

Housing Redevelopment Tour Leaves Residents Hopeful For Oakhill Jackson Future

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CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa - It's been more than four years since flood water destroyed Cedar Rapids homes and buildings. The water engulfing 1,300 blocks of the city destroying more than 1000 homes.

On Saturday, city leaders and residents gathered to celebrate the progress of one of the hardest hit spots, the Oakhill Jackson neighborhood. It was part of the City's self-guided Housing Redevelopment Tour.

"Oakhill Jackson is a great place to live and work because you're surrounded by committed people that care about their neighborhood and worked really hard to bring their neighborhood back after the flood," said Lynette Richards, the President of the Oakhill Jackson Neighborhood Association.

People flowed in and out of two apartments. The Oakhill Jackson Brickstone and The Village at 12 & 6. Both complexes were built to bring people back to the Oakhill Jackson neighborhood.

"Strong neighborhoods mean a strong Cedar Rapids. Although some people maybe don't live in the flooded areas, it's important they recover because their housing price will reflect the overall greater good for Cedar Rapids," said Mayor Ron Corbett.

Dennis Hagan was one of those people. He doesn't live on the southeast side, but showed up on Saturday to take a look at what's changed in the area. "It's a nice change, and it will help Cedar Rapids," he said.

Since 2008 the city has invested \$200 million in replacement housing. That is in both public and private funds. About \$94 million is in rental properties, the remaining \$106 million is in owner occupied properties.

"We lost over one thousand homes after the 2008 flood and as of today we've now created 13 hundred and 11 units. We actually have more housing stock than we did prior to the flood," said Corbett.

Two programs, the Multi-family new construction program and the low income housing tax credit project, brought Oakhill and The Village complexes to the area. Oakhill is part of the Low income project, The Village is part of the Multi-Family program.

"Here in Cedar Rapids they were committed to doing the right thing. We were lucky that we had a plan and we were ready to go, and since then I think it's been a win-win for everybody," said Dale Todd, Project Manager of the Oakhill Jackson Brickstones.

The Oakhill Jackson Brickstone opened about a year and a half ago. The 93-unit is income restricted but is considered workforce housing.

Todd said the complex has seen a lot of success despite many people telling him not to invest because it was too risky.

"It's popular to be down here now, for a long time it wasn't. This can only be seen as a good thing," he said.

The City also implemented programs like ROOTs and HAND, which offer incentives for people to rebuild or buy homes. Many told TV9 that the key to rebuilding a strong neighborhood is finding a good balance of apartments, homes, and green space. "I think the most important thing is to approach the growth and change with optimism, but a sense of care that we don't develop just a wall of apartments," said Richards. Many people touring the area on Saturday, believe the Oakhill Jackson neighborhood will soon have that right balance.