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Breaking New Ground

Encouraging developments in the Affordable Housing Clinic

It's tempting to say that business at the Law School's Affordable Housing Clinic is, well, building. Tempting — and true. According to Dean Barry B. Boyer, the Affordable Housing Clinic "has become not a major but *the* major factor in Western New York in creating publicly funded housing." In the past year, he said, the clinic has obtained financing in excess of \$22 million, counting leveraged tax-advantaged investments, to support construction of low- and moderate-income housing in Western New York. Approximately 350 units have been built to date.

Local community development partners include: the Diocese of Buffalo, Catholic Charities of Western New York, The Blind Association, the Polish Community Center and the Town of Hamburg. The clinic also serves as consultants to the New York State Catholic Conference on use of federal low-income housing tax credits to develop special use housing.

"All of this is a tribute," Boyer said, "to Nils Olsen, vice dean and director of Clinical Studies, and to the people in our housing clinic who have taken a leadership role in this community in making things happen."

With groundbreaking planned this spring in Buffalo on a \$2.4 million apartment project for visually impaired people, and the relocation of a prestigious scholarly journal to UB, the housing clinic is seeing the rewards of years of work.

For George M. Hezel, director of the Affordable Housing Clinic, seeing

that first shovel hit the ground will be a satisfying moment in the long journey toward Gratwick Manor, a 24-unit project of the Blind Association of Western New York that will be located in the city's Riverside section.

"It involves taking an area in an old business section of Riverside, taking a vacant piece of land and building an attractive structure on it," Hezel said. "It brings state money into the area, and that has a ripple effect."

"It's the University doing what it ought to do — students putting their energy into developing the community."

Faculty and a half-dozen students in the housing clinic have worked on funding applications, memos on a passel of legal issues and tax credits for investors in the project. "Part of the learning experience for the students," Hezel said, "is to watch how these things actually progress, from early conceptualization all the way to completion." That, he said, means learning how to negotiate as well as how to write briefs.

Funded largely by the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corp. and investors in low-income housing tax credits, Gratwick Manor will provide four two-bedroom and 20 one-bedroom units. Because it's designed for visually impaired residents, it will include such aids as Braille signs, "talking" elevators, special lighting, and safety features in bathrooms and kitchens.

The one-bedrooms will rent for \$250 monthly plus utilities, Hezel said.

In addition to helping the visually

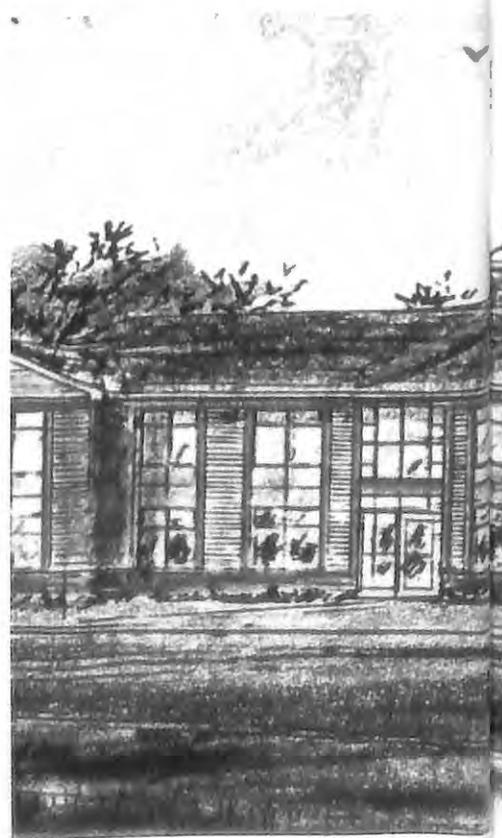
impaired, the Affordable Housing Clinic has assisted other special needs groups in securing a total of \$6.3 million from state and federal sources to produce 76 units of badly needed housing.

That's the direct-action component of the Affordable Housing Clinic. But just as exciting is the advent of a scholarly journal — *the Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* — at UB Law School.

The journal is published quarterly by the American Bar Association as part of a forum (precursor to an ABA section) on housing and community development law. Its subscribers are 1,500 ABA members — a number that's growing rapidly, Hezel said.

Twenty schools bid on becoming the journal's co-sponsor, with UB the unanimous choice of the ABA forum's governing committee.

"What I'm thrilled about," Hezel said, "is that it recognizes the quality



Alumni Support Affordable Housing Initiatives:

Twenty-one families were able to purchase new homes at below market costs thanks to Michael G. Zapson '85, and Richard Rosenberg, '85. Zapson is a partner of the New York City law firm of Schaeffer & Zapson, as well as a City Councilman for the City of Long Beach, N.Y. He was aided in putting together an affordable housing program by Rosenberg, a partner in the law firm of Berkman, Hennoch, Peterson & Peddy, in Garden City, Long Island. Rosenberg provided the legal work for the purchasers pro bono. ■



Michael Zapson '85 (standing) and Richard Rosenberg '85 with clients.

and strength of a program that has been lodged at the Law School for a number of years. It also heralds an interesting area of expansion within the practice of law. Hard-pressed communities will need some devoted attention from lawyers to enable them to develop and prosper.

"The fact that the journal comes here to UB Law School, when the ABA could have chosen a lot of highly qualified law schools, is a real coup."

Designed for both practitioners and scholars, the journal covers such topics as housing finance, federal housing programs, tax credits, bond financing and community development law. It involves faculty from both the Affordable Housing Clinic and the Community Economic Development Clinic — Hezel, Thomas F. Disare, Peter R. Pitegoff, Lauren Breen, and Philip Halpern, who is the school's liaison to the American Bar Association.

It also involves the students in

reviewing submitted articles, making suggestions for revisions, checking citations and providing articles for publication. Already, two UB Law students have written full-length articles which have been published in the journal. That feeds into the Law School's New Curriculum, Hezel said, because the faculty members in the two clinics can work with students individually to develop the students' portfolio of legal writing, some of which may become part of the journal.

Already, he said, news of the journal's move to UB Law has prompted requests from other law schools curious about UB's clinical programs. Some have called seeking recent graduates with clinic experience who might set up similar clinics at their schools.

"I think our clinics have not been announced to the world as broadly as they should be," Hezel said. "This really gives them a stamp of approval." ■

Gratwick Manor, a 24-unit project of the Blind Association of Western New York.

