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Chestnut Hill Realty Building Communities

September 20, 2019 - Spotlights

George McHugh

Dave Risko

Immersive Community Experience

“Simply providing a safe, secure and clean place to live is no longer enough for today’s apartment residents,” said George McHugh, President of Property Management.” “What people now are looking for is an immersive community experience with extensive on-site amenities and services without the responsibilities and time commitments of home ownership. CHR is committed to not only providing our residents beautiful apartment homes in which to live, but also to enhance their enjoyment of the community experience,” McHugh said.

Many of the apartment properties owned and managed by CHR include amenities such as community rooms, swimming pools and tennis courts. “Now we’re going beyond that and expanding opportunities for community interaction,” McHugh added.

Rent Café phone app

Be Our Guest event - The Tomorrow Fund

A Focus on the Customer

In a highly competitive real estate market, a customer-oriented approach can help to differentiate a company from its competitors. CHR seeks to extend the longevity of its customer relationships by offering a menu of services and lifestyle-oriented amenities that meet their evolving housing needs. From short-term furnished apartments to long-term unfurnished apartments, CHR can assist young professionals looking for their first apartment to retirees who are downsizing to smaller quarters or choosing a luxury apartment community for their retirement.

“CHR sponsors many community-building activities and events that bring residents together,” said David Risko, Vice President of Property Management. “This goes along with the goal of building community at our sites. The fact that CHR sponsors numerous resident events over the course of

the year provides a number of opportunities for residents to interact with both the staff and their neighbors. The events are always fun and many come with a charitable component allowing the properties and its residents to give back in some way.”

The Company’s onsite property staff maintains regular and timely communication with residents through a series of channels. There is an emphasis on quality and timely customer service. Apartment residents, for example, have 24x7 access to a comprehensive online resident portal Rent Café, which allows them to process rent payments and maintenance requests. Each property has its own Facebook page, which provides community information, lifestyle-related posts on topics ranging from decorating their homes to events happening in the neighborhood, and a channel to connect with other residents.

Hancock Estates’ Home Office Center

Longwood Towers - Brookline, MA

CHR is building a series of resident services and lifestyle centers at select properties, with a focus on creating amenities that offer flexible spaces that transition seamlessly from business to leisure pursuits, and encourage community interaction. These centers offer entertainment suites with multimedia capabilities, resident lounges, complimentary gourmet coffee, fitness centers and

swimming pools. For those residents that work from home, CHR has designed Home Office Centers, which provide attractive, state-of-the-art workspaces.

Ed Zuker is especially pleased to introduce the Home Office Center to the Company's mix of amenities. "People want and need flexibility with regard to where they work," he said. "The workplace is no longer exclusive to a building where a company is based. Today's workplace is anywhere you can find a Wi-Fi signal, comfortable seating, and a little quiet space. We're excited to be able to provide attractive, state-of-the-art spaces where residents can work independently, or even invite their colleagues for meetings."

The Company's efforts to create or improve the resident experience at all of its 32 apartment rental properties are ongoing. David Risko added, "People often ask if we're done enhancing our rental communities, if we've completed everything we've set out to do. The answer to that is an emphatic 'no.' The CHR way is to continually invest in our properties and keep them up to date while making them as livable as possible. We look forward to maintaining the highest levels of customer service and opportunities for further enhancements in the future.

"Our jobs are to provide people with homes," commented Risko, "a place where they can feel comfortable and at ease at the end of their day. The goal of building community within our sites is an extension of that theme. Besides being generally the right thing to do, the building of community from a business standpoint helps to foster greater resident retention and ultimately lower turnover costs. Residents will develop a greater pride in their community and neighbors and may have no interest in leaving."

Hancock Village resident event

Hancock Village resident event

Be Our Guest

Also in the spirit of creating communities, CHR has launched a program called “Be Our Guest” to invite and encourage community organizations to use its amenity spaces at no charge.

The ‘Be Our Guest’ program provides local businesses and non-profit organizations complimentary use of Chestnut Hill Realty’s amenity spaces for meetings, mixers, or events. The locations include Brookline, Chestnut Hill, Norwood, Framingham, and Plainville. The Be Our Guest spaces include conference rooms, swimming pools, movie theatres, ball fields, tennis and basketball courts, catering kitchens, activity rooms and lounges.

Three notable examples of these enhanced communities are Regency Plaza, a landmark Providence, R.I. apartment community, Water View Village Apartments in Framingham, MA and Village Green Apartments in Plainville, MA.

Regency Plaza

A five-year improvement project at the Regency Plaza in Providence, R.I., was geared toward attracting a growing segment of apartment residents who are seeking more lifestyle choices by moving to more urban areas and selecting apartment communities that offer a broad array of on-site amenities.

Residents at the Regency Plaza property now enjoy a plush, newly designed lounge, fitness center, movie theater, catering kitchen, state-of-the-art conference rooms and an Internet cafe to accompany the existing swimming pool, hot tub, tennis court, putting green and grilling area. The interiors follow the owners’ mandate: subtle, elegant, timeless furnishings and finishes that instill a sense of comfort and pride for the residents.

Also added was the newest style apartment home, the Arlington, which features an open concept kitchen with breakfast bar, choice of custom cherry wood or neutral painted kitchen cabinets, hardwood floors, granite countertops, upgraded stainless steel appliances, an in-unit washer/dryer and generously sized closets.

“A growing number of apartment residents are seeking to greatly augment their lifestyle and activity choices by choosing apartment communities that offer a wide variety of on-site conveniences,” said George McHugh. “Their home is not just within the four walls of their units; it is the community space that they live in. For this group, less time spent commuting and more time doing equates to a higher quality of life.”

Water View Village

In 2016, CHR celebrated the completion of a new 8,950 square foot resident services and lifestyle center at Water View Village apartments in Framingham, MA. The lifestyle center is part of a multimillion-dollar property improvement program.

Since acquiring the 281-unit Water View Village apartment complex (originally known as Edgewater) in 2012, CHR has focused on improving the resident experience at the community by upgrading its infrastructure and amenities. These investments include renovating apartments and hallways and building and/or redesigning desirable amenities including a new resident services and lifestyle center.

The new resident services and lifestyle center includes a community room, movie theatre, activity room, fitness center, and an innovative home office center that are designed to extend the living area of Water View Village residents, promote more interaction and opportunities for social activities, and enhance their enjoyment of Water View Village.

“It’s gratifying to see our vision for Water View Village come to fruition,” said Ed Zuker. “The investments we’ve made to improve the property and build a community our residents can be proud to be part of have been well worth it. Not only can you see the positive changes, but also you can feel a renewed vitality at Water View Village. And, we’re not done yet. We want to be known as one of the finest apartment home communities in Framingham.”

Village Green Apartments clubhouse
(before renovation)

Village Green Apartments clubhouse
(after renovation)

Village Green

In 2016, Chestnut Hill Realty completed the construction of a new 9,075 square foot resident services and lifestyle center at Village Green Apartments in Plainville, MA. The center represented the final phase of a \$13 million property improvement program launched in 2009.

Since acquiring the 400-unit Village Green apartment complex in 2007, CHR has focused on enhancing the image and appearance of the community and upgrading its infrastructure and amenities. These investments include new landscaping and hardscaping to create a more welcoming entrance and park-like feeling to the property, resurfacing and painting building exteriors, renovating apartment units and hallways, and building and/or redesigning desirable amenities including a new resort-style pool and sundeck, tennis court, basketball court, and a resident services and lifestyle center, which includes a Wi-Fi lounge, movie theatre, activity/function room, conference room, fitness center and an innovative Home Office Center, all of which are designed to extend the living area of Village Green residents, promote more interaction and opportunities for social activities, and enhance their enjoyment of Village Green.

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