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How Affordable-Housing Services Are Changing

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ANAHEIM, CA—Services that support special populations and a movement to create standards for services in affordable communities are just two of the ways these offerings are changing, Jamboree's George Searcy tells GlobeSt.com.



Searcy: "Providing access to supportive programs and resources where people live is an efficient and effective way to avoid substantially greater costs downstream."

ANAHEIM, CA—**Services** that support special populations and a movement to create standards for services in **affordable-housing** communities are just two of the ways these offerings are changing, **Jamboree Housing Corp.**'s VP of community impact **George Searcy** tells GlobeSt.com. Jamboree and **Innovative Housing Opportunities** recently completed construction of **Rockwood Apartments**, a 70-unit, **multifamily** property here that provides quality housing for families—many of whom were homeless—and formerly homeless individuals living with mental illness.

Rockwood Apartments was developed as a public/private partnership with the **City of Anaheim** on a 1.83-acre urban-infill site adjacent to **Abraham Lincoln Elementary School** and within walking distance of **Lincoln Park** as well as community services and public transportation. The new **apartment** community offers a spectrum of resident services provided by Jamboree and IHO that include life-enhancing programming such as homework assistance and tutoring for young people, plus health and wellness programs for families. Residents will also have the opportunity to participate in IHO's Economic Self-Reliance™ program that provides ongoing **financial**-empowerment tools, career **development** and entrepreneurship training to help residents develop financial security and plan for **homeownership**.

We spoke with Searcy about trends in affordable-housing services and how they are being funded.

GlobeSt.com: What trends are emerging in affordable-housing services being offered?

Searcy: Services have historically, but not exclusively, been a secondary offering at an affordable-housing development and are driven by regulatory requirements. Some developers do undertake large-scale services in affordable-housing developments but that is the exception rather than the rule. On-site services at affordable-housing development are funded at levels lower than almost any other industry standard in the human/social/behavioral health fields in terms of the total revenue available for direct services. The challenge of creating revenue from operating budgets at affordable properties for large segments of the industry creates a “how-little-can-we-spend” approach. This approach isn't created by a lack of caring by most developers about quality services, especially mission-driven non-profits, but rather a question of how, in a competitive funding environment, can more than the bare minimum of revenue be allocated for supportive social services for residents.

Even in California's tumultuous **post-redevelopment-agency** period, combined with the uncertainty surrounding federal corporate tax policy and its impact on the **Low Income Housing Tax Credit** program, there is a continuous effort to rethink how such beneficial activities (both from a compliance and human standpoint) are funded and delivered. There are some initiatives/trends that are influencing the field.

- **Supportive housing and services.** Special populations like veterans, homeless and homeless with mental illness, typically are recognized as requiring services in order to remain successfully and stably housed. This approach, which is accompanied by government funding to ensure it happens, has been proven to reduce the financial burden on the public-works sector to fund additional costs when these populations aren't successfully housed permanently. In Los Angeles, a **study published by the Economic Roundtable** identified costs for police, fire, and other public-service costs.

- **Industry subject-matter expertise** is growing, and policy advocates are working together to create standards that make the case that such services within the context of these housing developments are valuable assets placed in communities. Groups such as the **Partnership for Children and Youth** have founded the collaborative initiative entitled **Housed** that focuses on field technical assistance, standards development and policy/advocacy to improve this valuable niche of after-school programs in affordable housing.



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GlobeSt.com: How are these services being funded in the various affordable communities?

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Searcy: Funding such services occurs through a range of channels, including:

- **Funding basic levels of services** as required by tax-credit or federal funding sources to remain in compliance with the obligations placed upon the development for the life of the funding cycle.
- **Collaborations and grants** that draw upon local capacity and understanding of the needs in each neighborhood are increasingly popular strategies for service delivery. The national movement known as **Collective Impact** widely promoted by the **Stanford University's Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society** and widely recognized through the **STRIVE** collaborative in Cincinnati is a model that is finding new life. Formerly, the term "collaboration" could refer to any connection or agreement between two or more groups to create a partnership. For **developers** who have an appetite for larger-scope community development, this model establishes

standards for such partnerships that focuses on common goals, member capacity, and serves as the critical backbone of the partnership for coordination and impact measurement. One example of such an approach is in [Minnesota](#).

- **Partnerships that incorporate a range of non-profits** are increasingly providing new **economic** models through joint development strategies. Services are delivered through a variety of development partnerships that differ from the Collective Impact Model in that these partners have incentives to collaborate to create development projects jointly as their primary relationship. One example is the East Harlem development created through the [partnership](#) between **Jonathan Rose Companies**, **Harlem RBI** and **Civic Builders**.

GlobeSt.com: What else should our readers know about affordable-housing services?

Searcy: During this time of exceptional change in the national dialogue about how America addresses the needs of all demographic segments of our communities, we expect this conversation about how services are made available to those who choose to live in affordable housing also will undergo an evolution. The research literature is rich with evidence that critical assistance to lower-income families and special populations, like persons experiencing homelessness or various disabilities, including mental illness, are very cost effective in preventing even greater costs than the costs incurred by taxpayers to underwrite housing and services for these groups. The cost-benefit analysis should continue to be clearly articulated. Providing access to supportive programs and resources where people live is an efficient and effective way to avoid substantially greater costs downstream.

Several economic factors have resulted in net positives for the multifamily sector and prices in core markets are at an all-time high. But just how long can the market continue on this trajectory? [Join us at RealShare Apartments East](#) on Feb. 28 and March 1, 2017 for insights on succeeding in the right markets as well as navigating and finding opportunities in the more challenging ones. [Learn more.](#)



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