

The Uptown Lofts: Affordable Housing for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care



More than twenty percent of youth aging out of foster care end up homeless. These youth do not have the same resources and support as other young people and, in many cases, face additional challenges in the transition to adulthood after years in foster care. In 2013 alone, an estimated 133 youth aged out of the foster care system in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

ACTION-Housing, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has been operating a program targeted at these young adults aging out of foster care since 2010. The MyPlace program uses scattered site apartments to provide them with housing and intensive case management services, giving them the stability and support they need to transition from foster care to self-sufficiency.

Building upon its success, and recognizing the need to provide additional supportive services to youth aging out of foster care, ACTION-Housing has designed The Uptown Lofts. Located in the Uptown neighborhood of Pittsburgh, the Uptown Lofts will provide a total of 47 units in two adjacent buildings.

Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS) provided significant legal services to ACTION-Housing in connection with this project. Uptown Lofts was financed using Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. In particular, the focus on youth required RHLS to establish that LIHTCs could be used for this population and would not violate a prohibition relating to housing students in LIHTC units.

The Uptown Lofts in Pittsburgh is the first affordable housing property in Pennsylvania targeted at youth aging out of foster care.

24

supportive housing units

for young adults who have aged out of foster care in Allegheny County in the north building

23

workforce housing units

for local workers with moderate incomes in the south building

A significant component of Uptown Lofts is the direct supportive services that will be provided through individual case management alongside programs and classes that help these individuals build skills for independent living—all in a developmentally appropriate environment. By creating one facility where former foster youth can live with others experiencing the same difficulties and a staff well-suited to helping them, this project will ease the transition from homelessness to independence.

The Uptown Lofts won the first ever Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency Innovation in Design Award.

The two buildings in The Uptown Lofts were designed using different energy efficiency standards—the north building was designed to meet Passive House standards and the south building was designed to meet the 2012 International Energy Code standards. This will enable ACTION-Housing to compare construction costs, energy consumption, and operational expenses for the two standards, providing critical information that will inform the design of future projects.

Work on the buildings began in December 2013; the project is expected to be completed in late 2014 or early 2015.

