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Chicago Housing Authority Receives First LEED Platinum Certification for Senior Housing Development

Rehabbed senior building also wins prestigious “Design Excellence Award” from American Society of Interior Designers

CHICAGO (Oct. 6, 2011) – On late autumn afternoons, when the sun is splashing Chicago with lasers of yellow and orange light, Betty Campbell sits in her unit at the Kenmore Senior Apartments and enjoys the show.

“Where my apartment is positioned, with my windows facing the west, I get all of that sunlight bursting through my windows in the afternoons,” said Campbell, who has lived at the Kenmore since March 4. “It is fantastic.”

Other leaseholders at the Kenmore also get stunning views of the sunset, the Uptown neighborhood and the city of Chicago from the large windows that are just one eco-friendly improvement of the property. The once graffiti-riddled building, which underwent a gut rehab in 2010 to accommodate 100 new single-bedroom apartments, has become one of the premier green structures in Chicago.

The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), which owns the Kenmore, recently received its first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum Certification rating – the highest mark possible - for its renovation of Kenmore. LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system.

The rehabbed senior building also recently won the “Design Excellence Award” in Residential Green Design from the American Society of Interior Designers.

Throughout CHA, green features and healthy lifestyles are becoming more prominent. Last year, CHA, in coordination with the Respiratory Health Association of Chicago, began a smoking cessation program at Roosevelt Square.

In all, four CHA buildings have a non-smoking component. Two rehabbed senior buildings have smoke-free policies that extend to the inside of residents'

units, as do two mixed-income communities. At Roosevelt Square, smokers who lived there before the ban took effect in 2010 are still allowed to smoke inside their homes. Three other CHA buildings now under construction also will be designated as smoke-free housing when they open.

Further, the CHA Recycling Buyback Program allows residents in Kenmore and other CHA senior buildings to donate recyclables like aluminum cans, foil, tin cans, newspapers, cardboard, glass and plastic in exchange for funds that go back to the building for resident programs and events.

The CHA Recycling Buyback Program started 15 years ago. There are 56 programs in the senior buildings and 13 in CHA's family developments.

"It's really effective in getting residents who wouldn't normally be aware of recycling to recycle," said Bobby Irmiger, the CHA Recycling Coordinator. "Senior buildings in particular have seen an increase because of the "buy back" model. Some places are incredible."

The Kenmore was modernized by Holabird & Root, a Chicago-based architecture and engineering firm. The 90,000-square-foot building was reconfigured, and the previous brick walls were changed to storefront, allowing for the abundant natural light that Campbell likes so much. The ground level floor plan was reconfigured to include a library with a fireplace, a multipurpose room and a fitness center.

The building is constructed with high-recycled content, low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) and plumbing fixtures that conserve water. Rain gardens and a 7,000 square-foot green roof were added to interior courtyards to restore native habitat, create open space, and reduce storm water runoff.

Residents have received training on how to utilize the green features and are excited about living in a healthy green building.

Since moving in on March 4, Campbell, a Chicago native who lived in Indiana for 4 ½ years before returning to the North Side, has become something of a big sister to some of the older residents. That the building is so accommodating and refreshing has helped make her experience a tremendous one.

"The building is fantastic, the location, the people," Campbell said. "It's brand new everything. What's not to love?"

The renovation of the Kenmore Senior Apartments is an important step in the CHA's Plan for Transformation and is a model for high-quality public housing and senior living apartments.

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