

New housing a boon to residents and the city

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The conversion of the former Park City Hospital at 695 Park Avenue in Bridgeport into supportive housing uplifts the neighborhood and boosts the overall city economy.

Consider that since the actual construction and gutting of the building began in June 2009, more than 200 workers were involved in the renovation project. What's more, about \$20 million was spent on construction materials that benefited local suppliers.

Nicholas Calace, executive director of the City Housing Authority also pointed out that the project required the hiring of Bridgeport-based tradesmen for the construction.

"We put to work more than 200 workers in one of the worst recessions," Calace said. "It was a wonderful shot in the arm for the City of Bridgeport."

The project also created 40 full-time jobs to maintain and provide the services committed to the residents of The Eleanor and The Franklin. Calace also notes that the conversion of the former empty hospital converts the building into a viable use.

Loni Willey, executive director of the Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development, believes that the affordable housing boosts the surrounding community, adding people who live and shop in the area.

"The people living in these apartments are really excited and proud of their new housing," Willey said. "They take great ownership of their new home; it will only help elevate the surrounding community, too."

Beyond all the economic advantages of the construction project, Calace thinks the most important plus is 110 Bridgeport residents have a new chance and a safe and attractive place to live. For many, that hadn't possible for a long time.

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“We are helping to elevate people into becoming productive citizens,” Calace said. “They will fit into the community. This whole project has been a plus economically and most importantly for people. That’s really what this is all about.”