Written by Ivan Phifer
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Another apartment development has opened in North Minneapolis.

Gateway Lofts, located at 2623 West Broadway, consists of affordable studios as well as one and two bedroom lofts. The development is 3.5 miles west of downtown Minneapolis and is considered the “gateway” between North Minneapolis and Robbinsdale. The Lofts also are in close proximity of the Lowry/Penn and Broadway shopping networks, as well as North Memorial Medical Center.

Two-hundred skilled and unskilled union workers built Gateway Lofts.

“It’s a work between Alliance Housing and the community; trying to find housing for people in the area,” said Kathy Stulc, Regional Property Manager for Hayes-Gibson Management Company.

Herb Frey, Executive Director of Alliance Housing, Inc. said the project got started shortly before January of 2008. “The site was previously a boarded up and dilapidated Petro Stop gas station,” said Frey. “We are very proud of this building.”

Gateway Lofts has 46 spaces which are currently full; 22 efficiencies at $418 a month, nine, one-bedroom units priced at $440 a month, four at $640 a month, five priced at $800 a month and six two-bedroom units priced at $840 a month.

The property is managed by Hayes Gibson International.

“As housing director for the city, we set out a vision five years ago to bring quality housing to all of our neighbors,” said Thomas Streitz, City Director of Housing and Development. “North Minneapolis was not going to be treated any differently. It was going to have the same quality housing, management and look like anything we build in Southwest or South Minneapolis.”

Streitz shares thoughts on how various corridors were in need of affordable housing.

“North Minneapolis has lost 30,000 residents over the last 20 years. You cannot have a neighborhood or community without people,” said Streitz.

Streitz said some neighbors he spoke with were against rental housing due to non-management and inconsiderate tenants.

“In five to 10 years, you will drive down a West Broadway that will be transformed with new vitality, new life and new people coming in the neighborhood. We will demand quality and partnership,” said Streitz.

Fifth Ward city council member Don Samuels said he understood neighborhood apprehension to a new apartment development, providing an example of a house on Hillside that was broken down into eight units. He said the tenants that lived in the eight house unit were prostitutes, drug dealers and gun arsenals were discovered by police.

“That’s what low-income or affordable housing in North Minneapolis has represented to many of us and our psyches,” said Samuels.

The residents of the new complex however, have a more positive experience.

“As a Northsider, I was given the opportunity to move to Gateway Lofts. It’s a great area with a spacious park; peaceful and close to shopping,” said Sheryl Box, a Gateway Lofts resident and neighborhood volunteer. Box is also an artist and believes the Gateway experience sparks her creativity in the arts and keeps her smiling. “I can honestly say from the bottom of my heart, Gateway Lofts is a lovely place to live.”

The loft-style apartments includes heated underground parking, air conditioning, cable television hookups, laundry rooms, washing and dryer hook ups for two bedroom units and a community room.

“We need more buildings like this,” said Ervin Locke, resident of Gateway Lofts who recently retired.

“It doesn’t get better than this; the scale, the parking, landscaping, management of units and engagement with the community are a wonderful combination of revolved sensibilities in housing and community,” said Samuels. “This is how multi-unit housing is supposed to be.”