

CHERRY
COURT

BY JENNIFER PFAFF

Cherry on top

Milwaukee takes housing to the next level



Public housing isn't what it used to be.

At Milwaukee's Cherry Court, a 120-unit apartment complex for the elderly and people with disabilities, residents can use a communal computer lab for job training or job searching, easily navigate all parts of the handicapped-accessible building and know that their homes are environmentally sensitive.

"As a public entity, we're acutely aware we have to lead by example," said Warren Jones, modernization and development services manager with the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee. "Mayor Tom Barrett is very strong on

green-building projects that maximize utilization of renewable resources. It's important for us to show that these types of technologies can be incorporated into a public type of housing so developers can see it can be used in nonpublic buildings as well."

The city used funding from a Hope VI grant to demolish the former, less-functional, 1960s-era building and replace it with a state-of-the-art, five-story, green building.

A living roof — 20,000 square feet of hardy plants — aids storm-water management and improves roof life, Jones said.



"The plants are arranged in trays that have an almost soil-less composition in them that will absorb almost 90 percent of a one-hour rainfall," he said. "The plants use it to thrive and grow, and whatever isn't used evaporates into the air."

The building was made primarily from locally made and manufactured concrete and precast concrete. Sunshades at the corner lounges keep the sun's heat outside the building in summer and welcome it in winter.

The community room features bamboo flooring, which is a renewable resource. Carpets have a large amount of recycled materials in them, and there is no virgin vinyl or PVC flooring within Cherry Court, Jones said.

"We tried to push the green envelope as much as possible," he said. "We wanted to be sound and sustainable."

That even includes the incorporation of two-stage flush toilets, which offer flush settings that use different amounts of water, so water use can be tailored to the specific needs of the moment.

While Cherry Court's green qualities abound, designers also recognized they had to meet the everyday needs of the residents, many of whom have disabilities.

"Each unit is fully accessible," Jones said. "They have kitchen cabinets, kitchen faucets and bathroom facilities that are usable for people with mobility disabilities. Every unit is adaptable for people with sight or hearing disabilities."

The Neighborhood Network, located on the first floor, has 20 computer stations residents can use and is staffed by people who help residents use programs to gain job skills, create a resume, search for health-related information or complete other tasks.

PROJECT ESSENTIALS

Project Name: Cherry Court

Location: Milwaukee

Submitting Organization: The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee

General Contractor: Reichl Construction Inc., Hales Corners

Project Leaders: Warren Jones, Housing Authority's modernization and development services manager; John Plichta, Housing Authority's retired construction manager

Architect: Quorum Architects Inc., Milwaukee

Engineer: Graef, Anhalt, Schloemer and Associates Inc., Milwaukee

Owner: The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee

Project Cost: \$14.5 million

Project Size: 120 rental units

Start Date: June 2005

Completion Date: August 2006