

NLIHC's Preservation Catalog Project

*Recapping Year Two and
Looking Forward to Year Three*

October 2007

Project Overview

I. Year One Recap

- Gained familiarity with federal programs and data
- Surveyed state efforts at data collection
- Washington, DC case study
- Florida case study
- Developed criteria for a Preservation Catalog: comprehensive; integrated; locally monitored; and tailored to preservation activities

II. Year Two Accomplishments

- Continued to identify similar efforts at data collection and potential partners in an effort to create a national Preservation Catalog
- Shared findings with groups pursuing similar work
- Broadened the scope of the original case studies and identified two additional states offering distinct research opportunities
- Fleshed out the idea of a Project Monitor network based on case study experiences

Identified similar data collection efforts and potential partners in a national effort.

Memo and research note (forthcoming)

- Federal sources found lacking
- Nonprofits adding value to national data are few
- National/Grassroots data collection capacity and dissemination opportunities identified

Shared findings with groups pursuing similar work.

www.PreservationCatalog.org

- Central repository for disseminating NLIHC's work on this grant

Data-related hurdles to a Preservation Catalog

- Text initially submitted to the nascent Data Shop department of HUD's *Cityscape*
- Currently available at www.PreservationCatalog.org

Advisory role on FHFC/Shimberg Center grant work

- Actively contributed to the direction of the research
- Attended the national conference in Ft. Lauderdale
- Continuing to shape strategy for implementing a national preservation data infrastructure

Case study cross-pollination

- Shared findings and best practices between and among case study participants

Broadened the scope of the original case studies.

Proposing a Network of Project Monitors in Florida and DC.

- In Florida, collaborate with the Shimberg Center in establishing a network of Project Monitors to engage with their data. NLIHC's primary interest would be in investigating how the community of advocates would respond to such a system and in learning how effective such a network would be at identifying and preserving at-risk properties.
- In DC, become familiar with the nonprofit and government agencies most involved in preservation efforts and propose a similar system of project monitoring. NLIHC and NeighborhoodInfo DC would assume responsibility for database maintenance.

Identified two additional states offering distinct research opportunities.

North Carolina

- In North Carolina, NLIHC found an opportunity to work with Socialserve.com. Thanks to a contract with the NCHFA, Socialserve.com agreed to manage the data and oversee communication with the Project Monitors we identify in the state.

Washington State

- The state has a reputation for having an active community of housing advocates, and NLIHC has a strong state partner (WLIHA) with a history of data collection and an interest in the project. Like in DC, NLIHC would assume responsibility for data collection, maintenance, and Project Monitor oversight, but from a much greater distance.

Florida

- Project Overview
 - NLIHC is actively recruiting Project Monitors to engage with the Assisted Housing Inventory hosted by the Shimberg Center. We are collaborating on the design of an online system for receiving Project Monitor comments and increasing awareness of projects identified as at-risk.
- Data Collection
 - NLIHC provided the Shimberg Center with data on HOME projects from HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development.
- Outreach
 - 30 attendees participated in the initial Project Monitor meeting in May.
 - 11 telephone interviews with stakeholders in Florida.
 - 80 contacts in the state associated with this project.
 - The Shimberg Center unveiled its proposed online comment form in August.
 - Staffed an exhibit table at the Florida Housing Coalition conference.
 - Introduced the project at the Florida Alliance of CDCs fall meeting.

Washington, DC

- Project Overview
 - NLIHC has assumed the roles of national advocate and local participant. With NeighborhoodInfo DC, NLIHC is the primary non-governmental force behind database development and its linkage to preservation efforts.
- Data Collection
 - 85-page DC Preservation Catalog was updated in April and again in July. It is available, along with ward maps, at www.PreservationCatalog.org.
- Outreach
 - Two very fruitful meetings with 15-20 stakeholders.
 - Strong involvement from the technical assistance/organizer community.
 - 40 contacts, including partners and DC employees
 - Actively contributing to and shaping several legislative and mayoral efforts related to affordable housing data collection and monitoring that are currently underway.

North Carolina

- Project Overview
 - NLIHC has partnered with Socialserve.com to produce and host an online database of subsidized housing in the state and to create a system for Project Monitor comments and at-risk notification.
- Data Collection
 - NLIHC integrated HUD datasets with files received from NCHFA to create a Preservation Catalog of over 2,500 subsidized projects. Socialserve.com is responsible for disseminating the data online.
- Outreach
 - Seven phone calls were required to coordinate the responsibilities of NLIHC, Socialserve.com, NCHFA, and the North Carolina Housing Coalition.
 - Excluding partners, 25 people participated in the initial Preservation Catalog/Project Monitor meeting in July.

Washington State

- Project Overview
 - NLIHC's Preservation Catalog/Project Monitor proposal was initially met with a cool reception, as advocates saw little that the project could add to preservation efforts in the state. Advocates agreed that a comprehensive, integrated database would be valuable but questioned NLIHC's involvement.
- Data Collection
 - NLIHC integrated HUD datasets with files received from the Dept. of Community, Trade & Economic Development (CTED) to create a Preservation Catalog of 1,747 projects (available at www.PreservationCatalog.org).
- Outreach
 - Excluding partners, 10 housing advocates attended the initial Preservation Catalog/Project Monitor meeting in May. Contacts number 18 individuals.
 - NLIHC has conducted 10 phone interviews since May to better define its role in WA.

Fleshed out the idea of a Project Monitor network based on case study experiences

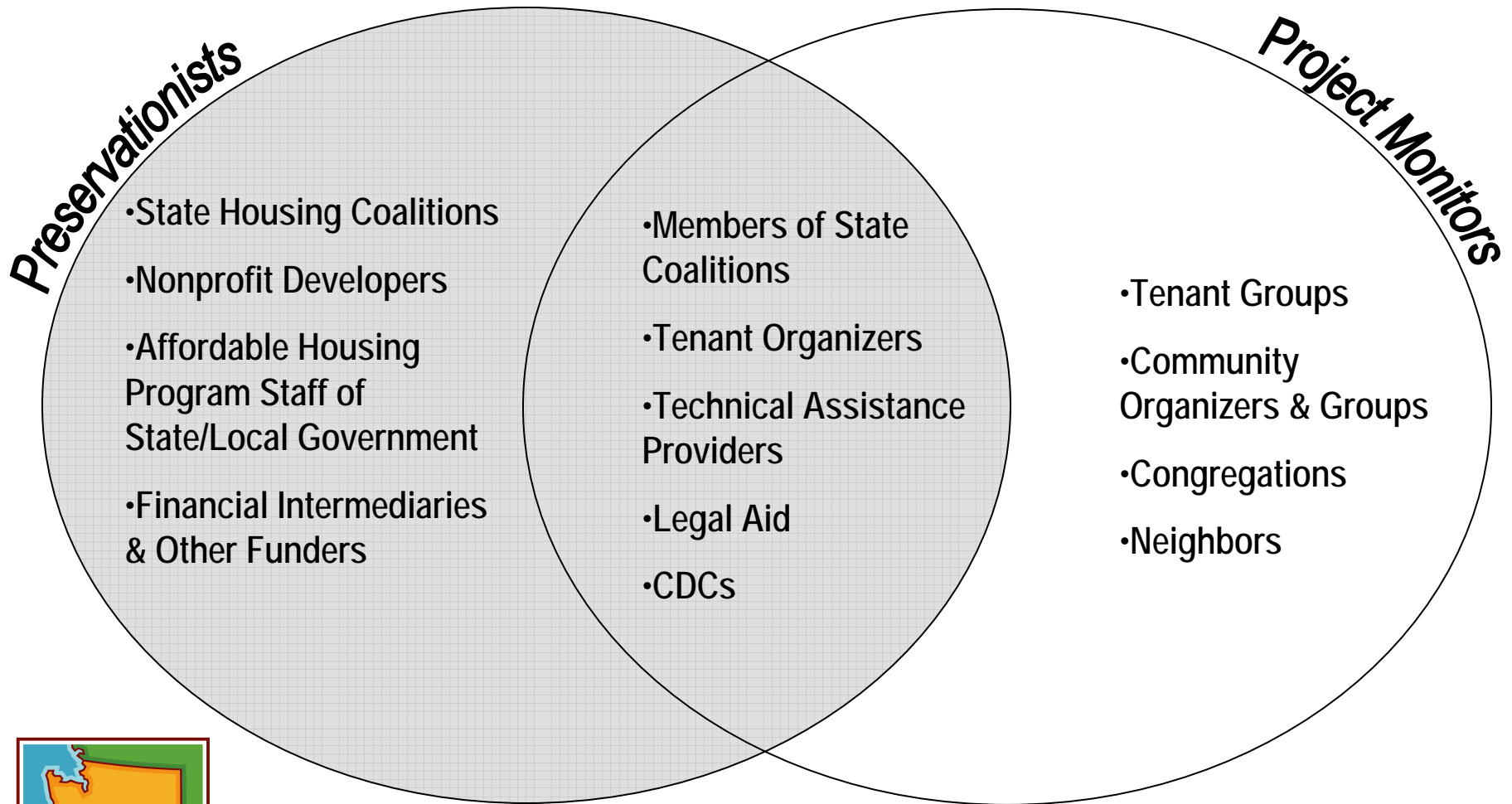
Proposed Project Monitor Activities

- Periodically review the Preservation Catalog to check on the properties in your area. Does the information look correct?
- Respond to emails (e.g., clarifying questions, at-risk alerts) from the coordinating organization when appropriate.
- Contact tenant associations and property owners/managers to learn more about the future of the building.
- Encourage other like-minded persons and organizations to join the network.
- Depending on the capacity and mission of the Project Monitor, actively participate in the preservation of threatened properties.

Project Monitor Data Collection Opportunities

- Emphasis on observable “external” changes to the assisted properties in their community, including signs of long-term vacancy or neglect, renovation, demolition, & change of ownership.
- Some may also have access to more “internal” information, including:
 - Owner’s intent to sell, opt-out of a rental assistance contract, or prepay a subsidized mortgage
 - Scores indicating property’s physical or financial status (e.g., REAC)
 - Capital needs, plans for capital improvements, and construction/rehab history

Structure of State Preservation Networks Emerging from Case Studies



Themes Emerging from Case Studies

- **Preservation Efforts**
 - There is the perception in some states that critical information is already available, either via a strong state notification law or through communication with tenant organizers.
 - Several expressed the desire to “rank” projects on their level of risk in order to prioritize preservation efforts.
 - The vulnerability of the subsidized rural stock was mentioned several times.
 - The Catalog & Monitor system could function as a coordinating force where groups are already engaged in ad hoc preservation efforts.

- **Data**
 - State/Local data are difficult to obtain and use for a variety of reasons.
 - A “one size fits all” Preservation Catalog for every state and municipality is unrealistic. Customizing it to meet local needs is important.
 - There is general agreement that a comprehensive database could fill several important research, education, and advocacy roles.

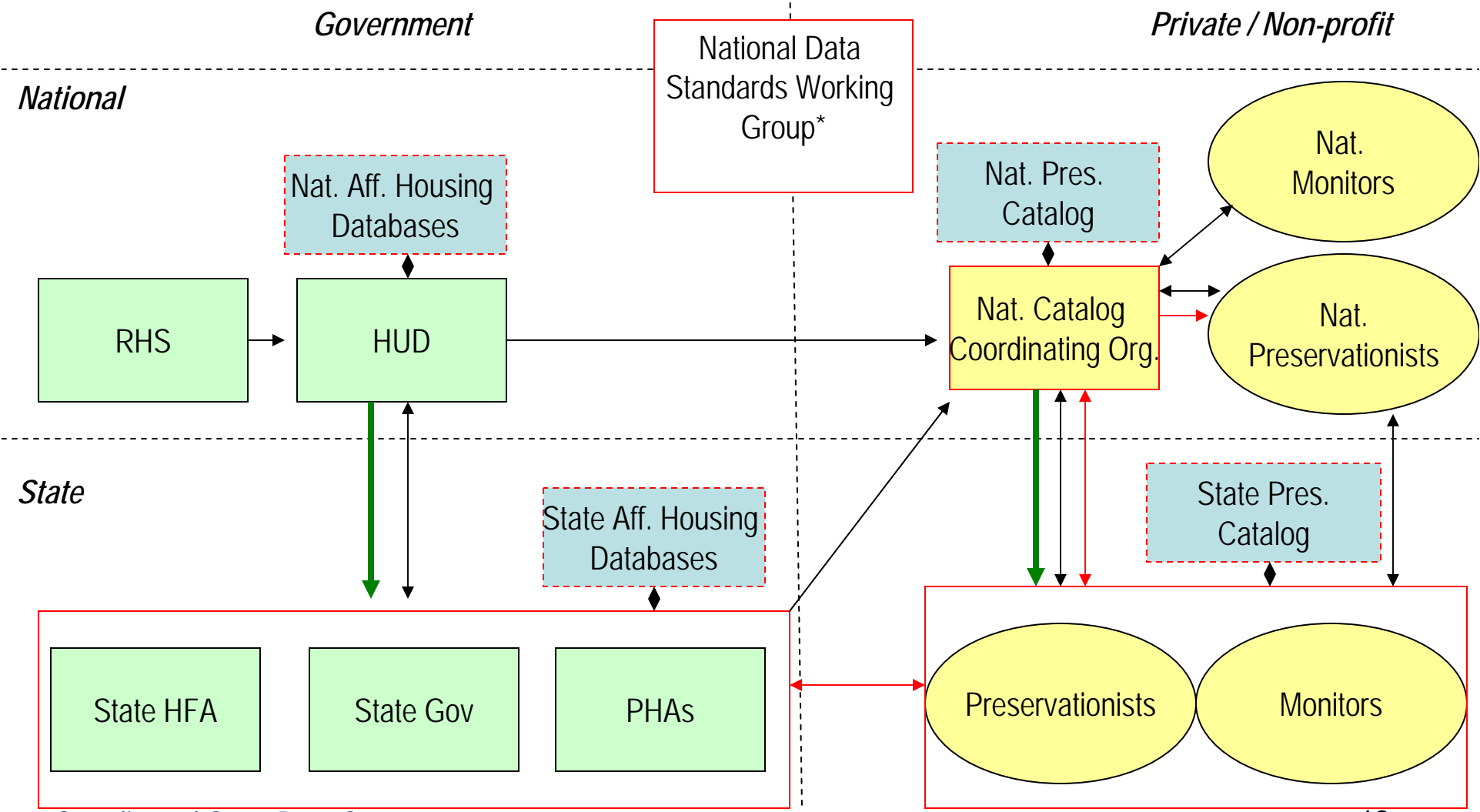
- **Project Monitoring Issues**
 - The value of potential information contributed by Project Monitors remains to be tested.
 - There is a general reluctance to monitor without an explicit preservation strategy.
 - The costs associated with monitoring projects and linking preservation data and preservationists are nontrivial.

The Preferred Path for Creating a National Preservation Catalog

- An advisory group to establish standards for preservation-related data collection.
- Legislation mandating that HUD:
 - Produce a list of all rental projects receiving at least one federal subsidy (including the USDA stock). This list, as well as all other federal data releases, should include a unique ID to assist in data integration.
 - Continue releasing program-specific updates on a regular basis.
 - Make public other data important to preservation efforts (eg, opt-outs/prepays, REAC scores).
 - Provide grants to states and localities to integrate local data with federal.
- A distributed system of sub-national data collection and national standards setting.
- National Coordinating Organization(s) to:
 - Aggregate federal and state/local datasets into a National Preservation Catalog.
 - Train state/local groups on data standards and customization.
 - Build, maintain, and fund (if necessary) a network of Project Monitors and associated organizations involved in preservation at the state level.
 - Report on temporal, geographic, and programmatic trends in the national landscape of subsidized housing.
- Issues to resolve regarding the funding for the National Coordinating Organization(s):
 - Would foundation grants be sufficient to support an undertaking of this magnitude?
 - Are there any compelling reasons *not* to pursue federal funding?
 - Could the NCO be at least partially self-sustaining by charging fees for services provided to states/localities? Or as a membership organization with associated dues?

Relationship Schematic

- Capacity grants
- Project-level data exchange
- Preservation alerts and tracking
- New organization, function, or product



Coordinated State Data Strategy

* Each of the four categories and types of organizations represented

The Need for State/Local Grants

- **Data Integration Grants** from HUD to state and local agencies and public housing authorities could potentially fund the following activities:
 - Training on national preservation data standards and database development.
 - Database development encompassing new standards.
 - Compilation and integration of historical state data into new catalog.
 - Training on data collection and maintenance to meet and maintain new standards.
- **Nonprofit Preservation Catalog Capacity Grants** are necessary to fully realize the potential for state and national catalogs. To ensure that organizations are able to use, monitor, and add value to HUD and state level data catalogs, funding may be required to:
 - Hire new staff or devote staff time to establishing a statewide preservation network and develop monitoring, risk assessment, and notification capacity.
 - Expand or sustain existing statewide preservation networks and to develop monitoring, risk assessment, and notification capacity.
 - Develop program assessment and accountability capacity.
 - Invest in equipment and software to undertake these activities.
 - Train and build capacity for Project Monitors.
 - Pressure or legislate improvements in local data.
- **Additional resources would be sought to preserve additional properties and assist tenants identified as at risk through this system.**

Year Three Goals and Activities

I. Advance the four case studies as follows:

- Florida
 - Work with the Shimberg Center to make the online component of the Project Monitor system operational.
 - “Kick off” project at the Joint Homeless and Supportive Housing conference in St. Petersburg (Oct. 25-26).
 - Continue to recruit Monitors, integrate comments, and assess system effectiveness.
- Washington, D.C.
 - Capitalize on current interest of preservation-focused groups to use the Preservation Catalog as a mechanism to coordinate efforts and increase city accountability.
 - Expand the network of Project Monitors.
 - Amend and pass proposed legislation to create citywide “affordable housing data clearinghouse” to include data and processes more suitable to preservation.
- North Carolina
 - Unveil Socialserve.com’s online interface to Project Monitors.
 - Assess system’s incorporation of Monitor feedback and its utility in preservation efforts.
 - Continue to recruit Project Monitors.
- Washington State
 - Pending an MOU, partner with WLIHA on several state-funded projects. As part of these projects, NLIHC would help develop a project-level database and assess project-level risk for preservation-focused groups in the state.

Year Three Goals and Activities *(cont'd)*

- II. **Promote preservation-minded activities, including cataloging, monitoring, and use of state and local planning processes, with NLIHC state partners and local members.**
 - Update as needed and distribute four guides to state and local planning processes (ConPlan, PHA plan, CoC, QAP) that can include preservation.
 - Exhibit on and/or present preservation activities at state and local housing conferences.
 - Survey a sample of ConPlans to determine the degree to which preservation language is included. Prepare a report based on the survey results and on follow-up interviews with advocates on best practices.
 - Communicate results of research to states.
 - Conduct outreach and education on the value of a national preservation data infrastructure.

- III. **Produce an operational proposal for a national nonprofit entity to be a clearinghouse for national and state data and a national preservation catalog.**
 - Continue to be an active member of the national data standards working group.
 - Ensure that data standards are useful for national advocacy and accountability.
 - Work with our state coalitions and local members to determine how a national nonprofit would engage with and accommodate a broad array of state level preservation networks.
 - Gain consensus with state and national partners, including members of the national data standards working group, on the organizational structure of the nonprofit side of the preservation data infrastructure.

Year Three Goals and Activities *(cont'd)*

IV. Advocate for legislation that would expand the federal government's provision of essential affordable housing data.

- Develop a legislative proposal to mandate that HUD:
 - Produce a comprehensive list of all rental housing projects receiving at least one federal subsidy (including USDA subsidized housing) and give each project a unique identifier.
 - Conduct and release program specific reports on a regular basis.
 - Make public other data that are important to preservation including, but not limited to, REAC scores, opt-outs, and pre-payments.
 - Provide grants to state and local government to support the integration of state and local data with federal data.
- In pursuit of a sound legislative proposal, convene a working group of key stakeholders with expertise in data collection and management, state and local government operations, and preservation of HUD and USDA housing programs.
 - Meet with key officials at HUD, USDA, and OMB.
 - Examine the historical explanation for the current state of data confusion on the assisted housing stock.
 - Explore similar federally mandated "catalogs" to determine models to consider and to avoid.
- Work with key Congressional offices to plan introduction of legislation in early 2009.