

Northrop Grumman Wins Affordable Housing Award

Carrie Mason-Draffen, *Newsday*
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Local economists have long cited the lack of affordable housing as the prime reason Long Island has trouble recruiting or retaining enough skilled workers.

Some companies have begun addressing the problem on their own. One of them is the aerospace giant Northrop Grumman. On Monday a national housing group recognized the aerospace company's affordable housing efforts for its employees on Long Island and in Mississippi. Homes for Working Families, a Washington, D.C. affordable housing group, named Northrop Grumman and 13 other companies recipients of its 2008 Pioneer Awards.

In a report issued Monday the group said that nine employees of Grumman's Integrated Systems division in Bethpage have taken advantage of the unit's help through its employer-assisted housing program. That program provides \$5,000 in grants to eligible employees for downpayments. The Long Island Housing Partnership administers the program. New York State's Homeownership and Economic Stabilization for Long Island Program then matches employer housing benefits three to one, the housing group said. Those amounts are awarded on a sliding scale. The program also provides grants of up to \$20,000 for housing rehabilitations.

In Mississippi, Grumman grants employees "forgivable" loans to help them build or purchase a new home or to rebuild a home destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

"We thought Grumman was particularly innovative because they targeted the program to two very different markets and made it fit the employees' needs in the those two areas," said the group's spokeswoman Kathryn St. John.