

VOICES OF Energy and Housing Affordability



NAME:

Phyllis Edwards

OCCUPATION:

Property Owner;
Executive Director, Bridging
Communities

PROPERTY:

Pablo Davis Senior
Living Center,
Detroit, Michigan

FINANCING:

Low-Income
Housing Tax Credit
(LIHTC)



Going energy efficient is the way to go...It's the only way to go because we want to leave the world a better place for the next generation. As an owner you need to be a good steward of the building. – Phyllis Edwards

Built in 2000, the 80-unit Pablo Davis Elder Living Center was the first elder care center in southwest Detroit. When Phyllis Edwards joined Bridging Communities as Executive Director, she was committed to continuing to care for the building and its burgeoning community.

As the facility aged, Phyllis saw an opportunity to participate in the Detroit Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Multifamily Green Initiative with the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) resyndication process. After a LIHTC building has operated for 15 years, its owners must reapply for the tax credits through this process. Phyllis used it to apply for funding to improve the building.

With support from Elevate Energy, she knew she wanted to incorporate energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy systems in her proposal, not only to strengthen her LIHTC application, but also to enhance the building's livability for residents.

Phyllis cites the energy efficiency improvements as a reason her application got approved: **“The energy savings are tremendous and played a really important role in getting it funded.”** The remodeling project got underway in January 2019. All 80 units received new windows, doors, appliances and lighting. The addition of solar panels and a new generator improved resiliency and brought comfort to residents on oxygen tanks or other life-supporting equipment.

Additionally, it was important to Phyllis to improve the aesthetic of the building: the exterior got more landscaping, signage and restored sidewalks, and the units a fresh coat of paint. “Tenants love the remodel. They’re really happy with it,” she said. A new energy efficient cooling and heating system and efficient appliances help lower tenant energy bills. This was critical to Phyllis: **“It shows that you not only care about your property**

but also the residents since they, too, can save money on their utilities.”

LIHTC-funded projects are complex. “It was difficult to get the funding sources together—the entities like the city and partners and syndicators—to come together and agree on a final package,” she said. According to Phyllis, **“there needs to be more gap financing. If you want to preserve affordable housing—not just for seniors, but for everyone—you really need to begin to look at how we fund it and how it’s maintained.”**

Even with the complicated application process, Phyllis is proud she improved the building while maintaining its affordability. The project was such a success that Bridging Communities plans to use this process again when more of its facilities come up for resyndication.

