



Enterprise and Wells Fargo Foundation name winners of \$20 million housing innovation challenge

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418 Fabius Street - Syracuse, NY

Washington, D.C. Enterprise Community Partners (Enterprise) and The Wells Fargo Foundation named the winners of the 2023 Housing Affordability Breakthrough Challenge, a \$20 million nationwide competition to find and seed innovative housing solutions. The six winning organizations will each receive \$2 million to \$3 million in grants and support from peers and industry experts to

scale new strategies aimed at making homes more accessible and affordable. The wide range of winning solutions include a workforce training program that prepares students for homeownership; a new way of financing housing in rural communities like the Mississippi Delta; and a new construction technology that reduces the carbon footprint of multifamily buildings.

“There is incredible demand across all types of communities for affordable housing solutions that are tailored to local needs and have the potential to scale,” said Jacqueline Waggoner, president of the Solutions Division at Enterprise Community Partners. “The Housing Affordability Breakthrough Challenge enables leaders on the ground to multiply their impact nationwide. We are so excited to work with this second cohort of winners to bring their ideas to the next level.”

“Creating true equity in the nation’s housing system requires a focus on transformative ideas that challenge current housing practices and processes,” said Stacy Spann, head of Housing Access and Affordability Philanthropy at the Wells Fargo Foundation. “Through the Housing Affordability Breakthrough Challenge, we are intentionally lifting up solutions to serve communities that have experienced disinvestment and marginalization for far too long. And the winning group of entrepreneurs and social innovators truly combine expertise with the lived experiences of the communities we aim to serve.”

The 2023 winners and their breakthrough ideas are:

Housing Access and Resident Support

Build UP: Build Up Birmingham and Beyond aims to expand the unique workforce development high school in Birmingham, AL. that combines academic learning with hands-on, paid internships in home construction and real estate. The environmentally sustainable model relocates donated homes to underinvested neighborhoods where students renovate the homes and eventually have the opportunity to live in and buy them, creating a pathway to homeownership and wealth creation. As part of the Breakthrough Challenge, Build UP plans to enroll more than 120 students, renovate and relocate more than 40 homes, and facilitate 200 paid construction internships.

Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority: Success Starts With Me Home Ownership Program is a new housing model which bridges the gap between traditional mortgage loans and the financial needs in rural Alaska to provide low-income Tribal citizens access to homeownership on tribal lands. Partners including Haa Yakaawu Financial Corp. will offer construction and home loans with individualized down payments, payback schedules, and education courses with the goal of supporting more than 100 families in the Juneau region

Housing Construction

Hydronic Shell Technologies: Thinking Outside the Box for More Sustainable and Healthy Affordable Housing will pilot a new technology in Syracuse, NY that will make it possible to do large-scale energy retrofits of multifamily buildings from the exterior using prefabricated modular panels. The high-efficiency system, which is the first of its kind in the world, reduces CO2 emissions while improving indoor air quality, lowering energy bills and enabling residents to remain in place throughout the process.

Module: The Last Mile Network is a partnership between the modular housing company and affordable housing developers to bring prefabricated homes into urban communities and create on-ramps into the construction industry through workforce development programs. The project will scale Module's construction facility in Pittsburgh, Penn., and develop new facilities in Maryland and Virginia, building 100 all-electric affordable homes with a local workforce that has an equity stake in the business.

Housing Finance

Hope Enterprise Corporation: Securing Homeownership through Expiring LIHTC Developments is a new mortgage innovation which aims to convert long-time renters in rural communities into homeowners by providing residents of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit-financed homes the option to purchase the home when those credits expire. The model will be piloted in the Mississippi Delta in collaboration with local design partner, Delta Design Build, and HBCU engineering students who will renovate the properties.

Grounded Solutions Network: The Homes for the Future Fund will use private capital to purchase 200 homes in communities of color in the South – starting in Atlanta – that are experiencing rapid appreciation and rent increases, rehab the homes, and lease them to families at an affordable price. As the property values grow, the project will enable residents to use a portion of the equity toward purchasing the home. The unique investment structure aims to provide investors with a modest return while allowing the bulk of the equity generated to remain in the community through a shared equity model.

The competition drew more than 400 applications from a wide range of innovative nonprofit and mission-driven for-profit organizations stretching from Florida to Alaska in three categories: Access and resident support, construction, and financing. After two application rounds, 16 finalists were invited to present their innovations in a 10-minute pitch to a panel of judges composed of national affordable housing and community development experts, including leaders from Wells Fargo and Enterprise. The 2023 winners will take part in a multi-year peer learning network to share ideas and cultivate their innovations into solutions that can be applied to communities across the U.S. The cohort will gain access to a network of leaders from across the housing sector, including experts from Enterprise and past winners of the competition.

Named in 2020, the first cohort of winners have launched and begun scaling an array of innovations that include a modular building system that can grow over time, a shared-housing and services program for people returning to communities after incarceration, and an underwriting tool designed to close the racial homeownership gap.

“The Breakthrough Challenge allowed us to build a bigger table, where residents and frontline staff had real power and leadership over decisions in their communities,” said Julianna Stuart-Lomax, vice president of community impact for 2020 winner Preservation of Affordable Housing. “It fundamentally reoriented our organization and gave us the space to imagine a new kind of housing system for this country.”

