# The Founding Board

The quality and effectiveness of your local housing ministry will reflect the quality of the board membership.

The first task, then, of the steering committee/founding board will be to recruit people who share a common commitment to the cause and a willingness to devote significant time on a build site, attending necessary meetings, or performing other needed tasks.

The responsibilities of the board include program and committee development, fund raising, staff supervision, public relations, setting financial goals and priorities, dealing with legal and insurance issues and other fiduciary oversight matters.

## The Board Sets Policy

Generally speaking, the board sets policy and the staff and volunteers implement policy. In the early years of an organization these duties are often blurred, however it is important to the health of an organization to segregate these duties as early as possible.

## Structure

Experience has taught us that a board size of 8-21 is ideal; too few and the organization risks burn out, too many and the organization becomes cumbersome.

Typically the following officers are chosen: President or Chairperson, Vice-President or Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. Many states require that these officers must be in place to file incorporation papers. Members serve terms from one to three years as determined by your bylaws.

## Diversity

While flexibility is a virtue, the founding board members or steering committee should not rest until they have an inclusive board that reflects a diverse ecumenical representation (both ethnically and economically) of the entire community. Include both men and women. Seek out a wide-ranging representation of professionals who can help the organization such as architects, construction workers, ministers, bankers, etc. If your initial group is overloaded with individuals from one profession or one church, you will have a harder time getting the community to take ownership and support your new organization. A larger audience translates into more donations and volunteers. It is hard for people to support a program they don't know about.

Make sure there is leadership representation from the community that is the target of need. Once the board establishes a strong conflict of interest policy, though it is not required, it is permissible to have Fuller Center homeowners serve on the board after their homes are complete and their mortgages signed and recorded. The key is to establish a truly grass-roots led ministry effectively matching the strong desire to have a better community with people in need of better housing.

## Committed Members

Someone once observed, "There are work horses and there are show horses." Your Fuller Center Covenant Partnership program needs work horses. Board members should be hard-working "doers," committed to the time their volunteer roles in the organization demand. Look for people who are result-oriented.

***For more help with board development and strategic planning contact:***
Stacey Odom-Driggers at sdriggers@fullercenter.org or
Brenda Barton at brenda@fullercenter.org

***For additional in-depth study on board development we recommend:***

Stoesz, Edgar (2007). *Doing Good Even Better: How to Be an Effective Board Member of a Nonprofit Organization.* Intercourse, PA: Good Books.