless if they are an "unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years."

The NOFA removes all previously stated timetables for ending chronic homelessness. The policy shift begun in the 2004 NOFA of placing funding priority on "programs that target the supportive housing needs of chronically homeless persons" continues. In addition to the 2004 change requiring that at least 10% of the appropriation be awarded to projects "predominantly

serving individuals experiencing chronic homelessness," the 2005 NOFA re-names the Permanent Housing Bonus as the Samaritan Housing Initiative. These funds are now available "only for projects serving exclusively chronically homeless persons."

Another major change is that participant eligibility for permanent housing projects funded through the continuum can no longer include currently housed people who may become homeless within seven days. Although these households "remain eligible for transitional housing and emergency shelters," new rules state that only persons coming from the streets, emergency shelter or transitional housing are eligible, thereby removing the last source of homelessness prevention funds available through the CoC. This change applies to both new and renewal projects.

The NOFA also announces the availability of \$10 million for approximately 10 two-year grants for "Housing for People who are Homeless and Addicted to Alcohol." This new demonstration program, developed in conjunction with the Interagency Council on Homelessness, will provide support

ive housing assistance to chronically homeless persons who "have been living on the streets for at least 365 days over the last five years and have a long term addiction to alcohol, otherwise know an serial inebriates." At the end of the two-year demonstration program, funded projects may apply for renewal funds through the Continuum of Care NOFA.

Also in the NOFA is an advisement that final funding amounts for Shelter Plus Care and Section 8 SRO projects "may be different from the requested amount due to changes in the FMRs. HUD will apply FMR changes after selection."

Numerous other changes are contained in the NOFA, including shifts in the hold harmless provision, different scoring systems and new charts required from applicants. The CoC section of the SuperNOFA can be accessed at www.hud.gov/offices/adm/grants/nofa05/grpcoc.cfm. HUD will be holding SuperNOFA broadcast trainings throughout the month of April. The schedule can be accessed at www.ich.gov/library/2005-SuperNOFA-Broadcast-Schedule.pdf.

Study Details Fair Lending Issues

The National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) has released a report looking at 2003 home lending data. "Fair Lending Disparities by Race, Income, and Gender in All Metropolitan Areas in America" found that minorities and other traditionally underserved groups received a disproportionately large share of high-cost loans.

The report looks at disparities for all 331 metropolitan areas in the country, using descriptive statistics and regression. It analyzes prime and subprime home purchase and refinance lending trends for minorities, women,

low and moderate-income borrowers, borrowers in low and moderate-income neighborhoods, and borrowers in minority neighborhoods.

Among the report's findings are that subprime lenders made a consistently higher proportion of their loans to underserved communities than did prime lenders, even in more affordable markets. The report also finds that more segregated and more affordable metropolitan areas have greater disparities in lending patterns.

The authors conclude that the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) remains important in protecting against

abusive lending practices, and that it should be strengthened - including more scrutiny in the CRA exams given to subprime lenders. They additionally call for comprehensive anti-predatory lending legislation, improvement in HMDA data, improvement in the Federal Reserve Board's fair lending oversight, and for Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs) to stop accepting loans with abusive terms or characteristics.

The report can be found at: www.ncrc.org/pressandpubs/press_releases/hmda05report.php.