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Seniors Find Quality, Affordable Housing Option at New Westgate Plaza Apartments

Despite the growing threat of afternoon thunderstorms, smiles were shining brightly at the June 3 official grand opening of Westgate Plaza Apartments, a new 80-unit rental apartment community developed exclusively for seniors on Westgate Avenue in suburban West Palm Beach. Vice Mayor Priscilla Taylor led the celebratory ceremony hosted by Palm Beach County, Landmark Development, and the Palm Beach County Housing Authority.



Pictured left to right: PBC Housing Authority Director Van Johnson, Westgate CRA Director Elizee Michel, Citibank Dir. Darren Smith, Vice Mayor Priscilla Taylor, Landmark VP Francisco Rojo, Wells Fargo Managing Director Rick Davis, Landmark President Robert Saland, Landmark Sr. Project Manager Justin Gilbert, Citibank Manager Barry Krinsky, DES Director, Edward Lowery, and Commissioner Paulette Burdick

The \$16 million project was achieved through a public/private partnership of the county, Landmark, and the Housing Authority. Funding was provided through a \$6.1 million loan from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2, tax exempt bonds of \$7.5 million issued by the Housing Finance Authority of Palm Beach County and Citibank, and \$2.4 million in housing tax credits generated by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation and Wells Fargo Bank.

The four-story complex includes 56 one-bedroom units and 24 two-bedroom units, which are available to seniors 62 years and older with incomes no greater than 120 percent of area median income (AMI). HUD has determined that the county's AMI is \$64,600 for a family of four. Twenty units are reserved for seniors with incomes no greater than 30 percent of AMI and 24 apartments are reserved for seniors with incomes no greater than 50 percent of AMI. Tenant rents are supported by project-based Section 8 vouchers committed by the Palm Beach County Housing Authority.

The apartments contain energy-efficient appliances and impact-resistant windows and doors, with connections for cable television and Internet service. Four of the units are completely designed to meet Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards and include wider doorways and larger spaces to accommodate persons using mobility assistance devices, roll-in showers with grab bars, lowered counter tops and open counter bases, and appliances with front control knobs. Westgate Plaza amenities include a computer lab, library, fitness room, clubroom, and a pavilion with picnic tables and barbeque grills.

With full occupancy achieved in only 45 days, the leasing office has a current waiting list of more than 200.

During the ceremony which was held in the stylishly-decorated clubroom, residents Patricia Hess and James Moody gave brief testimonials about the sense of safety and comfort they have experienced at the new complex. Vice Mayor Taylor emphasized the need for affordable housing options for seniors. "I look forward to future opportunities to partner with the private sector to develop more quality senior rental communities such as Westgate Plaza," she said.

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