



**FROM THE ARCHIVES**

## Neighbors Challenge Proposed Rowhouse

Boise group wants the Housing Our Families development stopped

By **Tonya Y. Parker**  
Of *The Skanner News*

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A group of Boise neighborhood residents and business owners wants to block construction of low-income rowhouses by a community development corporation because they say it can't manage what it already has.

Plus, they think the area is too crammed with subsidized housing and is bearing more than its share for the city. They also accuse Housing Our Families of being deceptive for originally telling them the units would rent at market rate. The community development corporation plans to build 10 units on North Fargo Street and Kerby Avenue for families earning 60 percent of median income, or what's affordable to a single-parent bank teller or teacher's assistant, for instance. According to Chris Brown, Boise Neighborhood Association cochair, at least four different organizations are managing or building low-income housing projects in the area. "If these are so great, why don't we share the wealth?" he said. "That's the ugly secret people don't want to talk about."

To speak out against the project, the group of about 20, which includes neighborhood association and Mississippi Avenue Target Area steering committee members, has launched a petition drive and letter-writing

campaign. They say because Housing Our Families can't seem to keep a lid on problems such as drug dealing around its Betty Campbell apartment building on North Mississippi Avenue and Shaver Street, it doesn't need another to manage.

They list what they considered mismanagement, including failing to screen potential tenants properly, lack of security around the building and unresponsiveness to neighbors' complaints.

Their efforts have proved successful. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development sent Steve Rudman, the city's HUD director, a letter Jan. 19 stating his bureau must respond in writing to neighbors' complaints within 15 workdays if the Fargo Street project plans to use federal money.

The city also has put its funding for the project on hold temporarily, said Robin Boyce, Housing Development Financing section manager for the Portland Development Commission.

She said the agency is offering Housing Our Families a low-interest loan and deferred-interest-payment loan of \$361,000 from federal funds. PDC also wants to help the organization assess its operations and practices, she said.

"We continue to have money set aside for that project," Boyce said. But "we will not proceed towards a legally binding agreement until we're comfortable the issues



The housing was built despite protests that there was too much affordable housing.

have been resolved."

The two sides possibly could come together soon to talk and hammer out a good neighbor agreement, said Terrell Garrett, Mississippi Avenue Target Area steering committee cochair and a property owner across the street from the building. "We want to discuss some issues and have no basic, preconceived notions."

Barbara Willer, Housing Our Families interim executive director, said she is not

against brokering a good neighbor agreement and welcomes the chance to talk. "I'm a believer that when people have good communication and then they have to come to each other with something, things don't fall apart."

Although Willer doesn't deny a longtime tenant recently was evicted from the building because of drug-related problems, she said the organization isn't turning a deaf ear.

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