Clinic Helps People Secure Housing, Independence

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol18/iss1/14

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni Publications at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in UB Law Forum by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact lawscholar@buffalo.edu.
Clinic helps people secure housing, independence

In a run-down section of city street in Niagara Falls, N.Y. — flanked by abandoned homes and across from a shuttered hospital — a dilapidated old dormitory for nurses is getting a new start as transitional housing for homeless women and their children.

The building's rehabilitation is being made possible, in large measure, by the efforts of University at Buffalo law students attracted to an unglimmering, roll-up-your-sleeves niche of law practice known as affordable housing, which focuses on helping nonprofit and community organizations obtain financing to create low-income and special-needs housing.

"Affordable housing is for students looking for more substantial elements of law beyond the flash of litigation," explains law professor George W. Hezel, director of the UB Law School's Affordable Housing Clinic. "These students learn to negotiate sensitive issues, plan and advocate for people, which is really 90 percent of what lawyers do — other lawyers don't spend all their time litigation."

The refurbished four-story building, owned and operated by the YWCA of Niagara Falls, brings to $150 million the amount of affordable housing financing secured by students and faculty members through UB's Affordable Housing Clinic, says Hezel, who has run the clinic for 17 years.

"The trick of this project was securing about $1 million in historic-preservation tax credits," Hezel explains. "Financing that million paid for amenities that the tax credits, "Hezel explains. "Finding about $1 million in historic-preservation credits, "Granchelli adds. "We had a vision, it didn't seem like it was going to happen at one point, but now it is. There's no other housing like this in the entire county."" Created in 1987, the UB clinic is the granddaddy of affordable housing clinics at U.S. law schools. Its national prominence is why the clinic was selected as the home base for the American Bar Association's Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1990s, at the UB Law School and several other partnerships. Granchelli adds: "We had a vision, it didn't seem like it was going to happen at one point, but now it is. There's no other housing like this in the entire county."

In addition to one-, two-, and three-bedroom suites, the new facility contains a daycare center and a culinary-arts training center, which prepares women for jobs in restaurants around and in a closed courtyard playground, the new facility — located within the Buffalo Niagara Metropolitan Statistical Area — is an example of the type of community development projects, Hezel points out. In partnership with the Buffalo City Mission, the UB clinic has secured $9.3 million in financing for creation of a new 60-unit Cornerstone Manor, where over-crowding is a recurring problem. What's more, demolishing the outdated 60-unit facility — located within the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs continued growth of Buffalo's emerging life-sciences industry, Hezel points out.

"This project removes an obstacle to economic development in Buffalo, while providing something better for Cornerstone Manor and Buffalo City Mission," he says.

" Getting approval for this project involved a fairly sophisticated bit of persuasion," says Hezel, who personally pitched the project to state housing agencies in Albany. "It's taken a couple of years to put all the pieces together and convince the political power in Western New York and Albany that this should be a priority."

That project reflects the clinic's aptitude for more and more interesting and difficult projects, Hezel says. "And it's a great teaching event for students."

For their part, UB Law students are attracted to the clinic's work for practical and philosophical reasons. Some students like E.J. Snyder, now a third-year student, mainly enjoy the hands-on, problem-solving challenges of assembling complex financing and development packages, while other students like Melinda Grabowski '95 and Lisa Goodberry, a former social worker who is a third-year student, also enjoy helping people reach their goals.

"I'm thinking about affordable housing as a career," says Grabowski, who was senior editor of the Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law. "I like figuring out ways for people to be able to afford what they envision as their goal."

"Adil Goodberry, "I love the dynamics of it. I was searching for something in law that would make a difference in people's lives."

Because of the UB clinic's national reputation, many UB law graduates move easily into careers in affordable-housing practice with law firms and real estate development firms, or remain in Buffalo to serve the state and around the country. UB Law School graduate Julia Soto, for example, went to work for New York City's Nixon Peabody LLP, which has a large national affordable-housing practice, representing nonprofits, developers and investors.

"For me, studying law was only an option if I could use it to improve the status quo. It's a more basic need. If people can afford safe and sanitary housing, many other aspects of their lives can improve too. It's a building block to a better life, a better society," she says. "The UB clinic may expand from affordable housing to other types of community development projects, Hezel says. His and students are investigating development of a free medical center on Buffalo's East Side."

Julia A. Soto '95, who helped initiate the YWCA project. "I had the pleasure of assembling complex financing packages offered at the current 60-unit Cornerstone Manor, where overcrowding is a recurring problem. What's more, demolishing the outdated 60-unit facility — located within the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs continued growth of Buffalo's emerging life-sciences industry, Hezel points out. "This project removes an obstacle to economic development in Buffalo, while providing something better for Cornerstone Manor and Buffalo City Mission," he says. "Getting approval for this project involved a fairly sophisticated bit of persuasion," says Hezel, who personally pitched the project to state housing agencies in Albany. "It's taken a couple of years to put all the pieces together and convince the political power in Western New York and Albany that this should be a priority."

That project reflects the clinic's aptitude for more and more interesting and difficult projects, Hezel says. "And it's a great teaching event for students."

For their part, UB Law students are attracted to the clinic's work for practical and philosophical reasons. Some students like E.J. Snyder, now a third-year student, mainly enjoy the hands-on, problem-solving challenges of assembling complex financing and development packages, while other students like Melinda Grabowski '95 and Lisa Goodberry, a former social worker who is a third-year student, also enjoy helping people reach their goals.

"I'm thinking about affordable housing as a career," says Grabowski, who was senior editor of the Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law. "I like figuring out ways for people to be able to afford what they envision as their goal."

"Adil Goodberry, "I love the dynamics of it. I was searching for something in law that would make a difference in people's lives."

Because of the UB clinic's national reputation, many UB law graduates move easily into careers in affordable-housing practice with law firms and real estate development firms, or remain in Buffalo to serve the state and around the country. UB Law School graduate Julia Soto, for example, went to work for New York City's Nixon Peabody LLP, which has a large national affordable-housing practice, representing nonprofits, developers and investors.

"For me, studying law was only an option if I could use it to improve the status quo. It's a more basic need. If people can afford safe and sanitary housing, many other aspects of their lives can improve too. It's a building block to a better life, a better society," she says. "The UB clinic may expand from affordable housing to other types of community development projects, Hezel says. His and students are investigating development of a free medical center on Buffalo's East Side."

Julia A. Soto '95, who helped initiate the YWCA project. "I had the pleasure of assembling complex financing packages offered at the current 60-unit Cornerstone Manor, where overcrowding is a recurring problem. What's more, demolishing the outdated 60-unit facility — located within the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs continued growth of Buffalo's emerging life-sciences industry, Hezel points out. "This project removes an obstacle to economic development in Buffalo, while providing something better for Cornerstone Manor and Buffalo City Mission," he says. "Getting approval for this project involved a fairly sophisticated bit of persuasion," says Hezel, who personally pitched the project to state housing agencies in Albany. "It's taken a couple of years to put all the pieces together and convince the political power in Western New York and Albany that this should be a priority."

That project reflects the clinic's aptitude for more and more interesting and difficult projects, Hezel says. "And it's a great teaching event for students."

For their part, UB Law students are attracted to the clinic's work for practical and philosophical reasons. Some students like E.J. Snyder, now a third-year student, mainly enjoy the hands-on, problem-solving challenges of assembling complex financing and development packages, while other students like Melinda Grabowski '95 and Lisa Goodberry, a former social worker who is a third-year student, also enjoy helping people reach their goals.

"I'm thinking about affordable housing as a career," says Grabowski, who was senior editor of the Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law. "I like figuring out ways for people to be able to afford what they envision as their goal."

"Adil Goodberry, "I love the dynamics of it. I was searching for something in law that would make a difference in people's lives."

Because of the UB clinic's national reputation, many UB law graduates move easily into careers in affordable-housing practice with law firms and real estate development firms, or remain in Buffalo to serve the state and around the country. UB Law School graduate Julia Soto, for example, went to work for New York City's Nixon Peabody LLP, which has a large national affordable-housing practice, representing nonprofits, developers and investors.

"For me, studying law was only an option if I could use it to improve the status quo. It's a more basic need. If people can afford safe and sanitary housing, many other aspects of their lives can improve too. It's a building block to a better life, a better society," she says. "The UB clinic may expand from affordable housing to other types of community development projects, Hezel says. His and students are investigating development of a free medical center on Buffalo's East Side."
Clinic helps people secure housing, independence

In a run-down section of city street in Niagara Falls, N.Y. — flanked by abandoned homes and across from a shuttered hospital — a dilapidated old dormitory for nurses is getting a new start as transitional housing for homeless families with children.

The building’s rehabilitation is being made possible, in large measure, by the efforts of University at Buffalo law students attracted to an unglamorous, roll-up-your-sleeves niche of law practice known as affordable housing, which focuses on helping nonprofit and community organizations obtain financing to create low-income and special-needs housing.

“Affordable housing is for students looking for more substantial elements of law beyond the flash of litigation,” explains law professor George W. Hezel, director of the UB Law School’s Affordable Housing Clinic. “These students learn to negotiate sensitive issues, plan and advocate for people, which is really 90 percent of what lawyers do — litigation lawyers don’t spend all their time litigating.”

The refurbished four-story building, operated in part by the YWCA of Niagara, brings in $150,000 a month from affordable housing financing secured by students and faculty members through UB’s Affordable Housing Clinic, says Hezel, who has run the clinic for 17 years.

“The project of this work was securing about $1 million in historic preservation tax credits,” Hezel explains. “Finding that million paid for amenities that the state Homeless Housing and Assistance Program and Division of Housing were reluctant to pay for. It lessened their burden and made the project doable.”

In addition to one-, two- and three-bedroom suites, the new facility contains a daycare center and a culinary-arts training center, which prepares women for jobs in restaurants around in and around Niagara Falls, located just a few blocks from the facility.

“The building site for Cornerstone Manor Transitional Housing facility, a new three-story facility will replace and significantly expand the short-term transitional housing center on the edge of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in星星 tomega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in星星 tomega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.

Today there are about two dozen affordable-housing clinics in operation nationwide, but in the late 1980s at UB, the clinic had to begin in stars to mega Medical Campus — will open the door to future development on the medical campus, which, in turn, spurs economic development in Buffalo, and the regional economy as well,” says Paul Solmon, director of clinical studies at the UB Law School.