

# The Hamilton Hotel: Affordable Housing for the Elderly

By Margaret R. Shaw, Principal, Tekoa Housing Advisors

The \$13 million renovation of The Hamilton Hotel, an affordable elderly housing development in downtown Laredo, Texas, received the prestigious 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation/U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Hamilton Hotel, built in the 1920s, was transformed from a condemned city eyesore into an elegant 165-unit apartment building for low-income elderly residents earning less than \$10,000 annually.

"City and state governments face the increasingly daunting economic challenge of providing affordable housing options to their citizens," said Bill Skeen, president of Covenant Hamilton Housing, the project's developer. "The Hamilton Hotel is a model project for demonstrating what an innovative public-private partnership to create affordable housing and community revitalization."

The Hamilton was once a proud symbol of the gateway between Texas and Mexico, hosting travelers from all over the world and offering local residents a venue for community events. By the 1990s, however, many floors were condemned, and vandalism, water damage, and insensitive alterations marred the building. Part of the makeover included refurbishing the hotel's unique tile, decorative painting and light fixtures, to bring the building back to its original splendor. When standard resources were inadequate, a team member noted the hotel is the highest point for hundreds of miles, and to complete the financing package, a roof easement was sold for a telecommunication transmission tower to be erected.

HUD Secretary Mel Martinez said of the unique and successful partnership: "The rich history of the building is a link to Laredo's past

that generations to come will view with pride. Equally important for the low-income, elderly residents of the Hamilton Hotel, this is more than a historical landmark—it is their home and real hope for a better way of life."

Covenant Hamilton Housing Partners assembled an impressive development and financial team consisting of a diverse group of public and private sector members including the Laredo Housing Finance Corp., City of Laredo, HUD, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Related Capital Company, International Bank of

Commerce, U.S. Parks Service, Ford Powell and Carson Architects, Frank Architects and Faulkner Construction Company. Locke Liddell led the legal team, which also included firms from New York, Washington D.C., and Laredo. Funding for the \$13 million project came from several sources—including the City of Laredo, Related Capital, and International Bank of Commerce.

Tekoa Housing Advisors, is a consulting firm specializing in crafting affordable housing solutions.

## Congratulations 2002 Write Ten Winners!



NCCED is happy to congratulate outstanding members Tony Lentych, Executive Director of the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan; Patricia Barnes, Executive Director of the Ohio CDC Association; and Pamela Martin Turner, President and CEO of Northstar CDC in Detroit, Michigan. Each wrote at least ten letters to their legislators during fiscal year 2002 and were awarded prizes of \$1,000, \$500, and \$250 through NCCED's Write Ten competition at our annual conference.

You too can influence Congressional decisions by writing to your legislators in support of key community economic development issues. Visit NCCED's Public Policy web page, [www.ncced.org/policy](http://www.ncced.org/policy). Sample emails have been provided for each alert, bill, and issue. Enter your zip code and a sample email will appear—already addressed to YOUR local legislator. Just add your contact information, title the email, and modify the text as you like. Then click to send. It's that EASY!

Copies of your emails will automatically be forwarded to NCCED staff in Washington, D.C.

You can also draft your own letters and fax or mail and forward copies to Erica Lindquist, NCCED Policy Analyst, at 1030 15th St. NW, Suite 325, Washington DC, 20005, or (202) 289-7051 (fax). This year, make it a priority to WRITE TEN!