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Parc Rosslyn Receives US Silver LEED Certification

Seven years ago the Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH), a small nonprofit community development organization, developed a plan to build an environmentally friendly, mixed-income high-rise in the expensive Rosslyn neighborhood of Arlington, VA. Given the higher costs of green design and building techniques, rising construction costs, and construction delays, there were times when this plan appeared to be an impossible dream. Yet, after many years and the support of many partners and community leaders, this dream was finally realized. On Thursday, June 5th, the US Green Building Council certified Parc Rosslyn Apartments as Arlington County's first multifamily residential property to achieve a Silver ranking in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program.

"Parc Rosslyn is a model for the nation in sustainable development," explains Jill Norcross, Executive Director of the Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers (HAND). "Especially considering the creative financing which allowed the project to move ahead with minimal local subsidy, this building is a clear statement for our industry that a high level of green development really is feasible, even by small nonprofit developers." Parc Rosslyn's Silver LEED certification came just days after HAND named the property Best Project Northern-Virginia in its prestigious housing awards competition.

A Local Model of Sustainable Design

Conceived in the 1990's when APAH purchased the property, the basic model for Parc Rosslyn involved transforming an aging 44-unit garden apartment complex into a 15-story, 238-unit, mixed-income, transit-oriented high rise. The plan was made possible by an innovative transfer of density from an adjacent park, preserving urban parkland while allowing Parc Rosslyn to add green features to the development plan. A bridge loan from Arlington County allowed the project to move forward during the predevelopment period.

"Parc Rosslyn provided APAH with enormous challenges," says APAH President/CEO, Nina Janopaul, "challenges that were justified when we see our residents, from all walks of life and a range of incomes, enjoying this beautiful, low-impact, convenient, and affordable building."

Parc Rosslyn is also a successful model of Arlington's local housing development investment. With only \$1,800,000 in soft debt from Arlington County, APAH created 96 new sustainably built affordable homes. This subsidy, less than \$26,000/unit, is significantly less lower than the current cost of affordable housing projects to Arlington County in per-unit subsidy. Market rate rents in the building range as high as \$3,625/month for a 3-bedroom townhouse, while affordable homes in the same property are available for an average of one third of market rate cost, or as low as \$994/month for a one bedroom apartment.

In addition to affordable rents and transit-oriented location, all residents have the opportunity to share in the benefits of Parc Rosslyn's sustainable design. Indoor air quality in the building is improved through the use of non-emitting paints and adhesives, while on-demand water heaters and Energy Star appliances allow households to control energy use. Some residents have reported saving as much as \$100/month on their utilities.

Silver LEED Certification

LEED certification is awarded by the US Green Building Council (USGBC), an independent non-profit dedicated to improving the quality of life through environmentally sustainable development. LEED certification is based on a point system. Projects receive points for environmentally friendly features included in each building. LEED certification and levels depend on reaching certain point thresholds. To be LEED certified, a property must achieve at least 26 points, and to be a Silver LEED project, a property must reach at least 33 points. Parc Rosslyn received 34 points.

“With each new LEED-certified building, we get one step closer to USGBC’s vision of a sustainable built environment within a generation,” said Rick Fedrizzi, President, CEO & Founding Chair, U.S. Green Building Council. “As the newest member of the LEED family of green buildings, Parc Rosslyn is an important addition to the growing strength of the green building movement.”

Some of Parc Rosslyn’s green features include a green roof, on-demand water heaters, a gray-water irrigation system, rooms designed to maximize natural light and heat-retention, and low TIR windows. 30% of the building was created with recycled materials, and at least 20% was created with locally-produced materials. Additionally, Parc Rosslyn scored points for alternative transportation features, including providing residents with access to public transportation and bicycle storage.

Arlington County

[This project simply could not have been completed without the support of Arlington County and its strong affordable housing and green building programs. Using an innovative strategy, this project developed more affordable units through the County’s participation in the site plan process and allowed Arlington to support environmentally friendly features of the project.](#)

Arlington County initially lent \$1.8 million to and provided an additional \$4.5 million to keep the project afloat while APAH addressed a threatened lawsuit.

“One thing that Parc Rosslyn helps demonstrate is that there are numerous opportunities for Arlington businesses to make a difference for our environment,” noted Arlington County Board Chairman Barbara Favola. “By supporting innovative projects like this, Arlington County gets closer and closer to achieving our shared goal of reducing emissions and improving our overall quality of life. The First Silver LEED multifamily building in Arlington is an important landmark in sustainable development in our community. When everyone steps forward to do his or her part, the sum of these efforts will enable us to achieve our shared goal of reducing emissions and improving our overall quality of life.”

APAH is a nonprofit that owns, develops, and preserves quality housing that is affordable to low and moderate-income families, and is the only nonprofit affordable housing developer working exclusively in Arlington County. Founded in 1989, APAH now helps 2,300 Arlingtonians live in stable, secure, and affordable homes each year. In 2008 APAH was named Developer of the Year by the Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers and Best Small Business of the Year by the Arlington Chamber of Commerce.

For more information on APAH and its current projects, visit www.apah.org.

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