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**FOR RELEASE**

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## **WESTLAWN GARDENS RECEIVES NATIONAL COMMUNITY PLANNING AWARD**

*Milwaukee public housing community wins prestigious HUD Secretary's Award*

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the American Planning Association (APA) today awarded Wisconsin's largest public housing community, Westlawn Gardens, the [HUD Secretary's Opportunity & Empowerment Award](#). [Read more about Westlawn Gardens](#).



Jointly presented by HUD and APA, the award recognizes a plan, program, or project that improves the quality of life for low- and moderate-income community residents. Emphasis is placed on how creative housing, economic development and private investments have been used in or with a comprehensive community development plan to empower a community.

"Milwaukee's Westlawn Gardens is a great example of what can be achieved through public-private partnerships and an innovative approach to community planning," said HUD Secretary Ben Carson. "We endeavor to see more public housing communities adopt similar strategies and create a healthy, sustainable living environment for families."

Through a holistic, community-based design process, Westlawn Gardens is successfully being transformed from an aged and stressed community into a lively, mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood. The \$82 million first phase, funded through the state's largest Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) award created 250 new public housing units and is a mix of townhomes and apartments accommodating the housing needs of many seniors and residents with disabilities.

The first floors of the apartment buildings accommodate neighborhood retail and community services. A renovated elementary school, playground and a beloved community center are in the center of the neighborhood. Opportunities for job growth and economic development are also incorporated in the plan. A partnership with Growing Power created a 30,000 square foot community garden on site to educate and train residents about local food production.

"Westlawn Gardens is inspiration for communities around the country looking to change the conversation and approach to public housing," said W. Shedrick Coleman, AIA, chair of the 2018 Awards Jury. "The hard work and collaboration with residents has generated a strong and vibrant community for years to come."

Future phases will more than double the available housing and will add market rate ownership and rental housing intermixed with public and affordable housing options to provide a truly mixed-income community. Every new home is designed to LEED standards with durable, weather-resisted materials used to reduce heating and maintenance costs as well as improve indoor and outdoor air quality.

Prior to the new sustainable housing, the original Westlawn neighborhood is well over 50 years old. Over 700 barracks style public housing units on 75 acres inadequately addressed the needs of its 1,771 residents. Superblocks isolated it from its surroundings, physically and socially. Severely undersized housing did not properly serve growing families and individuals. Outdated and underperforming storm water and energy systems also poorly served the residents of the old Westlawn. Through an inclusive and participatory planning process, the team developed long term strategies to transform the neighborhood into a healthy and empowering place to live.

The 2018 APA National Planning Award recipients will be posted on APA's website on March 28, 2018. Additionally, APA's 2018 National Planning Awards luncheon ceremony will take place during the 2018 National Planning Conference in New Orleans, April 21–24, 2018. The award winners will also be featured in the April 2018 issue of Planning magazine.

For a list of all the APA 2018 National Planning Excellence and Achievement Award recipients, visit [www.planning.org/awards](http://www.planning.org/awards). APA's national awards program, the profession's highest honor, is a proud tradition established more than 50 years ago to recognize outstanding community plans, planning programs and initiatives, public education efforts, and individuals for their leadership on planning issues.

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