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IREM President's Message: Housing with Heart - Meeting the deeper needs of vulnerable residents

August 01, 2025 - Owners Developers & Managers



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Driven by a growing awareness of the complexities of homelessness, veterans' issues, substance abuse, and mental health challenges, there has been a significant rise in supportive services within the multi-family affordable housing industry in recent years.

From health care coordination and mental health counseling, to addiction recovery, life skills training, employment support, and childcare, on-site or closely coordinated services can be literally life-saving for those facing profound barriers to well-being – whether due to chronic homelessness, mental illness, substance use disorders, physical disabilities, or age-related challenges.

Supportive services are a mantle that multi-resident property owners and managers should take up, especially when serving vulnerable populations like veterans, seniors, and the formerly homeless – but the reasons are not completely philanthropic.

Yes, the priority is to create a pathway to recovery and integration for the formerly homeless; to foster independence and improved health outcomes for people with disabilities; to ensure seniors can age in place with dignity and support; and to provide stability for families with children at risk of entering the foster care system.

But, property owners can also benefit from providing supportive services. Residents receiving support are more likely to stay long-term, translating into stable occupancy, fewer marketing costs, and less down time between leases. Supportive services can prevent behaviors that lead to costly repairs. Improved tenant relations, enhanced property reputation, and decreased strain on area emergency services are all potential outcomes.

All that said: let's keep our focus on what truly matters. Ultimately, the core purpose of these services is to support those who need them most.

We had a great lesson in the power of AI and its practical applications in the real estate industry at our July 10 AI ChatGPT Workshop Training Seminar, held in conjunction with our Industry Partners Appreciation Night and Networking Event at Granite Links in Quincy. Many thanks to all who joined us for this insightful session – and to our generous event sponsors Flynn Law Group, ServiceMaster by Gilmore, and Norfolk Companies. We also extend our appreciation to raffle donors Norfolk Companies, Flynn Law Group, Certa Pro Painters, and Service Master by Gilmore.

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