

Housing Full at Opening



By Jake Thomas/The Portland Observer

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LEFT: Jesse Shumway is the manager of the Patton Park Apartments, the first major housing complex built for affordable living along the Max light rail Yellow Line on North Interstate Avenue. **RIGHT:** Five stories of housing dedicated to low and moderate incomes proves popular on North Interstate Avenue as the Patton Park Apartments open at full capacity this week and with a waiting list of 500 people. Photos by Jake Thomas/The Portland Observer

Patton Park built for economic relief

Melody Isom has lived in north and northeast Portland for years and has witnessed the ups and downs of economic growth. She's particularly fond of one change, though- the new apartment she lives in.

Isom is one of the newest residents at Patton Park Apartments, an affordable housing complex on North Interstate Avenue just down from the Killingsworth Max Light Rail Station.

"I love it," said Isom of her new pad, which overlooks the city and the Cascade Mountains. It's an easy commute to her work on Swan Island, and the rent is low enough to keep all her other bills paid, she said.

Families and individuals are seeing housing take a bigger bite out of their paychecks as properties values have soared during the housing bubble. North Portland has been no exception.

Recently REACH Community Development, a non-profit geared toward providing affordable housing, unveiled the 5-story Patton Park apartment complex in hopes of addressing this issue.

"It marks a new era for Interstate Avenue," said Laurel Lyon, the organization's spokesperson.

Lyon said that there may be affordable for-profit housing in the area, but rents could easily rise as property values shift. Patton Park will remain an option for those of more modest means, she said.

There are 54 units in the complex. The price ranges from \$450 a month for a studio to \$650 for a two bedroom. There are 12 three bedroom apartments that are set aside for families using Section 8 housing vouchers. Each room is a few hundred dollars below the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development fair market rates for apartments for the region.

The apartment is geared toward lower-income individuals who are at or below 50 percent of median income for the area. For a family of four that's \$33,950. For an individual it's \$14,250.

"We try to make them as low as we can," said Lyon of the rents.

However, people wanting to get in will likely have to wait, as there is currently a waiting list of about 400 people. Lyon said that as long as someone meets the income guidelines they can stay at the apartment, so she isn't sure how long the wait will be.

Jesse Shumway, the manager of the apartment complex, points to the hallways leading to apartments, which has wall panels alternating between white and a bright hue of red that could be out of a Mark Rothko painting.

"They could have left that all white," he said.

The air in the new building is pungent with the smell of sawdust and building materials. The lobby looks like it could be that of a swanky hotel, with sleek black and brown couches. They include a community room, with a kids' room full of toys and a play house.

A computer room with free internet for tenants is also present. You can see the West Hills from an apartment on the west side of the building, and you can catch a glimpse of Mt. Hood when the clouds give way from an apartment on the east side of the building.

"It makes it feel like just that much better of a place," said Shumway of the attention given to the design and decor of the building.

The complex is still being fine tuned by construction workers who steadily stream in and out wearing clunky boots and tattered jeans while lugging tools in and out. A grinding noise fills the air outside as workers finish up the parking lot.

Lyon points out that the building has many green features, which help keep costs down. They include energy efficient lighting and appliances, and all the rain water is filtered so that chemicals aren't washed in the watershed.

The building cost over \$12 million to erect. Although REACH Community Development keeps afloat financially from revenues from its 12,000 units of affordable housing located throughout the city, it had help on this project from a number of community partners.

The land was most recently owned by TriMet, which put out a call for proposals to build an affordable housing structure. REACH's pitch was accepted and TriMet sold them the land on the cheap, said Lyon who isn't sure what the exact value is.

REACH then got a loan from Bank of America, and Enterprise Rent-A-Car invested money in the project.

The Portland Development Commission also contributed money to project.