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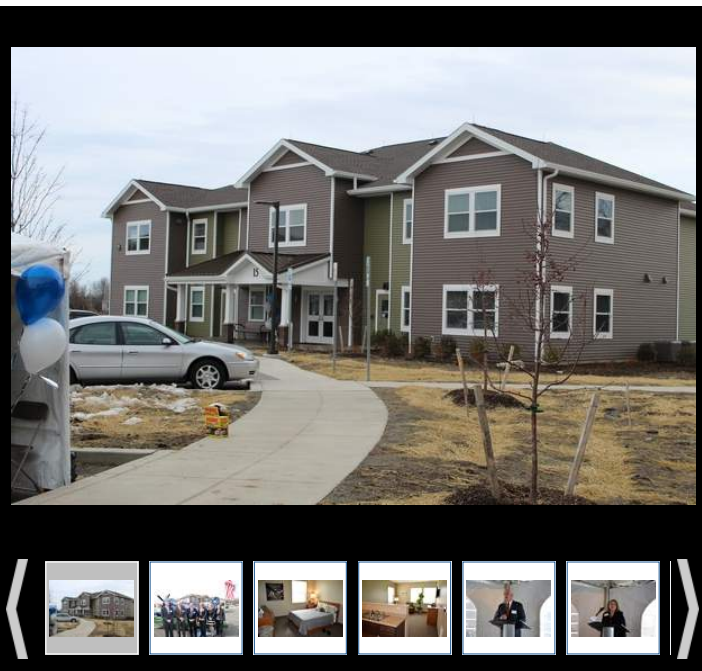
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# Skybird Landing opens in Geneseo

By **BEN BEAGLE**  
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Provided Photograph  
 One of the six buildings that make up Skybird Landing apartments in Geneseo. The 60-unit development from DePaul Properties features both affordable and supportive housing options.

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For much of the past 15 months Mary Jane Hedges watched the apartment buildings for Skybird Landing take shape behind Country Max off Lakeville Road in Geneseo.

She watched the project's progress from her own apartment complex down the road and as she learned more about the affordable and supportive housing development she decided she wanted to call it home.

She was among the first two dozen residents to move in at the end of February, and last week celebrated the official opening of the affordable housing development.

"It's everything you would expect in apartment living and more," said Hedges, a retiree who has owned two homes and lived in two other apartment complexes. "I like the brand-new, state-of-the-art qualities of the apartments."

The \$17 million project by Gates-based DePaul Properties was five years in development, said DePaul President Mark Fuller, and included dozens of architects, suppliers and community partners who worked on conceptual, zoning and funding needs.

"The effort," he said, "speaks to the great need here for affordable housing."

Skybird Landing features 60 newly-constructed one- and two-bedroom apartments spread across six buildings along Mustang Circle off of Megan Drive.

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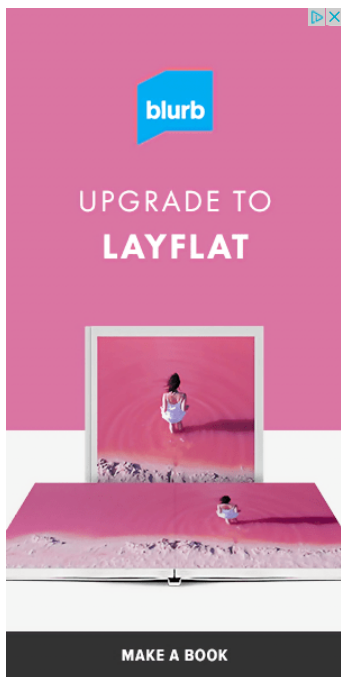
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Half of the apartments are designated affordable housing and are for households with incomes at or below 60 percent of the area median income, according to the state Office of Homes and Community Renewal, a partner in the project's development.

The other 30 apartments are called supportive housing and are available to tenants with a history of homelessness who will have access to supportive services and rent subsidies through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative, which is part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's \$20 billion, five-year housing plan to build and preserve more than 100,000 units of affordable housing and 6,000 units of supportive housing statewide.

Since 2011, HCR has invested \$442 million in the Finger Lakes region and created affordable housing for about 14,650 residents.

HCR's financing for Skybird Landing includes federal and state low income housing tax credits that will generate nearly \$12.7 million in equity, \$3.5 million through the Supportive Housing Opportunity Program, and \$200,000 from the Rural Area Revitalization Program. Additional funding was provided by the NYS Office of Mental Health and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

At Skybird Landing, on-site services include job training and skills to promote stability, health and independent living.

The apartments, said Leonard Skrill, upstate director of development for HCR, "serve as a path for people to get economic stability with freedom from the burdens of rent."

The inclusion of on-site support services make the project unique for the state Office of Mental Health, said Brett Hebner, the agency's director of housing.

The agency has traditionally provided capital and operating funds for projects, and assisted with debt services in the past. The inclusion of support services such as those at Skybird Landing, Hebner said, would "no doubt have a life changing and stabilizing effort on residents for years to come."

"We seek out communities where there are areas of need and work with the community to bring concepts to reality," he said. "We at OMH would not have much effect without the dedication and service of an agency like DePaul."

Michele Anuszkiewicz, director of Livingston County Mental Health and Community Services, called "safe, affordable housing a basic human right."

"Without basic needs being met," she said, people are not able to be their "best self." "We need folks that care about the residents, and we need the community they are in to provide these services."

Jennifer Rodriguez, Livingston County's director of public health, said when people don't have the stress or worry about affording housing "they can focus on other needs to meet such as nutrition or caring for chronic health ailments" that can improve their lifestyle.

Amy Pollard, president at CEO of UR Medicine Noyes Health, noted that Skybird Landing reflects a change in attitude about healthcare.

"For years, healthcare was like a silo and we each did our own little part. As I look around, I see many of those parts, but now we are working together to take care of the people in our community," Pollard said.

Skybird Landing's amenities include a community room, lounges, computer lab, laundry rooms with free laundry - residents just need to supply the detergent - workout rooms, a shared outdoor space and office areas for the supportive units.

The supportive apartments are also furnished.

All apartments come with basic cable, a flat-screen television and a large storage area.

Apartments also have a call system which allows tenants to let guests into their building or call security.

The name Skybird Landing is a tribute to the nearby National Warplane Museum, a military aviation and history museum. The buildings and apartments feature murals and photographs reflecting aviation themes, including the museum's annual airshow, and the history of Geneseo.

About half the apartments were filled by the March 14 opening. The remaining apartments are expected to be filled within weeks.

Kay Stevens, a resident, said she welcomed the security and staff's attentiveness.

"The professional staff is very much appreciated," she said. "They listen and do what it takes to help you."

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Betty Barnhardt, also among the first to move in, has found Skybird Landing to be a welcoming place where she has made friends.

"I feel so comfortable here," Barnhardt said. "I feel I belong here."

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