

Teamwork a key element in Successful Re-Development Project at Chestnut Crossing Apartments

Home City Development, Inc (HCDI), purchased the top five floors of 275 Chestnut Street in 2015 and made substantial physical improvements in 2019. Jodi Smith, Housing Management Resources (HMR) portfolio manager emphasized that the teamwork and investment from all parties, including the residents themselves, made this project a success. Today Chestnut Crossing is a place that residents are proud to call home, Smith explained. Ben Kleiner, project manager with Allegrone Construction, reiterated that statement, "It's my belief that everyone involved helped create some truly wonderful living spaces."

Previously owned by the YMCA of Greater Springfield, 104 single room occupancy (SRO) units were converted to 101 enhanced single room occupancy units in this re-development. Renovations included unit expansions to include kitchenettes; modern, efficient heating systems; handicapped access bathrooms; a large community room, with office space for service professionals; and security improvements. This work was performed in four stages in 14 months. The building was divided into four vertical sections and renovations were performed from south to north. This was a tricky feat, a dance moving tenants in and out and around the construction process.



"Being a phased project, with residents living in the building during construction could have made this project a little more difficult than most," Kleiner noted. "However, the residents were outstanding in their understanding and willingness to live alongside us during the past year."

Edward Brown has lived at 275 Chestnut Street for eight years. He had to move multiple times during the construction process, "It has been quite an experience, but well worth the wait. I am very pleased with my unit. It is beautiful. And to be able to look out over the City of Springfield and see the landscape and the trees [is a treat]."

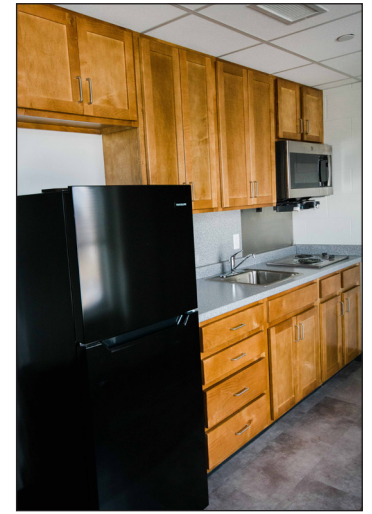
Bertrand Daniel has been a resident for four years. "I love it," he exclaimed when asked about his new space. "There is more privacy. I feel safe. The landscaping, the parking lot, it's uplifting compared to [what it was] before."

Jerry Platt Jr, a new resident, commented, "It's very quiet, clean, and very secure. There is enough space for me, I'm not cramped in."

Yaritza Torres the HMR property manager began as a resident services coordinator in February 2019 in the midst of the demolition phase. She noted that it was a lot to step into all at once. "But I'm so happy I [took the job]. I have met a lot of amazing people and learned a lot. Always being the middleman between the construction and the residents...was challenging," but Torres emphasized that no matter what, "We always made sure the tenants came first."

HMR staff did indeed work hard to communicate with tenants and make sure they felt welcome and safe throughout the construction period. "[Management is] very sociable," Daniel explained, "I've had great experiences with them. [There have been] events like coffee and donuts...to show appreciation for the tenants. To me, it's important to connect with management besides paying my bill."





Platt agreed, “They are great people, they have been very helpful. I plan on staying [here] for a while.”

“I understand the [construction] process was tough,” Brown noted, “[HMR] stayed on top of things, I compliment them all.”

Moises Luciano, Maintenance Supervisor with HMR noted that state-of-the-art systems including new hot water tanks, new boilers and new HVAC systems will save his maintenance team time and energy every day. He expects to see significantly less maintenance calls with these enhanced and efficient systems in place.

“The final product has changed the culture of the building.”

Smith pointed out, “When people are proud of a place that they live in, they are more apt to see it as a community and a place that they want to call home.”

“The neighbors respect each other and communicate.”

Brown noted, “That makes a big difference, the community aspect. We are a mixed population of ages, from the younger population, middle, and then seniors. It’s a good balance,” Platt also emphasized that he feels he has good neighbors, “People say hello, good morning, how are you doing, when you walk by.”

And Daniel reported that the “Neighbors seem calmer, open, and satisfied,” since the conclusion of the renovation project.

“My favorite part about the whole process was seeing the faces of the people who have been in this building for a long time,” Torres recalled. “Seeing the emotions on their faces when they first walked into their new apartments, and all of the happiness that they felt. You could tell they were so appreciative of all the changes and the final product. And now, the way the new space is laid out, the residents walk by the office all the time, they come by and say hello.”



View of Downtown Springfield from west-facing units.



Residents exploring new units.



Do you have a story that you would like to share with the Home City Development Community? If so, we’d love to hear from you. Email kcharkoudian@homecitydevelopment.org, or call 413-785-5312 and leave a message for Karoun.

