



EDITORIAL

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development

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USDA: Protecting the American Dream for Rural Homeowners

By Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture

June is National Homeownership Month.

Throughout the month, USDA, which is a primary lender in rural America, will reach out to local residents to talk about how our programs can help them repair their homes, making them more energy efficient, buy an affordable residence or find safe and sanitary housing in one of the many apartment buildings we have helped to fund.

A strong Nation is made up of strong families, and safe, quality housing contributes greatly to rural Americans' quality of life. The Obama Administration is committed to bringing the necessary resources to rural America provide decent, affordable housing to those who need it.

Let me share with you some of what the Administration through USDA is doing to help protect the American Dream, and how our efforts help local communities. In Gering, Nebraska, a community of about 8,000, there was a need for new, affordable housing. A local manufacturer, Magnolia Homes, needed new orders to keep from laying local residents off. USDA worked with the manufacturer, the city, housing organizations and local lenders to fund the construction of five new homes. The manufacturer then started work on more homes. Working with our partners, USDA helped stabilize a local business, increased the tax base and provided affordable housing for families in Gering. That's the type of thing the Obama Administration is doing all across America.

USDA does more than help people buy homes: it helps owners remain in them. We have funds available to help limited-income seniors and families weatherize their homes and make needed repairs such as replacing inefficient heating systems, installing programmable thermostats, upgrading plumbing and electrical systems and improving accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

President Obama and I understand how important homeownership is to the nation's continued prosperity. Homeownership is an essential component of the American economy and a key to vibrant rural communities. We work closely with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, State housing authorities, Tribes, local organizations and a host of lenders every day to assist income-eligible residents obtain safe, sanitary, affordable housing. We want to work with you as well.

At USDA, we are proud to celebrate our accomplishments and the spirit of homeownership this month, and throughout the year. I'd encourage you to contact any of our USDA Rural Development State or area offices to talk to us about how we can help meet your needs. To find out more, visit www.rurdev.usda.gov. #

Committed to the future of rural communities.

"USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender."

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