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Two new affordable-housing apartment projects come online in southeast Colorado Springs

By Debbie Kelley debbie.kelley@gazette.com

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A redeveloped site at 920 S. Chelton Road has 125 affordable apartments for low- to moderate-income seniors, in a renovated existing building and a newly constructed building comprising the campus of Paloma Garden. The complex opens this week for residents and will have a public ribbon-cutting event Monday.

Courtesy of Volunteers of America

Sue Blythe is ecstatic. The 70-year-old Colorado Springs resident has found her people and is packing up and relocating to live closer to them.

Blythe will move on Friday across town from her current apartment, where a recent rent increase bumped her monthly payment by \$125, into her new home at Silver Key Apartments at South Murray.

She's among the first residents of the new 50-unit affordable housing complex for low- to moderate-income seniors, ages 62 and older.



“I think it’ll be unbelievable,” she said. “I have no family in town, and it’s nice knowing I’ll have a place that will be secure and affordable.”



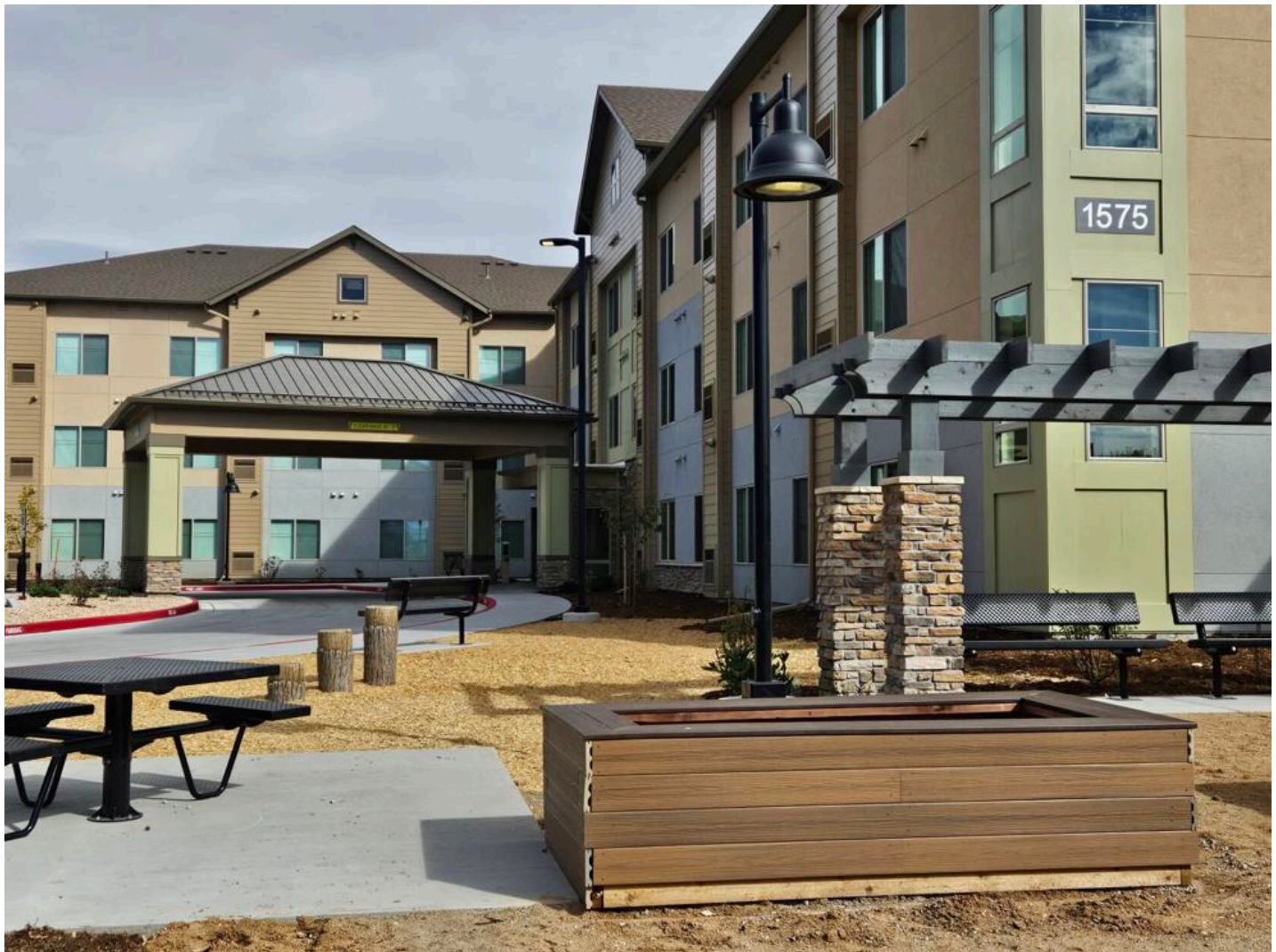
Colorado Springs churches venture into affordable housing market

By Debbie Kelley debbie.kelley@gazette.com

The \$14.7 million project is one of two new apartment complexes coming online this week in southeast Colorado Springs. Both feature one- and two-bedroom units created specifically for low- to moderate-income seniors.

“Affordable housing for seniors is a growing need in the community,” said Doug Snyder, vice president of regional real estate development for Volunteers of America.

The nonprofit Silver Key, founded in 1970, received more than 550 applications for its 50-unit complex at 1575 S. Murray Blvd., said President and CEO Jason DeaBueno. Thirteen are reserved for military veterans, and some units remain available, he said.



Residents begin moving in on Friday to the new Senior Key Senior Apartments at South Murray, adjacent to the organization's headquarters at 1625 S. Murray Blvd. The 50-unit affordable-housing complex for low- to moderate-income seniors ages 62 and older includes 13 units reserved for military veterans.

Debbie Kelley, The Gazette

Rents start at \$780 for a one-bedroom for a tenant whose annual income is \$29,120 or less. That represents 40% of the area's median income. A one-bedroom for a renter with a monthly income of \$44,040 or less runs \$1,170.

What distinguishes the Silver Key project, which was developed by MGL Partners and constructed by B.C. Builders, is that it's next door to the organization's headquarters and a host of other services, DeaBueno said.

Those include a food pantry, a meals and nutrition program, a computer lab with live instructors, a thrift store, a café, transportation to appointments, access to behavioral health counseling, various activities and classes, a companionship program and resource navigators. Other organizations also have offices in the headquarters, including the National Alliance on Mental Illness, RISE Southeast coalition and Peak Education.

"It fits with the idea of meeting our mission of keeping seniors living as independently as they and enjoying life," DeaBueno said.



Affordable housing project near downtown Colorado Springs earns urban renewal designation

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Blythe, who has received rides from the organization to medical rehab and now is a volunteer, likes that she'll have so many amenities and companionship with folks her age. She's also looking forward to her apartment's washer and dryer, dishwasher, built-in microwave and walk-in shower.

"I believe in the organization so much that I want to be a part of it," Blythe said.

A public ribbon cutting is scheduled for 9 a.m. Dec. 4.

At the same residents are unpacking at Silver Key's first venture into affordable housing, inaugural renters also are moving into another income-based community, Paloma Garden at 920 S. Chelton Road.

A public ribbon cutting will be held 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Monday.

A project of Volunteers of America National Services, a nondenominational faith-based nonprofit headquartered in Alexandria, Va., the overhauled campus that's been four years in the making offers a total of 125 units. A newly constructed three-story building has 75 units, and an existing 50-unit complex on the site has been renovated.



Kitchens and living rooms at Paloma Garden, a new affordable-housing campus for seniors, have an open design and modern amenities with access to a private exterior balcony. (Courtesy Volunteers of America)

Courtesy Volunteers of America

In its former life, the property was home to Laurel Manor Care Center, a skilled-nursing center facility, and Laurel Gardens apartments, which needed refurbishing, said Douglas Snyder, vice president of regional real estate development.

After a coronavirus outbreak in 2020 took the lives of 14 residents of the nursing facility, that building was razed in 2020 and is where the new building was constructed.

“It’s sort of like a rebirth and rebranding; the new property as Paloma Garden represents pieces of Laurel Manor and Laurel Gardens,” Snyder said.

Residents of the existing building stayed in their apartments during construction and in a survey indicated they wanted more outdoor spaces — which appear in the form of a courtyard with covered picnic tables, a garden, public art, walkways and a patio.

The pandemic prompted another outdoor amenity: balconies on units.



New affordable housing units to expand in southeast Colorado Springs

By Mary Shinn mary.shinn@gazette.com

“When COVID hit, we locked down our common areas, and seniors really suffered from social isolation,” Snyder said. “We thought about how important private outdoor space is and decided to add balconies.”

Also of note are energy-efficient lighting and plumbing, accessibility features for people with disabilities such as elevators and handrails, a community room and an exercise facility.

The existing building has replacement windows to match the new building, an exterior color scheme to mirror the teal, tan and brown of the new complex, and improvements in lighting, heating and cooling.

The word “paloma” means dove in Spanish, Snyder said, which seems to accurately symbolize the organization’s faith-based roots as well as its previous work operating Laurel Manor and Laurel Gardens.

Snyder said the \$43.2 million redevelopment came together with financing that included tax credits from the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority, \$19 million in private activity bonds from the city of Colorado Springs, equity from Enterprise Partners, and loans from First Bank, the Division of Housing and El Paso County.

For renters in the 30% to 60% of area median income range, monthly payments run from \$585 to \$1,404, he said, with units available.

“Seniors on fixed incomes can live here safely, get around independently and have social interaction,” Snyder said. “We also hope to prevent people from slipping into homelessness — another growing population.”

Across Colorado, Volunteers of America operates 27 properties with 1,900 units, he said.



Mt. Carmel reports greater need for homeless Colorado Springs veterans as temperatures drop


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