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## Green and Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI)

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by Michael Shaw | Feb 11, 2011  
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### Innovation

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Green and Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI)

### Describe your project

GHHI is inspiring a national movement by creating a scalable program to holistically address multiple housing deficiencies in low income communities and affordably produce significant public health and energy benefits. By braiding community, philanthropic and government collaboration and investments, GHHI breaks the cycle of deferred housing investments that result in higher medical bills, energy costs, maintenance costs and poor outcomes for children. Working in 15 communities in the US, but replicable globally GHHI moves away from the fractured delivery systems of silo-based housing programs to a coordinated whole house approach that produces sustainable green, healthy and safe homes and improves the health, economic and social well-being of children and their families.

### What stage is your project in?

Operating for 1-5 years

### What makes your project unique as it relates to the theme of this competition?

Every year in the US, millions of low-income children are needlessly robbed of the ability reach their full potential by illnesses, injuries and poisonings caused by unhealthy homes. This results in excessive and avoidable costs in the billions - costs absorbed by communities, homeowners, taxpayers and the health care sector. Delivering housing services in silos is inefficient and only partially solves problems. The public experiences government as a fractured entity that is not solving the real problems at hand: children are sick - causing them to miss or underperform in

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school, their home is too expensive to heat or maintain and parents miss work because they have to solve these issues. GHHI is breaking new ground and shifting public policy and investment by bringing together programs across multiple federal, state and local government agencies, philanthropy and the private sector to pool resources and create a single point of intake and intervention. Rather than separate, exhausting and less effective investments, GHHI is able to eliminate health, safety, and energy problems in the home simultaneously. Integration of energy and health programs eliminates service delivery costs by over 20% and reduce contaminants (such as carbon monoxide, lead, mold, and allergens), improve ventilation and thermal comfort, reduces moisture and condensation, increases safety and offers residents a healthier and sustainable environment. GHHI improves homes to improve the health, economic and social outcomes for children and families - leading to healthier and more stable communities.

#### Share the story of the founder and what inspired the founder to start this project

Ruth Ann Norton joined the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning in 1993 to address deteriorating housing stock and lead poisoned children in Baltimore. Understanding the impact that lead poisoning was having on the learning abilities of children as well upon the increased likelihood that poisoned children would enter the juvenile justice system, she designed a campaign to end childhood lead poisoning in Baltimore. This led to a 98% reduction in poisoning rates. Through the work of the Coalition, she fully understood that eliminating lead hazards was only one part in breaking the link between unhealthy housing and unhealthy children. In 1999, Ms. Norton designed one of the nation's first Healthy Homes Programs addressing asthma, injury and lead hazards in low-income urban neighborhoods. This began a pathway and passion for how to design and implement best practices to address home-based environmental health hazards in a cost-effective and preventive fashion and thus create better health, economic and social outcomes for children from low income communities. Inspired by the nation's investment in energy efficiency and weatherization, she designed a GHHI process to capitalize on this historic ARRA investment and develop a sustainable effort that would integrate weatherization with health-based housing interventions to create affordable green and healthy homes in the most distressed neighborhood.

## Social Impact

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### Who or what (i.e. youth, women, environment, etc.) benefits from your project, and why is your project critical?

Children, families, the environment, health care, government, neighborhoods and workforce development are direct beneficiaries. Children benefit by the reduction of illness, injury, poisoning caused by unhealthy homes. Families benefit by lower energy, housing and health care costs. The environment benefits by lower energy consumption. Taxpayer paid health care spends less on housing-based illnesses. Workers and contractors will benefit from opportunities to expand and diversify their skills to address energy and health with the goal to create 1400 GHHI jobs by 2012. GHHI places a priority on directly hiring residents and reaching low-income workers with criminal backgrounds and other barriers to employment. Neighborhoods are stabilized by healthier, affordable and maintainable homes.

### Please describe how your project has been successful and how that success is measured.

In less than 18 months, GHHI has grown from one project site to 13 cities and 2 American Indian Tribal communities, with 31 additional cities seeking to join the Initiative. It has inspired over \$11,000,000 in philanthropic commitments with pending pledges for more than \$12,000,000 from local utilities to support Green and Healthy Home Initiative efforts in low income neighborhoods in GHHI sites. GHHI has also worked with HUD to set a national goal of 500,000 green and healthy units by 2015. There clearly is unmeasured economic impact of increasing the ability of parents to work while reducing missed school days due to illness, poisoning or injury as well as a return on investment from families that are better able to meet mortgage requirements and open savings accounts due to lower medical bills, energy bills and housing maintenance costs. Initial data from the first 650 GHHI homes (full unit production to begin in all sites by June 2011) has demonstrated: 1) 20 to 25% savings in home repair costs by integrating programs – for a total savings of \$3.0 million; 2) Energy cost reductions of \$900.00 on average for units completed to date; 3) Energy savings that are 30% higher than traditional weatherization programs for comparable housing; 4) only one child of 140 asthmatic children has returned to the emergency room or hospital for Asthma to date – generating an estimated direct medical cost savings of \$5.4 million; 5) More than 500 new GHHI related workers, auditors, and analysts have been added to the workforce from low income communities.

### How many people have been impacted by your project?

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1,001 - 10,000

**How many people could be impacted by your project in the next three years?**

More than 10,000

**What barriers might hinder the success of your project and how do you plan to overcome them?**

While GHHI delivers significant cost savings, federal, state and local budget cuts could reduce the scale of GHHI pilot site work. Unresolved differences in income qualifications for various federal programs create unnecessary barriers, although GHHI has successfully worked to advance cross agency agreements to overcome these barriers. Currently, the US Center for Medicaid Services and health care insurers do not readily contribute to cost-effective health prevention interventions. Obtaining funding for cost-benefit analysis to change these policies is critical. Funding will need to come from philanthropy. In addition, the lack of a national health-based housing standard for federal investments could slow progress but work is underway in partnership with HUD and other federal agencies.

**How will your project evolve over the next three years?**

GHHI is working with its federal, philanthropic and other partners to bring this effort to scale. GHHI's existing goal is to reach 3,500 initial units in 15 sites over the next 18 months. In partnership with HUD, we have set a goal of creating 500,000 GHHI units by 2015. In 2010, GHHI partnered with the US Conference of Mayors to reach over 1,000 US Mayors through a series of education events with a goal to have 100 mayors sign a compact on Green and Healthy Homes standards, practices and principals by 2012. GHHI is working with the Federal Healthy Homes Work Group to establish a uniform green and healthy housing standard that would regulate minimum housing quality where public dollars are being invested. Once adopted nationally, the GHHI approach will produce a paradigm shift in housing.

## Sustainability

**For each selection, please explain the financial and non-financial support from each**

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GHHI is a partnership coordinated by the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning that has engaged the support and interest of 13 US Cities, 2 American Indian Tribes, multiple federal agencies, national and community foundations, and national and local non-profits. The Coalition, on behalf of GHHI, has secured a contract with HUD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide technical assistance to the initial GHHI partnership sites through 2011. Local foundations have provided support for Learning Networks, workforce development and interventions. GHHI is working with NGO's/Non-profits on advancing the national dialogue to establish a national/global health-based housing standard and organizing the field in a way that better advocates for vulnerable families. Local organizations remove home-based health hazards and weatherize homes through coordinated interventions. Regional and local government provide staff, funding, coordination in building local capacity and engaging a new way of doing business by braiding funding through a streamlined intake and intervention process. Business, specifically utility companies, provides resources to support interventions and energy usage data in many of the GHHI cities. The data is crucial to benchmarking and capturing the cost- saving impacts of weatherization and energy efficiency interventions. The federal Healthy Homes Work Group, led by HUD, DOE, CDC, and the EPA, address barriers and best practices raised by GHHI partners and puts forward solutions on issues such as income eligibility and resource coordination.

**How do you plan to grow and/or diversify your base of support in the next three years?**

GHHI works to build robust partnerships and a diverse portfolio of revenue streams. GHHI's groundbreaking success in changing public processes has garnered foundation support and will continue to generate that support locally within sites and nationally. We are developing economic models and cost benefit analysis to capture health savings to attract additional preventive investments from public and private health insurers, CMS, and other agencies. We continue to respond to federal funding opportunities as they become available and to assist GHHI sites to apply where appropriate. We are receiving substantial funding from utility companies who identify GHHI as valuable to their business models. Added investment will support: 1) expanding technical assistance by supporting key TA operations, tool development, and site capacity building support. 2) a multidisciplinary evaluation focusing on housing, health impacts, government system and process change and innovation, and workforce development needs. 3) a national and site-based database to document cost-benefits and track integrated health and energy-based interventions with the addition of a handheld field system for assessment and information data sharing. 4) developing a software program for cities and states to readily tag and track all housing intervention resources. 5) supporting local GHHI Coordinators to establish and guide local efforts to ensure fundamental systems change. 6) a National fund to support efficient and effective integrated green and healthy housing programs and a federally supported housing standard.

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**Collaboration**

Please select your areas of intervention in the home improvement market

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Design, Technical assistance, Water, Infrastructure, Energy conservation, Green housing, Environment, Income generation, Urban development, Rural development, Citizen/community participation, Public policy.

Is your innovation addressing barriers in the home improvement/progressive housing market? If so, please describe in detail your mechanisms of intervention

The Green and Healthy Homes Initiative addresses multiple housing deficiencies simultaneously to maximize public health and energy benefits. Through an innovative set of practices and smart investments, GHHI breaks the cycle of deferred housing investments that result in higher medical bills, higher energy costs and higher housing maintenance costs. Right now, the benefits of health-based housing investments largely go unrecognized, resulting in homes with excessive and avoidable costs being absorbed by the health care sector, homeowners and taxpayers. GHHI addresses substandard housing by effectively braiding categorically separate and siloed that low income families are unable to effectively access. GHHI overcomes those barriers by coordinating separate (both in terms of funding streams and responsible government agencies) but mission-related programs and by leveraging investments of federal, state, local, and philanthropic resources. GHHI eliminates existing health and safety hazards and energy inefficiencies in the home simultaneously through integrated, single stream interventions that use green technologies and that align federal, state, local, and philanthropic and private sector investments. Integration of energy and health programs eliminates overlapping costs and reduces energy consumption (as well as carbon emissions), lead hazards, indoor allergens that trigger asthma attacks, contaminants and safety hazards (such as carbon monoxide, mold, and dust), improves ventilation, reduces moisture and condensation, improves thermal comfort, and offers residents a healthier environment. By reducing energy and medical costs, GHHI also stabilizes homes by reducing financial stress on families that can lead to foreclosure or tenant eviction. GHHI improves homes to improve the health, economic and social outcomes for children and families - leading to healthier and more stable communities.

Are you currently collaborating with private companies, or have you partnered with private companies in the past? With which companies?

GHHI has been successfully building partnerships with utility companies in our initial GHHI sites who practice Demand Side Management. The utility companies are financially supporting energy efficiency and weatherization components of the GHHI interventions locally to help in reducing energy consumption and energy costs for low income families. These collaborating utility companies to date are: Constellation Energy Group (Baltimore), DTE Energy Company (Detroit), Xcel Energy (Denver), United Illuminating Company (New Haven), PECO (Philadelphia).

Please describe in detail the nature of the partnership(s)

While each relationship has its unique qualities, in each partnership there is an exchange or investment of resources for housing interventions made to the local GHHI efforts and an exchange of utility usage data which is used to benchmark the impact of the interventions in reducing energy cost burdens for low income families. GHHI is partnering with HUD, DOE, EPA, CDC, and others to create a uniform national green, healthy and safe housing standard that ensures that all federal investments in low income housing include eradication of environmental health threats, reduction of energy consumption, and access for properly trained community residents to benefit from the associated workforce opportunities. The creation of a federal green and healthy homes housing standard would result in federal agencies mandating that the standard be required of all (not just HUD) federally funded housing intervention programs. In addition, the uniform housing standard will guide the private market and bring other private partners into utilizing the standard to promote housing that is green, healthy, safe, and sustainable. On the local level, GHHI has developed innovative partnerships and collaborations with state and local housing, health, and energy related agencies that are producing integrated assessment and intervention strategies and comprehensive interventions. GHHI is also partnering with Spanish speaking communities to foster the implementation of comprehensive housing intervention models in diverse neighborhoods. To generate a more sustainable movement, GHHI is also partnering with 30 national and local foundations and philanthropic institutions to leverage their organizational knowledge, technical expertise, local influence and ability to convene stakeholders, as well as direct funding support to ensure that GHHI principles are put into practice more readily. GHHI is working with HUD's Office of International and Philanthropic Initiatives to share GHHI models and principles in an effort to raise housing standards for communities internationally.

Select the unit(s) with which the partnership was formed

Foundation of the company, Corporate social responsibility department.

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