

CONTACT: Dan Pittman
714.282.9994
dan@pittmanpr.com

Resident Services Often Yield A Greater Return On Investments In Apartment Complexes And In The Futures Of The Residents

Few makeovers are more visually dramatic than when a crumbling 1970s or 1980s era apartment complex, or a weedy abandoned parking lot, make way for a gleaming new community with exciting architecture and the promise of a bright future for the low-income residents who will become the new inhabitants.

But it takes more than architecture to build a community. History shows that what's equally important is the creation of a supportive environment for low-income residents who are faced with the challenges and risks brought on by living in poverty. Only then will positive outcomes, such as academic achievement, financial stability and improved access to health services, be realized.

That's where nonprofit Project Access and other providers of vital health, education and employment services for families, children and seniors living in low-income housing communities come into the picture.

Project Access currently partners with 13 affordable housing developers to provide programs and services to residents, including Affordable Housing Access, Aimco, BCC Corporation, BRIDGE Housing Corporation, Bridge Investment Group Partners, Bristol Equity Capital, Inc., Eden Housing, JSM Enterprises, KDF Communities LLC, Oakland Housing Authority, Related California, Sorrento Tower Development LLC and Vitus Group. Project Access operates Resource Centers inside the complexes that are easily accessible to residents.

In a one-stop shopping fashion, residents can be directly connected with needed social services, leading to positive outcomes for all involved. Services offered often include After School Programs (tutoring), English as a second language, computer access and training, resume preparation and job search assistance and healthy activities for seniors. Among the more tangible benefits

accruing for developers are reduced turnover expenses, longer resident tenancy, eviction prevention and decreased vandalism and property maintenance costs.

“Experience tells us that resident services are an important asset management strategy as they improve the overall vitality of a community,” said Project Access CEO & President Kristin Byrnes.

“Service-enriched housing adds value to individuals’ lives by building their social, human and financial capital. Onsite social services also improve the overall living experience for residents as a whole, serving as an amenity in a competitive housing market.”

Byrnes observed that community-building efforts also help strengthen the social fabric of a community, acting as a self-monitoring mechanism that discourages anti-social behavior and improves security. Facilitating connections between residents strengthens their network, forging relationships that can be leveraged in the marketplace to get by and get ahead.

“A supportive environment helps to reduce the effects of risks associated with poverty,” said Byrnes. “Project Access’ goal is to help keep family members employed, children in school and seniors active.”

Developers agree. “There’s no question in my mind that having a community service program has a tremendous impact and creates a win-win situation for all of the stakeholders from our residents and employees to our investors and the entire community,” said Dan Stanger, chief investment officer with Bridge Investment Group Partners, LLC ("Bridge-IGP").

“Our learning experience at Warwick Square in Santa Ana, California has become the incubator for what we now try to do every time we obtain a challenged asset that has issues like a vacancy or vandalism problem. We have found that everywhere we have a community service program in place, the asset stabilizes, turnover decreases and the asset gains greater value when we sell it.”

Stanger said the cost to bring Project Access in is offset by lower turnover. Confirming that observation, Community Builders estimates that the annual cost of a resident services coordinator can be covered by preventing just 10 evictions a year.

“But beyond being a good business strategy, it’s a good people strategy. By making the investment to create a sense of community, we change the dynamic that

drives stability and generates positive energy. People look out for each other more and take better care of their homes.”

Stanger says the investment community agrees with this philosophy. “Investors are looking for differentiators. Our investors love the fact that as a for-profit company, we’re giving back to the community and that they get to be a part of that. It excites them.”

William Witte, president of Related California, which has partnered with Project Access for residential services at a dozen locations in California, is also a strong advocate of having residential service programs in place in his affordable housing communities.

“Our experience shows that in affordable housing, bricks and mortar alone can’t make a community,” he said. “Social programs delivered onsite complement what we are trying to do in developing these communities and are an integral part of the residents having improvements in their lives.”

Witte said that Project Access does a number of things exceptionally well that help significantly stabilize the communities, including analyzing each individual community to help determine the most pressing needs. “A community of low-income seniors will have different needs than one where large immigrant families are living.”

He said that Project Access then determines what existing services are available in the particular cities where the apartments are located that could be brought into the community space available in the complex. Lastly, he said they often come aboard to directly facilitate additional needed programs.

Do these programs work? “They most definitely have a positive outcome,” said Witte. “For example, because we made residential services available at the Hermosa Village community in Anaheim, California, it went from being in the heart of one of that city’s most troubled areas to a place where positive changes are being made in the quality of life for children and adults. It’s a different kind of bottom line. It’s about making a difference.”

“After spending millions of dollars on the design and construction of the apartment complexes, making an additional modest investment in each family’s potential will provide meaningful returns over a lifetime and even through generations,” said Byrnes. “And that’s good for everyone’s pocketbook.”

More information is available at www.project-access.org.

###