



*NEWS FROM*  
**PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY**

---

**CONTACT:** Mark Gomez 238-7314

**MEDIA ADVISORY**  
**Monday, November 15, 2004**  
**For Immediate Release**

**OAKLAND AND HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOUSING  
WIN NATIONAL 2004 PHOENIX AWARD**

**OAKLAND, CA** – The City of Oakland's Habitat for Humanity homeownership project at the corner of Fruitvale Avenue and Davis Street has won the national Community Impact Phoenix Award™ for excellence in redeveloping a “brownfield”, one of just three recipients nation-wide. The City of Oakland and East Bay Habitat for Humanity were honored with the award during the EPA's *Brownfields 2004* national conference in St. Louis, Missouri, September 20-22, 2004. The Oakland City Council will recognize their achievement with a formal Resolution on Tuesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> in City Hall's Council Chambers between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Oakland City Hall is located at One Frank H. Ogawa Plaza.

“We are proud of the dedicated city employees who joined with Habitat for Humanity and the new homeowners to develop this nationally recognized project,” said Council President Ignacio De La Fuente who sponsored the City Council Resolution. “These new homes prove we can take care of our environment and revitalize neighborhoods at the same time.”

The four new, single-family homes dramatically announce the end to a 25-year battle with blight, subsurface contamination and regulatory confusion. Thanks in large part to the coordinated efforts of the City of Oakland and Habitat for Humanity— buoyed by private donations and assistance from other entities ranging from U.S. EPA to Alameda County— four deserving families now own resource-conscious, cost-efficient homes in the heart of Oakland's mixed-use Fruitvale neighborhood.

## FACT SHEET

In 1978, the service station that had operated at the corner of Fruitvale Avenue and Davis Street for over 30 years quietly closed. Over the next five years, this 0.31 acre lot became a blight on the neighborhood. In reaction, the City of Oakland purchased the property in 1983, with the intent of facilitating its eventual reuse. At this time, little was understood of the myriad state and federal environmental laws that had recently been enacted, and no environmental due diligence was performed.

Over the next ten years, as different ideas for the redevelopment of the property were proposed and considered, the City periodically rented out the site for use as a produce stand and Christmas tree sales lot. By 1993, the property had been earmarked for housing, and the City began to prepare the site for redevelopment and undertook a subsurface investigation.

The results of the subsurface investigation identified significant soil and groundwater contamination at the site. Given a difficult regulatory environment in which very aggressive and expensive remediation was often required for any brownfields site targeted for redevelopment, the City was forced to back away from its plans for housing and fenced off the property.

Meanwhile, beginning in 1995, the City's Environmental Services Division embarked on a long-term project to establish Oakland-specific risk-based standards and institutional controls, with the intent of facilitating the reuse of brownfields such as the one at Fruitvale and Davis. By 1998, draft city-wide cleanup levels had been developed, reviewed by the local environmental regulators, and put into practice at select sites. The City soon decided to apply these cleanup standards at the Fruitvale and Davis Street site.

Working together with Alameda County Environmental Health, the regulator for the site, areas of concern were quickly established. The City determined that actual exposure risk was limited to a small amount of lead-contaminated surface soils, which were promptly removed. In addition, mitigation measures were taken to reduce petroleum contamination in groundwater. Cleanup costs, which had been estimated to be prohibitive of redevelopment just a few years back, were now quite small and easily absorbed.

At about this time, the City and Habitat for Humanity discovered that they had a mutual desire to redevelop the site for affordable housing. Habitat for Humanity had an excellent idea for the creation of four single-family homes at the site.

With regulatory clearance now in hand, East Bay Habitat for Humanity undertook its first "green building" project. All construction employed "green building" practices, including the use of recycled building materials, passive and active solar energy features, and recycling of 90 percent of construction waste. The new homes also used 30 percent less lumber. Now, these features will be replicated at future Habitat for Humanity projects in the Bay Area.

Ten adults and 13 children now call the corner of Fruitvale Avenue and Davis Street home. Living in the heart of a mixed-use neighborhood, they are within walking distance of many goods and services provided by local businesses. Their mortgage payments to Habitat for Humanity are being reinvested to help fund the construction of future, similar projects around Oakland.

Stephen Johnson, Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Stephen Mahfood, Director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, co-hosted the award ceremony at the environmental conference with over 4,000 registrants.

The 2004 Phoenix Award winners represent outstanding brownfield projects from each of the 10 US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regions and the International community. This year, three Community Impact Award winners were honored. The 2004 Community Impact winners are:

- Oakland Habitat for Humanity Housing, Oakland, California
- The Home of the Innocents, Louisville, Kentucky
- Battle Monument Area Brownfields Redevelopment Project, Trenton, New Jersey

Created in 1997, this prestigious award honors individuals and groups who are working to solve the critical environmental challenge of transforming abandoned industrial areas into productive new uses. The Phoenix Awards™ are widely recognized as the outstanding award for achievement of excellence in Brownfield redevelopment, and often are called “the Brownfields equivalent of Hollywood’s Oscar.”

The awards are open to any individual, group, company, organization, government body or agency. Criteria for The Phoenix Awards™ focus on the magnitude of the project, innovative techniques, solutions to regulatory issues, and impact upon the community. A panel of environmental professionals and business, academic and government leaders select the winners.

The Phoenix Awards™ were created and are coordinated by Denise K. Chamberlain, Esq., a Brownfields expert, and are affiliated with The Phoenix Awards Institute, Inc., an environmental and community service non-profit, located in Harrisburg, PA. The Executive Committee members include: Denise K. Chamberlain, ARCADIS G&M Inc., Phoenix Executive Committee Chair; Dennis Alvord, US EDA; Charlie Bartsch, Northeast Midwest Institute; Edgar Berkey, Concurrent Technology Corporation; Thomas Fidler, PA DEP, Linda Garczynski, US EPA; Don Green, US HUD; Ken Komoroski, Kirkpatrick & Lockhart; Howard McClintic, CTC Foundation; Terri Smith, Environmental Liability Management, Inc.; James P. Snyder, ARCADIS G&M Inc.; and Sharon Williams, PA DEP. Public and private sector sponsors support the program, including ALCOA, Koppers Inc., Kirkpatrick & Lockhart, CTC Foundation and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

To learn more information about The Phoenix Awards™, visit [www.phoenixawards.org](http://www.phoenixawards.org).

###