

# Affordable Housing Takes On A New Look

by Ann Deibert



**W**hen you think of a housing community with amenities such as energy efficient appliances, ceramic tile floors, hurricane impact windows and doors, well-appointed outdoor entertainment areas with pools and barbecues, and fitness centers, does affordable apartment housing come to mind? It should.

There are several undisputed truths about Broward County's current housing dilemma. Many families and residents are facing or have experienced foreclosure and need affordable housing to live; unemployment, underemployment and flat wages leave Broward residents struggling to pay high rents. There are over 200,000 renters in Broward County of which approximately 107,000 are severely cost burdened, meaning they spend 50 percent or more of their monthly income for housing, leaving very little left to spend for other basic needs.

In recent years, affordable housing has emerged with developments residents and the community can be proud of. Those still harboring a not-in-my-backyard viewpoint might want to take a fresh look at some properties that have re-created and re-defined affordable housing.

Progresso Point, a 76-unit property developed by Broward County Housing Authority and its non-profit partner, Reliance Housing Foundation, is a good example of a successful and attractive affordable housing community. The development was designed with numerous community amenities and green building features, which reduce resident costs as well as provide a return on investment in operating and maintenance costs.

Shortly after opening, Progresso Point became fully leased to 76 gainfully employed residents; all filling jobs in Broward County's businesses, and all with renewed disposable income available for buying goods and services from area businesses.

The need for affordable housing is apparent. City leaders and concerned residents should not think of affordable housing as an unwelcome neighbor. Affordable developments, when done well, are attractive, successful, and strengthen a community.



Affordable housing is an integral link in maintaining vital communities. It is important for residents of a tourist area such as Fort Lauderdale/Broward County to remember that everyone cannot afford a home. The workers behind the scenes, who are already contributing members of our community, need and deserve a comfortable, attractive and affordable place to live. Without housing options for any portion of the population, the health and economy of the entire community diminishes.

Affordable housing should be designed to meet a city's requirements, as long as the approach is measured and thoughtful. Smart, quality housing is a product of responsible design and is key to the continued economic growth of Broward County.

Next time you are in a discussion about an affordable housing development that is being considered for your community, I urge you to ask for information to help you in forming your opinion; what type of need (individual, family, seniors), what range of income, and what affordable communities have the development team completed in the past.

Affordable housing communities can be a lifelong solution, or a stepping-stone in a resident's journey. Either way, an attractive and safe community is uplifting not only for the residents, but for an entire city or county.

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