

## **Evesham Marks Completion of 104-Unit Housing Project**

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EVESHAM -- Representatives from the state, county and township joined a Moorestown nonprofit and members of the business community Tuesday to celebrate the completion of a 104 unit affordable housing development on Sharp Road.

"Today is the end of the construction phase and the beginning of the community building," said Matthew Reilly, president and chief executive officer of the Moorestown Ecumenical Neighborhood Development (MEND) of Moorestown, a nonprofit, faith-based provider of affordable housing in Burlington County.

"Our hope is that over time that (the Sharp Road Family Apartments becomes an asset to the community," Reilly continued after a ceremonial ribbon cutting for the newly constructed complex

MEND developed and built the \$20 million affordable housing development with joint partner Conifer Realty LLC of Mount Laurel. The project is a major component of Evesham's state-mandated Council On Affordable Housing obligations.

The township acquired the land in 2007 and then deeded it to MEND when construction began on the site in February 2008.

Built on 48 acres near the Medford and Mount Laurel, the Sharp Road Family Apartments features one, two and three-bedroom apartments constructed in 13, two-story buildings. There's also a community building that contains a laundry room, exercise room, computer lab and a lounge with a kitchen.

The project also includes several "green" features including energy efficient appliances in each unit and solar panels on the community building and on several residential buildings, Reilly said.

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Joseph Doria called the complex a perfect example of how the public and private sector along with nonprofit organizations can come together to create quality affordable housing units.

"This project is a model what a project can be. For profit companies working with nonprofits — That's the whole concept," Doria said.

He said project shows that if everyone works together they all can create some quality homes for people who need them.

Reilly noted that the development is already fully leased with low to moderate income tenants.

"This isn't Section 8 housing. Everyone here works," he said.

Rents in the complex vary based on income and family size.

Reilly said rents range from \$350 a month one-bedroom apartments for a low-income tenant to as high as \$850 a month for a three-bedroom apartment for a moderate-income tenant.

And he said the response by applicants of the complex has been amazing.

"We had 2,000 applicants for 104 units," Reilly said. "If anyone doesn't think we need more affordable housing in this state then tell them to give me a call."

While Mayor Randy Brown has been an outspoken critic of recent changes in COAH rules and how it calculates each municipality's affordable housing obligations, he acknowledged there definitely needs to be more developments like the Sharp Road Family Apartments.

"I think it's fabulous," Brown said "I'm hopeful that once the children integrate into the school system it will become a valuable asset to the community."

Councilman Michael Schmidt said the development surpassed any expectation he had when the township began talking about the site about five years ago.

"It's wonderful," Schmidt said. "It doesn't look like an apartment complex. It fits right in with the community."

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