

Formed in 1997, Jonathan Reed & Associates, Inc. [JRA] is a development firm specializing in developing tax credit-funded communities in rural areas. Over the last fourteen years, with Jonathan Reed as President, JRA has actively partnered or consulted with numerous non-profit housing providers in New Mexico and Colorado, developing 16 “9%” LIHTC projects and one market-rate development. These developments were fostered through co-development agreements with organizations, such as: Rural Housing, Inc. and YES Housing, Inc., of Albuquerque, the Housing Authority of the County of Montezuma, of Cortez, Siete Del Norte CDC, of Embudo, Eastern Plains Housing Development Corporation, of Clovis, and Southwest Community Resources, Inc., based in Durango. Several repeat relationships have been formed, enabling the firms to work a second or even a third time together. In all, over 656 units have been developed by JRA.

Central to JRA’s purpose, and a driving theme of the IRS’ tax credit financing program is the notion of helping people regain autonomy. Whereas traditional government subsidy programs have encouraged, even economically coerced households to remain poor and dependent, through the tax credit financing program and JRA’s combined efforts, hundreds of families are on their way to becoming independent. This independence is not limited to economics. Rather, a myriad tenant, project-based education and skills programs have been launched within the developments’ community buildings. Programs such as ESL, GED, psychological counseling, financial planning, first-time home buyer counseling, and children’s field trips have all been created. All tenants must pay monthly rent, ranging from as low as \$170 (Cortez, 2001) to \$274 (Gallup, New Mexico, 2008).

In addition to tenant autonomy, a second and crucial imperative of JRA is to promote community revitalization. Often, affordable housing developers will force their pre-determined product on a community, only discussing their market understanding and political acceptance with community leaders *after* the project is largely committed. Realizing the importance of long-term positive relationships with community leadership, JRA has initiated, from the start, a different policy, meeting with the town Mayor or City Manager early, *before* selecting sites, lenders, product types, or common amenities. This sort of invaluable input garnered from the community helps accomplish two things: 1) Developing rapport with the City (conveying respect to the community leadership), and, 2) Obtaining precious market input. Affordable housing should always be built where it is needed and wanted, as a community asset. Too often, it is forced on communities by radical, special interest groups, as an egalitarian tool.

A second role JRA’s projects play in community revitalization is the attention paid to long-term construction quality. Although the funding sources often greatly encourage low-cost development, JRA has striven to implement only a product that will enhance the community, prove aesthetically pleasing, and ultimately serve the tenants’ needs over the long term. JRA virtually always implements separate wall-plate construction for sound deadening, often with 6” exteriors, coupled with double pane windows, central air conditioning (refrigerated), central heating, energy-star appliances, “5/12-6/12” roof pitch, and generous installation of phone and video jacks for tenant convenience. It is believed that tenants will be more efficient at regaining autonomy if they have what they need to quickly “get back on their feet.” A mother is more apt to attend night school or work a second job if she has a clean, safe, and well maintained environment for her children. To bridge this chasm, between scarce funding sources and construction quality, aggressive value engineering and open bidding efforts are traditionally invoked with builders, paying strict attention to cost control in areas that do not impact the buildings. Townhouses and single family homes are built, in addition to garden-style apartments. It would *almost* be accurate to say that the only thing affordable about our projects is the rents.

Lower income families are charged with unique challenges that must be distinctly addressed. JRA, to address this need, realizes the importance of age stratification in the communities. Consequently, virtually every project developed incorporates amenities such as [a]: community building, gym, tot lot, basketball court, computer learning center, and laundry facilities or laundry hook ups—to assist every age group live a more productive life on their way to becoming independent.