

# CURB APPEAL CASE STUDY

## BALTIMORE, MD

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) has been an active participant in the RAD program, with 15 projects closed and an additional 12 under review. Many of these conversions include HABC's senior buildings, where, in addition to updating systems and units, HABC has made a strong effort to make the building entrances, lobbies, and other common areas both more pleasant and functional. We asked HABC to share some of their experiences at two properties – Primrose Place and Hollins House.

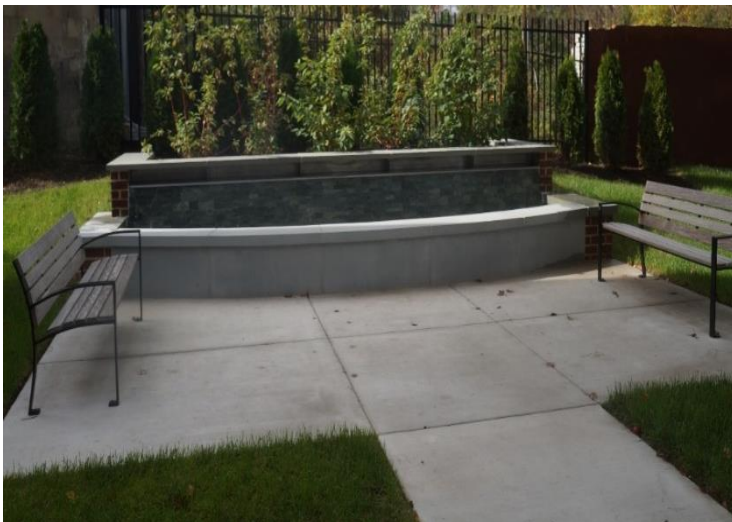
We spoke with Arlisa Anderson, RAD Coordinator for HABC.

### **Question: First, tell us a bit about the basic RAD plans for your senior buildings.**

We have a total of 17 elderly high-rise properties. By the end of this calendar year, we will have converted all of them to RAD! These are mostly properties that were built in the 1960s and 1970s and received only modest amounts of capital improvements over the years. They badly needed to be rehabbed and modernized. These were very drab structures. With such limited capital funding under the public housing program, the agency just couldn't afford to do much more than patch them up throughout the years.



**Upgraded entrance to Primrose Place**



**New Fountain at Hollins House**

**Question: How did you structure the financing?**

These are all 4% tax credit transactions, mostly with FHA insurance. By combining the three – RAD, 4% credits, and permanent mortgages – we were able to do, on average, about \$75K/unit in construction work. RAD has been just such a huge success. And the residents love the work that’s getting done.



**Shuford Homes, Lagonia  
Pergola, Grill, and Seating Behind Hollins House**

**Question: We’re glad to see you really incorporated “curb appeal” (in the broadest sense) into your designs. Can you tell us what that entailed?**

Sure! But first a short note about each property and our development partners. Primrose Place was built in 1982 in a stable community of homeowners in West Baltimore. The nine-story building has 125 dwellings units, and Community Housing Partners (CHP) was selected as HABC’s development partner. Hollins House is a nine-story property built in 1983 in the Hollins Market neighborhood of Southwest Baltimore. It contains 130 dwellings units and HABC selected Community and Preservation Development Corps (CPDC) as its development partner.



**Primrose Place new lobby seating**

What's important here is that both CHP and CPDC have been engaged in the development and operation of quality affordable housing for many years and, thus, were very insightful about how to make the buildings more attractive and purposeful. They also engaged residents in getting ideas about how to make the buildings work better and feel more like a home.

Essentially, we worked on the following design themes.

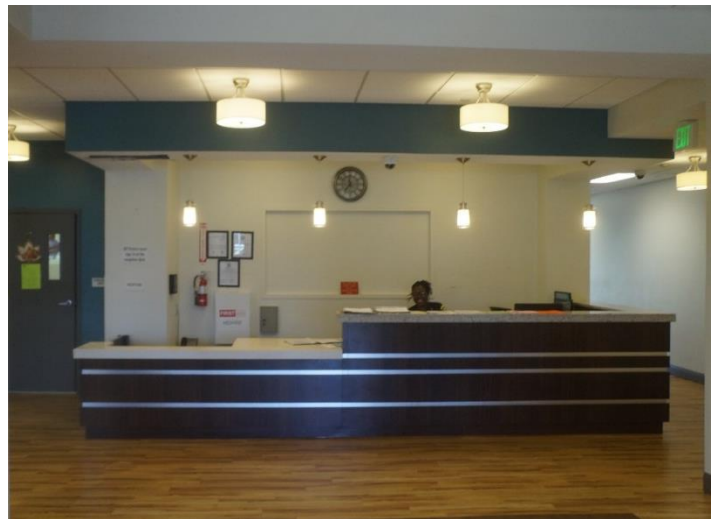
- We reconceived the lobby areas. One of the most important things we had to do was get rid of the pane of plexiglass that separated the residents from management! So, as you typically see in modern hotels or bank lobbies, the space is now much more open and accessible. We added new colors and lighting, but we also added texture with the flooring and wall finishes. It's so much more vivid and alive now!
- We created more useful common space – a place for computers and internet access; a place for reading; a place to watch TV (with a big screen!), or just a place to sit and chat with other residents.
- We updated all the lobby furniture to something both more comfortable, durable, and attractive.
- We remodeled front and rear entrances, the management and resident services offices, the laundry room, and even the mail room – making them all more appealing to residents.
- We re-made the exterior common space – a place to sit peacefully and enjoy a waterfall or grill dinner and have a picnic.



**Primrose Plexiglass Management Office, Before**



**Primrose Front Desk, Before**



**Primrose Front Desk, After**

# Main Entrance/Lobby



Before



After

Before/After of Hollins House Entrance