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West Park senior housing project proves market strength as units nearly sell out

ZACHARY SMITH



Exterior of Franciscan Annex, the final building on the Franciscan Village campus

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The Franciscan Annex, the final building in Franciscan Village's multi-year redevelopment project for senior housing, was completed in January of this year. Not even six months later, management reports that nearly every unit has been filled.

Located at 3684 Rocky River Drive in Cleveland's West Park neighborhood, the Annex is the only new building developed as part of the updated Franciscan Village plan, though its design matches the existing three buildings in the complex.

The Annex adds 62 new units for seniors, but there are key differences compared to the other 176 units across the original buildings.

For example, units in the Annex are not HUD-subsidized, meaning residents must pay full rent. However, these units feature more modern appliances, including dishwashers, which are not available in the other units.

Additionally, the Annex is open to anyone 55 and older, while the other units are designated for seniors 62 and older. Despite these differences, demand for the new building remains high.

According to Franciscan Village property manager Alistar Englehart, nearly two-thirds of the Annex is already occupied, with full occupancy expected by June. A waitlist has also started.



The new kitchen in the Franciscan Annex apartments.

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Local officials, including 17th Ward City Councilman Charles Slife, are not surprised by this demand.

“It’s fully leased because people want quality housing,” Slife said. “Franciscan Village is top-tier and meets the day-to-day needs of its residents.”

“Residents of the Franciscan Annex have access to the same amenities as those in the rest of the village, including a computer lab, library and fitness center, and access to a licensed social worker.



The atrium in Franciscan Village

Zachary Smith

Groundbreaking for the Annex took place in November 2023, coinciding with the ribbon-cutting ceremony for renovations to the existing Franciscan Village complex.

The first building on the site was the former Our Lady of Angels Franciscan Seminary, which was converted into independent senior housing in the 1980s. Two additional buildings followed, with many activity rooms located in what was once the rectory for Lady of Angels Church. Today, the campus includes more than 230 units.

The total cost to build the Annex was approximately \$13 million, according to Englehart.

While major renovations and construction are now complete at Franciscan Village, minor projects are still in progress, such as the construction of a new outdoor gazebo for residents.



The gazebo being built at Franciscan Village

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For West Park Kamm's Neighborhood Development, the completion of this project indicates a positive future for the area.

They're leasing very well, and that proves a successful test case for building new apartment units in the area for other developers," said David Robinson, executive director of West Park Kamm's Neighborhood Development.

Slife agrees, saying, "There is a market here for other senior and market-rate housing. People are eager to come and stay in the neighborhood."