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Fairlawn Village Opens, Bringing More Affordable Housing to Orlando

By **Staff** May 21, 2023

Fairlawn Village, a new affordable housing community located at 1491 Mercy Drive, recently celebrated its grand opening, bringing more affordable housing to Orlando as residents are desperate for more options. The apartment complex, developed by Blue Sky Communities, features 116 apartments situated in two 3-story walk-up garden style buildings and one 4-story walk-up/elevator building.



The ceremony featured remarks from Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, District 5 City Commissioner Regina Hill, Blue Sky Communities President Shawn Wilson, CASL CEO Scott Eller, resident Millie Atwell, Executive Director of the FHFC Michael DiNapoli, and CEO of Aetna Better Health of Florida Jennifer Sweet.

"These high-quality homes not only provide safe, comfortable living for residents and their families, the development increases the stock of affordable housing in the community and sets an example of what's possible," Tammy Haylock-Moore, Managing Director, Chase Community Development Banking shared.

Eight years ago, the City of Orlando purchased the property with the intention to build affordable housing and selected Blue Sky Communities as the developer.

In this collaboration with Blue Sky Communities and the City of Orlando, CVS Health invested \$8.6M into the development of Fairlawn Village as part of an ongoing commitment to advance health equity by tackling housing insecurities. Within the past three years, they have invested more than \$10 million in affordable housing in Orange County and more than \$26 million in Florida.

Including Fairlawn Village's 116-units, the investments equate to nearly 1,100 new senior, family and permanent supportive homes (PSH). PSH's are communities that include wrap-around services for residents who previously experienced homelessness, domestic violence survivors, individuals with disabilities and youth aging out of foster care. Fairlawn Village has 20 PSH units.

The total development costs for the project were approximately \$26 million. Funding was generously supported through partners including Aetna/CVS, Chase Bank, Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC), and Raymond James Tax Credit Funds. Carteret Management will manage the property.

Chief Executive Officer of Aetna Better Health of Florida, Jennifer Sweet said, "Bringing this property to life means we're helping Florida families become more economically self-sufficient and in turn, enabling them to lead healthier lives by providing a safe, beautiful, and affordable place to live."

For resident Millie Atwell, it did just that. After suffering cardiac arrest, the 36-year-old mother was unable to work despite mounting bills. A caseworker helped lead her to Fairlawn Village, where she found an apartment for her and her daughter that she could afford. Ms. Atwell is now earning her GED and utilizing the free financial literacy classes offered.

The community includes 28 one-bedroom units, 54 two-bedroom units, and 34 three-bedroom units, and is available to residents with incomes less than 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Apartment rates are adjusted by income. For example, a two bed/two bath with an income of 50% AMI would cost \$696 a month.

Twenty units are designed as permanent supporting housing with casework services for people experiencing homelessness, survivors of domestic violence, people with a disability, and youth aging out of foster care. These units will be managed by Community Assisted Supported Living (CASL). Fairlawn Village is family-oriented and offers many amenities including a clubhouse, on-site laundry, playground, and free parking. Services include financial management and literacy trainings as well as employment assistance programs.

Move-ins at Fairlawn Village began in March 2023.

“We are thrilled to open Fairlawn Village and offer quality affordable housing to families in Orlando,” said Shawn Wilson, President of Blue Sky Communities. “It took a team to bring this project to fruition. We are grateful to CASL and Carteret Management Corporation for taking care of the needs of the residents, and to our funding partners for helping make this community a reality- Chase Bank, CVS, Aetna, UACDC, Florida Housing Finance Corporation, Raymond James, and the City of Orlando.”