Event Planning Guidelines

* Determine date or possible dates.
* Decide the key people who should attend and coordinate available dates with their schedules. This may include Mayors, Congressional Representatives, key community or development officials.
* Decide the event location—at the development—what area?
* Think of a potential theme. This provides a "hook" for media coverage. This can also be used to determine how to celebrate the grand opening (ribbon across a resident's door or community center; presenting a door decoration or key to resident; big red ribbon with lots of scissors, etc.). Is it a place for families? What makes this development unique, desirable? Is the event formal or casual? A theme isn't always necessary with a standard ribbon cutting, but having one could attract more attention and could help tie the whole event together.
* Arrange for a tour of a couple of the units – this would be best if you could get some of the residents involved – to look at "lived in" units.
* Decide on a schedule of events – who will be the main speaker – who else you would like to speak. Make sure participants keep their talking points to a minimum. You want to make sure the program does not take longer than a half-hour – especially if people will be standing – just make sure everyone involved is acknowledged. You also may want to have a resident involved in the ceremony. It is usually appropriate to have the highest elected official speak first, but you may want to check with their office for their preference.
* Touch base with selected speakers to see if they are able to participate.
* Suggested invitees:
  + Any federal officials involved with the project – also try member of Congress
  + State officials involved in project (Ohio Housing Finance Agency, Ohio Department Services Agency)
  + Local officials involved in project (Mayor, City Council, etc.)
  + All people involved in financing (lenders, Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing and/or other syndicators, Federal Home Loan Bank, all investors, etc. OCCH can provide you an address list of investors involved in the project.)
  + Local organizations involved in the project (local community development corporations, neighborhood groups, etc.)
  + People with the project (manager, resident manager, owner, architect, accountant, etc.)
  + Residents
  + Media
  + If there is a residential neighborhood nearby, you may want to invite local residents or any resident group to promote positive relations and for them to be more informed on the project.
  + Anyone else?
* Coordinate any sort of refreshments, decorations, name tags if using them (cookies and punch, balloons, etc..) Refreshments after the ceremony give a reason for people to stay a little longer, do some networking and receive personal thanks.
* Send media advisory out to local press – newspaper, radio stations, TV stations.
* Call press to follow up a couple days before the event.
* Prepare fact sheets or brochures on the project (including the name of every organization involved).
* Prepare an agenda to hand out.
* Prepare a press release for media acknowledging the grand opening and recognizing everyone involved in the project.
* Have a photographer on hand or have a staff person take photos.
* Make sure there is appropriate signage at the entrance of the complex and directional signs if necessary