

FALL 2012

"When the company was founded 30 years ago, the design was to set up a social enterprise, which back then was not all that popular or even commonplace. It's certainly becoming more popular today," says Charlie Werhane, President and CEO of Enterprise Community Investment, Inc. "We were devised as an organization that would really have its own for-profit arm, in addition to a policy arm that focused on providing affordable housing to those most in need. We do believe that good, clean, affordable housing in good communities is really the bedrock for people moving up and out of poverty."

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Servicing The People

Adapting To The Needs Of
Residents Across All Age Groups

For more than 60 years, the Plattsburgh Housing Authority has focused on offering safe, adequate, decent and affordable housing to residents throughout Plattsburgh, New York. The agency, with 604 units spread across eight developments, also works to promote opportunities for residents through programs geared toward self-sufficiency and economic independence.

Currently, the housing authority is working on modernizing 35 of its units that will be adaptable and accessible for individuals with disabilities. As part of these efforts, all of the modernized units will also receive upgrades that make life a little easier for those who live in them.

"We've been finding more and more that folks with disabilities, especially those with disabilities who are low income, have very few options for good, safe and affordable housing," says Lori Cantwell, Executive Director of the Plattsburgh Housing Authority. "These 35 units can be readily retrofitted from adaptable to accessible; so that if somebody comes in with a special need, we can quickly accommodate that need. As we were undertaking our modernization projects, we were looking at what we could do to make those units more user friendly in a cost effective way.

Additionally, in an effort to free up more first floor space for fully accessible units, the housing authority recently relocated its office space from a senior housing building to a mixed-housing location. The organization has fully embraced the adaptable concept with a number of unique ideas and features focused on improving the lives of residents.

"We can easily retrofit and adapt for accommodations that might be needed, including things like adjusting doors so they are wide enough for somebody with a wheelchair," Cantwell says. "One of the interesting things that we are installing where needed are doorbells that have a strobe light indicator on them for residents with a hearing impairment. Things like that that are user-friendly and can be adapted quickly if somebody has a need."



Plattsburgh Housing Authority

Executive Director :: Lori Cantwell | Location :: Plattsburgh, New York



HELP THE AGED

The Plattsburgh Housing Authority is also planning to offer aging-in-place units. The agency has plans to build an assisted living home with additional space for aides and nurses, if needed.

"These aging-in-place units will mean that people don't have to be pulled out of their home to go to a hospital or a nursing home," Cantwell says. "This tends to be more cost effective across the board, and it certainly is more convenient and compassionate to the individuals who are aging-in-place."

According to Cantwell, the aging-in-place concept places less of a strain on the residents and allows them to remain comfortable and in familiar surroundings.

"Assisted living basically allows you to be in your home while you undergo medical needs and recovery, so you are not constantly in and out of medical facilities," she says. "It's much better from an overall well-being standpoint. Everyone would rather be in the comfort of their own home."

The Plattsburgh Housing Authority's recent focus on modernization and aging in place has put the organization in a good position to assess the benefits of these programs for future projects.

"We have healthcare providers who are assigned to our units at any point in time, so we are bringing the services to the people," Cantwell says. "We are making sure that there is a synergy there. Where we have pockets of the population that have a medical need or are an aging demographic, we are working toward making sure that the facilities and infrastructure does what it needs to do in order to help them be as comfortable as they can be."

In addition to making sure that services are available to people when they need them, the housing authority is also keeping an eye on costs.

"Sometimes the best way to provide those services is to avoid having [residents] go out and get them," Cantwell says. "If there is a large enough portion of the population that needs them, having the services come to the population can be more cost effective."

While the Plattsburgh Housing Authority has different plans and goals for different types of residents, its overall objective is to fill the need for

housing in the community, offer valuable services and promote self-sufficiency as much as possible.

"In terms of our younger population, which is made up of people who are job seeking, working, or in transition, we would like to continue to focus on independence," Cantwell says. "We view housing as something which people can use as a base during a time of need, so that they can stabilize and then become independent again. I think wanting to be independent is an important element for the morale of the individual, and it's healthier. Stagnation in life can be harmful if it lasts for too long. I'm interested in pursuing ideas, concepts and strategies that encourage people to grow and don't allow people to become stuck for the long term."

For its older population, the organization looks to continue to provide safe, healthy and affordable housing that meets residents' needs.

"Wherever we can provide a better quality of living, especially when it comes to health and well-being, we are going to continue to try to bring that into the mix," Cantwell says. 