

Coordinating Preservation Through an Interagency Working Group

Effective preservation of affordable housing requires more than isolated programs or ad hoc policy fixes. It depends on durable infrastructure: dedicated staffing, formal inter-government agency coordination, and partnerships with non-governmental stakeholders. Jurisdictions (whether at the city, county, or state level) that achieve strong preservation outcomes build internal capacity and establish clear mechanisms for collaboration. With multiple government agencies holding responsibility for housing production, planning, economic development, tenant protections, compliance, and financing, coordinated action is therefore essential.

ACHIEVING SUCCESS

The communities featured in this brief have proven preservation success and share a common feature: an inter-agency working group. These working groups focus on the preservation of existing affordable housing, align goals, share data, and coordinate interventions. These groups help agencies:

1. Share information and improve communication so no at-risk property is overlooked.
2. Establish a unified preservation strategy that aligns priorities and coordinates resources across agencies and with external partners.
3. Increase public sector capacity by leveraging collective expertise to accelerate transactions and respond proactively to at-risk properties.

Inter-agency preservation working groups can provide a structured forum for information sharing and consensus building, align agency preservation goals into a coordinated strategy communicated consistently to external stakeholders in addition to expanding the public sector's capacity to fund and monitor subsidized and unsubsidized affordable housing.

CONVENING STAKEHOLDERS

An effective working group should include public entities responsible for the production and preservation of affordable housing, in addition to those administering state and federal housing initiatives. Beyond convening meetings, the group requires clear processes for setting agendas, sharing updates, and assigning responsibility for follow through. Most preservation-focused inter-agency working groups designate a staff member or a small team to coordinate the essential preservation work across agencies. This role ensures consistent engagement with property owners, supports long-term strategy development, and maintains shared tools such as property databases.

The [Illinois Interagency Council](#) is facilitated and convened by The Preservation Compact through Community Investment Corporation (CIC). The Council, formed in 2009, uses data and community input to identify at-risk properties, coordinate strategies, and engage owners. Over fifteen years, this collaboration helped preserve 64 properties and over 7,500 affordable units, while also building trust and strengthening the relationships that enhance cooperation among stakeholders.

Council members across the city, county, and state include:

- The Preservation Compact
- Community Investment Corporation (a local Community Development Finance Institution)
- City of Chicago Office of Housing
- Chicago Housing Authority
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regional office
- Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA)
- Local housing authorities
- Tenant Advocates

The Council focuses primarily on properties with Project-Based Section 8 contracts and those carrying multiple public subsidies. This effort has since grown to encompass the [Portfolio Health Initiative](#), a collaborative project with the Illinois Housing Council (IHC) launched in 2024, to assess the financial and operational health of Illinois' government-assisted housing and the broader subsidized housing portfolio.

SPEARHEADING THE WORKING GROUPS

Both Washington, D.C. and Colorado employ a Housing Preservation Officer and Preservation Program Manager, respectively. It is the role of these individuals to build relationships with owners, investors, and advocates, coordinate and develop long-term strategies with stakeholders, and provide financing guidance and technical assistance. Since 2018, the D.C. Housing Preservation Officer, itself a role that came out of the 2015 Housing Preservation Strike Force, has led the implementation of a District Right of First Refusal regulation, the creation of a Small Buildings Preservation Program, and the establishment of the Housing Preservation Fund to support ongoing preservation efforts in the District.

DEFINING PRESERVATION

With a list of key government agency staff and preservation staff or team identified, a clear definition of “preservation” and “at-risk” properties should be the first step of any effective preservation strategy. The inter-agency preservation working group can then develop a preservation framework or priority matrix that will help align diverse agency goals and provide a transparent tool for communicating funding priorities to partners.

The next NHT Update will delve into the mechanics and examples of a preservation framework and priority matrix.

IDENTIFYING PRIORITY AREAS

With these tools, the interagency preservation group may also have an opportunity to determine priority areas, including neighborhoods facing displacement pressures or properties with high preservation value relative to cost. A considered approach is necessary to set strategic and measurable goals. Setting tangible goals helps focus resources, improve public accountability, and guide decisions about which preservation projects need immediate investment. However, they must be done in conjunction and partnership with external partners. Together, these will form a preservation strategy that will offer a jurisdiction clarity about where to focus limited public resources.

The **Colorado Housing Preservation Network**, co-led by the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) and Enterprise Community Partners, brings together state, federal, and local agencies alongside non-profit and mission-driven partners to coordinate strategies for at-risk affordable housing properties. Since its establishment in 2016, the Network has served as a central hub for preservation efforts across the state. In its first year alone, it helped preserve nearly 5,000 affordable apartments—an early demonstration of what is possible through intentional, cross-agency collaboration.

The Network reflects a diverse and highly coordinated coalition, including:

- Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA)
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs – Division of Housing (DOH)
- City and County of Denver Department of Housing Stability (HOST)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT)
- Impact Development Fund
- Weave Social Impact
- Mercy Community Capital
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Local governments including the City and County of Denver, Adams County, and the City of Colorado Springs
- Local housing authorities and additional regional partners

The Network held its first annual Preservation Summit in 2024 and is entering a new phase of activation and expansion by strengthening partnerships, advancing data-driven tools, and ensuring that at-risk affordable housing remains a priority across all levels of government.

EXPANDING THE WORKING GROUP

As the group matures, the inter-agency preservation working group should broaden engagement to include owners, non-profit and for-profit developers, funders, housing advocates, and tenant rights organizations. Regular outreach to owners helps clarify intent, identify capital needs, and determine whether properties may be candidates for preservation-minded acquisition. Models such as Massachusetts' Interagency Working Group and Preservation Advisory Committee, Oregon's Housing Preservation Project, and the D.C.

Preservation Network demonstrate the value of integrating public and private partners in coordinated preservation efforts.

CONCLUSION

While building public capacity and aligning governmental priorities is a critical initial step, preserving the affordable housing stock requires partnering with private stakeholders including: affordable housing owners, for-profit and non-profit real estate developers, housing advocates, and tenants' rights groups. The institutional commitment to preservation developed by an inter-agency preservation working group needs to be supplemented by an equal commitment to preservation outside of the government. By establishing a clear process for identifying and engaging at-risk properties, aligning agency priorities, and collaborating with private stakeholders, an inter-agency preservation working group can proactively protect and expand a community's affordable housing stock.

The Washington D.C. Preservation Network is co-facilitated and co-convened by Urban Institute's Urban-Greater DC initiative and The Coalition (formerly the Coalition for Nonprofit and Economic Development). It was formed in 2007, to offer a forum for District housing agencies, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, community-based organizations, and affordable housing developers to coordinate and plan their efforts to preserve existing affordable housing, especially at-risk properties.

The Network membership includes:

- The Urban Institute
- The Coalition
- District Housing Agencies, including the D.C. Housing Finance Agency, Department of Housing and Community Development, and D.C. Housing Authority.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Local Community Based Organizations
- Local Affordable Housing Developers, Owners, and Operators.

In 2016, the Network released the [Preservation Catalogue](#); a database on assisted multifamily properties at or below 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). Network members now meet monthly to assess the status of the District's housing portfolio, based on data in the catalogue. Network members have been effective in organizing tenants, engaging with owners, and developing strategies to preserve these affordable homes.