

# Shays, HUD secretary commend area's use of public housing funds

By Doug Dalena  
Staff Writer

**STAMFORD** — U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso Jackson toured federally funded affordable housing here and in Norwalk yesterday, but gave no indication that the Bush administration would support a large increase in funding for new projects.

Jackson swept through Fairfield County with U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Bridgeport, on a tour of affordable housing projects at 130 Main Ave. in Norwalk and 830 Clinton Ave. in Stamford.

In Stamford, the Housing Authority is building Post House, the nation's first supportive housing building financed by Hope VI funds.

Hope VI provides the seed money to replace obsolete or dilapidated public housing with mixed-style and mixed-income housing.

The 60-unit Post House, which will include a social service case manager funded by investors' purchases of affordable housing tax credits, is part of the replace-

ment housing for the Fairfield Court revitalization project.

The \$19 million Hope VI grant for Fairfield Court is paying to demolish the public apartment complex at Fairfield and Stillwater avenues and to replace the 144 units there with 55 on the same site and 89 in other locations.

Jackson and Shays were in town yesterday for the topping-off ceremony for the six-story Post House, which will house 48 residents moving from Fairfield Court and 12 new tenants.

Jackson commended Stamford for managing its Hope VI projects, which also include the replacement of the Southfield Village housing towers with the Southwood Square housing complex. He also used the occasion to give Shays an early campaign boost.

Shays has faced tough criticism for his views on the war in Iraq, and has a likely Democratic 2008 challenger in Greenwich businessman Jim Himes. Himes raised more campaign money in the last quarter than Shays did, setting up the possibility of an-

other bruising 4th District campaign.

"Seniority in Washington, D.C., has its place, because without seniority, what stands behind me, you would not see," Jackson said against a backdrop of the rapidly rising Post House. "I suggest that you keep Congressman Shays."

HUD has no large-scale program for funding new public housing or privately developed affordable housing, critics have charged, and the Bush administration has sought to decrease funding for Hope VI, citing mismanagement of funds and the inability of housing authorities across the country to get projects going.

"If everybody carried out the Hope VI like what we've seen in Stamford, I wouldn't have a problem with continuing the Hope VI program," Jackson told a crowd of about 40 public housing tenants and city and authority officials.

But Hope VI doesn't fund privately developed projects or new housing, or rehabilitation of

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Paul Desmarais/Staff photo  
U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson, center, visits an affordable housing site yesterday in Norwalk with Mayor Richard Moccia, left.

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nonfederal projects such as the authority's aging Vidal Court complex off Merrill Avenue.

Shays has bucked the administration in calling for more Hope VI funding and in co-sponsoring a bipartisan bill by U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., that would create a \$10 billion trust fund to finance new affordable housing projects and rehabilitation of privately developed affordable housing, such as the St. John Towers complex at Tresser and Washington boulevards.

comment on a bill before Congress.  
"If the legislation passes, we'll clearly implement it. That's the best answer I can give you," he said.  
Shays said he expects the bill to pass in the House, but it would need 60 votes in the Senate to cut off a Republican filibuster.  
"I think we have a good shot at 60 votes," he said.

Earlier, Jackson met with Stamford Mayor Dannel Malloy — who also attended the topping-off ceremony — to discuss other issues involving HUD.  
The two discussed negotiations with St. John Urban Development Corp. to allow the nonprofit to sell one of the three

St. John Towers in return for using the proceeds to rehabilitate the remaining two and guarantee their affordability for 30 more years after the current affordability restriction ends in 2010.  
An agreement would clear the way for Lowe Enterprises Real Estate to buy and rear down one of the three towers and develop an 835-unit, high-rise residential and retail complex on 4.5 acres between Bell Street and Tresser Boulevard. The agreement also would require Lowe to relocate the residents of the 120 units in the tower it wants to demolish.  
Malloy has been a frequent critic of HUD funding cuts for affordable housing construction and existing projects.

"They don't get enough money to maintain themselves," he said. "I think this secretary has the best interests of affordable housing at heart. The problem is the people who are producing budgets for the Bush administration don't have the best interests of housing at heart."  
During the topping-off ceremony, in which Malloy, Shays, Jackson, Fairfield Court tenants association President Bernest McLeod and several housing authority officials signed the final steel beam for the building, Malloy challenged Jackson to send more funding to the city.  
"You send me money, and we'll build more housing," he said.