

Alabama Gains More Affordable Family Housing



HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

LEAD DEVELOPER
NEIGHBORHOOD CONCEPTS INC.

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT RENTAL HOMES
ALABAMA 5TH 125

CATEGORY
FAMILIES, PRESERVING EXISTING AFFORDABLE, GREEN DEVELOPMENT



Photo: Courtesy of Neighborhood Concepts Inc.

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Around Huntsville, Ala., the need for affordable housing is perhaps only eclipsed by the need for affordable family housing. Spring Branch Apartments addresses that need.

The 70-apartment, 11-building development was restored and renovated in 2013 from an aging 90-apartment complex. It once housed African-American soldiers who worked at a local Army base during World War II, and then the owner in 1990 used low-income housing tax credits (LIHTCs) to redevelop it. In 2013, the new owners did it again, rehabilitating it and changing the name from Burgundy Square Apartments to Spring Branch Apartments.

“There is definitely a demand for affordable housing in Huntsville,” said Kenneth Benion, Huntsville’s director of community development. “But the need for affordable housing for families is especially high.” Enter Spring Branch, which has rental homes reserved for residents earning up to 60 percent of the area median income (AMI).

The new Spring Branch Apartments feature 56 two-bedroom, eight three-bedroom and four four-bedroom rental homes, plus two additional rental homes for on-site staff. During redevelopment, one of the old buildings was torn down to make way for a community garden where

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residents can grow their own fruits and vegetables, as well as a splash park where children can play during hot weather. There are other communal amenities, including a clubhouse with a television and Wi-Fi, a computer lab, a covered pavilion, a central laundry facility, a learning center for children, a playground, 24-hour emergency maintenance services and an on-site manager.

The rental homes were upgraded to include a combination of carpeted and faux wood-plank flooring, ceiling fans in the living rooms and bedrooms, central heating and air conditioning, Energy Star-rated appliances, new

cabinets and countertops, and spacious closets.

“The building was starting to show its age,” said Mary Ellen Judah, executive Director of Neighborhood Concepts, a Huntsville-based nonprofit affordable housing developer. “We are a nonprofit organization and it’s our mission to provide affordable housing. It is

important that we serve low-income residents seeking housing.”

Once Spring Branch was completed in November 2013, it quickly leased up.

“Many developers are turning to rehabilitation to preserve and improve Alabama’s aging housing stock,” said Robert Strickland, executive director of the Alabama Housing Finance Authority, which provided the \$5.65 million LIHTC allocation. “Though not a process to be taken lightly, successful rehabs can improve the quality of housing, as well as the quality of life for residents.”

At Spring Branch Apartments, that’s a daily fact of life. ❖

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$5 million LIHTC equity investment from PNC Bank Roughly \$1.7 million in construction and permanent financing from PNC Bank \$820,000 in outstanding HUD Urban Development Action Grant funding left over from Spring Branch Apartment’s, formerly Burgundy Square’s, original financial structure \$246,000 in outstanding CDBG financing left over from Spring Branch Apartment’s, formerly Burgundy Square’s, original financial structure 	