

IMPROVE ROI WITH ON-SITE RESIDENT SERVICES

Everyone wins when developers invest in their communities, and in the residents themselves.

By Kristin Byrnes



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Few makeovers are more visually dramatic than when a crumbling old urban apartment building is replaced by a gleaming new complex for low-income residents. Unfortunately, it takes more than mere architecture

to build a community.

History shows what's equally important is the creation of a supportive environment for those residents faced with the challenges and risks brought on by a life in poverty.

On-site services, such as preschool and afterschool programs, healthcare services, computer access and training, resume preparation, job search assistance and English as a second language (ESL) instruction, are often available at these communities for no additional cost to low-income renters. But why would apartment developers want to support such programs?

Simply put, because they pay dividends to all parties. It isn't enough to have state-of-the-art construction, sustainable building practices, high-quality materials or even solar power in low-income communities. Not if developers want to both protect their investments and make a difference in the lives of their renters.

The tangible benefits for developers are reduced turnover expenses, longer resident tenancy, eviction prevention and decreased vandalism that helps reduce property maintenance costs. On-site services also provide residents

with much-improved opportunities for positive outcomes, including academic achievement, financial stability and better access to health services.

Non-profits Specialize in Providing On-site Resident Services

Developers often turn to organizations like non-profit Project Access to arrange for the delivery of resident services. This particular non-profit currently partners with more than a dozen affordable housing developers to provide programs and services to residents.

Project Access operates resource centers inside the complexes, making them 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.

Experience tells us that resident services are an important asset management strategy as they improve the overall vitality of a community. Service-enriched housing adds value to individuals' lives by building their social, human and financial capital. On-site social services improve the overall living experience for residents as a whole, serving as an amenity in a competitive housing market.

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.



William Witte, president of Related California, is a strong advocate of on-site residential service programs at his affordable housing communities, such as Vintage Crossings in Anaheim, Calif.

Developers See Monetary and Social Value

“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, CIO of Bridge Investment Group Partners LLC. “Our learning experience at Warwick Square in Santa Ana, Calif., 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 also noted the cost to introduce Project Access is offset by lower turnover.

This observation is confirmed by Community Builders, which estimates 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,” Stanger continued. “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.”

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Witte says that after spending millions on the design and construction of an apartment complex, it just makes sense to implement an additional modest investment in each family’s potential through these services at communities like Pradera Apartments in Anaheim.

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 noted. “Social programs delivered on-site complement what we are trying to do in developing these communities. They are an integral part of the residents having improvements in their lives.”

So do these resident services programs work? Absolutely. Related California made residential services available at the Hermosa Village community in Anaheim, Calif. The apart-

ment community went from being in the heart of one of the more troubled areas in the city to a place where positive changes are occurring, directly impacting the qualities of life for both children and adults.

After spending millions on the design and construction of an apartment complex, making an additional modest investment in each family’s potential provides meaningful returns over a lifetime, and even throughout generations. We believe that’s good for everyone’s pocketbook.

Kristin Byrnes, CEO and President, Project Access in Newport Beach, Calif.



Dan Stanger, CIO of Bridge Investment Group Partners LLC, relies on these services at his affordable housing properties as well, including Valencia Crossing in Mesa, Ariz.



Paseo Verde apartments in Fontana, Calif., developed by Related California.