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Preserving America's Heritage

ACHP Honors Middle Way House, Inc., Department of Housing and Urban Development, for Renovating Historic Bottling Plant in Bloomington, Indiana

Washington, DC- Middle Way House, Inc., its New Wings Community Partnership, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) received the Chairman's Award for Achievement in Historic Preservation at the summer business meeting of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) today.

"Middle Way House, HUD, and the many people and organizations that made the New Wings Community Partnership a success did a remarkable job of preserving a historic property, converting it to new uses to serve community needs, and helping revitalize part of Bloomington, Indiana in the process," said Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA, ACHP chairman. "It's a great model of how to accomplish multiple goals through building an inclusive partnership and creating strong local community support."

The Coca-Cola Bottling Plant at 318 South Washington Street in Bloomington was constructed in 1924. Substantially upgraded in 1937, the building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. The structure was past its prime when Coca-Cola abandoned the building in the 1980s. The building and its surrounding area had slowly deteriorated over many years. Attempts to resuscitate and put the structure to good use had been made, but failed.

Ultimately, in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, the future of the Coca-Cola plant was determined. Toby Strout, executive director of Middle Way House, Inc., with Cynthia Brubaker, who served as project development coordinator through the six years the project took, negotiated a creative real estate deal allowing the improvements to commence. Middle Way House provides victims of domestic abuse with meaningful alternatives to living with violence and provides an emergency response and follow-up services to rape and sexual assault survivors.

Nancy Hiestand, Bloomington's Program Manager for Historic Preservation, noted that halting the deterioration of the area which includes the plant and restoring it was vital to the city and a priority for local and state governments.

HUD provided early funding through its Community Development Block Grants program, administered in Indiana by the Housing and Community Development Authority. Funding programs from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service also assisted.

Fund-raising was widespread. The New Wings Community Partnership, which solicited multi-year commitments from local donors, was chaired by Laurie Burns McRobbie, Indiana University's First Lady as well as a faculty member.

Notable to the success of the effort was a \$400,000 challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation and a \$250,000 challenge grant from the Sunshine Lady Foundation. The fund-raising led to rehabilitation of

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the bottling plant and construction of an adjacent compatible contemporary structure. Completed in the summer of 2010, the complex houses the non-profit's headquarters, crisis intervention services, emergency shelter, personal and legal advocacy programs, child care, six units of permanent, affordable housing, and a commercial kitchen business.

Also involved in funding were:

- Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis (Affordable Housing Program Award)
- Indiana Historic Preservation Fund
- Indiana Department of Energy Alternative Energy Program Grant
- Indiana Landmarks
- City of Bloomington HOME funds
- City of Bloomington Mayor's Office Business Incentive Investment Grant
- Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association
- Kresge Foundation Green Building Initiative Grant
- Bloomington Housing Trust Fund low interest loan
- local bank consortium low interest loan
- private gifts of cash and in-kind donations.

The project incorporated alternative energy systems such as solar voltaic and thermal mechanisms, and rainwater and chiller condensation collection for rooftop garden irrigation. It tapped a spring running under—and formerly, sometimes through—the building to provide irrigation water. These systems allowed the production and periphery gardens to go through the drought of 2012 without recourse to city water.

“Saving a historic structure, using it to fulfill essential community needs, helping revitalize an important cityscape, and creating an innovative community partnership to get it all done right – each of those are worthy outcomes considered individually,” said Clement A. Price, Ph.D., ACHP vice chairman. “Putting them all together amounts to a grand slam for historic preservation, and gave us a most deserving recipient for the Chairman’s Award for Achievement in Historic Preservation.”

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Note to editors: For more detailed information on the New Wings Community Partnership and Middle Way House, Inc., please contact Ms. Toby Strout at 812-333-7404 or via e-mail at tobystrout@middlewayhouse.org.