

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

# First Senior-Focused Affordable Housing Development in 50 Years Opens in Newtown

This comes as Sarasota County rents keep skyrocketing, surpassing a countywide median overall rent of \$2,000 a month for the first time late last year.

By [Kim Doleatto](#) • February 2, 2022



The new Amaryllis Park Place apartment building at 912 N. Orange Ave. in north Sarasota welcomed residents for the first time yesterday.

Sarasota leaders, including city commissioners and U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, gathered to celebrate the opening of Amaryllis Park Place yesterday morning. The affordable 84-unit apartment building on Orange Avenue will serve residents 62 years and older.

The project broke ground in the early summer of 2020 and replaced a subsidized housing project called Newtown Heights, which was more than 80 years old and had no central air conditioning. Amaryllis Park Place has solar panels.

The former Newtown Heights was a 60-unit, segregated housing project and the first federally sponsored housing development in Sarasota, built “around the time Black people were being pushed from Overtown in the Rosemary District into Newtown,” said William Russell, president and CEO of the Sarasota Housing Authority.

A 1941 article from the Sarasota Herald-Tribune announced Newtown Heights with the headline “Negro Housing Permit Issued” and named Ralph Twitchell as the architect. It cost \$200,000 to build at the time, and the architectural plan was described in the article as “simple, with smooth lines and sparing use of tropical color.”

A copy of a 1941 news article announcing the opening of a segregated, low-income housing project in Newtown. The 1941 article announcing the previous development, Newtown Heights, a segregated, subsidized housing project. It was torn down to make way for the new Amaryllis Park Place.

“A former resident of that development just signed a lease to move into the new one. Others are moving in as we speak,” Russell said.

Of the roughly 20 residents who began moving in yesterday, Russell said husband-and-wife John and Janet Jackson love their new unit, and Janet was especially “hot to trot to get their stuff moved in,” he said.

Amaryllis Park Place will rent half of its 84 units to those making no more than 60 percent of the area median income (AMI), which amounts to \$32,460 a year for one person, and \$37,080 a year for two people. Those units will cost \$788 a month for a one-bedroom, and \$922 a month for a two-bedroom apartment.

The other half of the units will go to those who make less than 50 percent of the AMI. All residents must be at least 62 years old to qualify.

This comes as Sarasota County rents keep skyrocketing, surpassing a countywide median overall rent of \$2,000 a month for the first time late last year. “There’s always tremendous demand,” Russell said. “We have to close our wait-lists for periods of time. We knew that affordable housing options for the elderly and other retiring baby boomers are a very finite resource.”

Funds for the \$22 million Amaryllis Park Place came from \$14 million in private equity from the sale of federal low-income housing tax credits to Enterprise Community Investments. The City of Sarasota put \$1.3 million in sales tax funds toward the project.

The Sarasota Housing Authority next plans a major renovation of McCown Towers on Boulevard of the Arts, which Russell hopes to kick off in April. It has 75 HUD-subsidized one-bedroom units to serve the elderly who qualify.



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