

Apartment owner is key in fighting blight

Ken Ippolito's purchase, cleanup of properties lifting neighborhoods, officials say

By Dave Scott

Beacon Journal staff writer

CANTON: Ken Ippolito and his legion of workers fight blight with hammers and paintbrushes.

The plan: Buy a drug-infested, crime-ridden but structurally sound building, strip it down to the studs, fix it up with clean new accommodations and wait for new renters to move in.



Ippolito

He has found that they come in droves, as recently shown at the 78-unit Legends Pointe apartment complex on Trinity Place Northwest in Canton. When he announced it was open for leasing, people lined up for two blocks.

It's not the first success for Ippolito's

plan.

In 2006, he did a similar project at the 200-unit complex then known as King James Court.

Now known as Chesapeake Pointe Apartments, the buildings are part of the Akron police District 5. In 2006 that district reported 13,701 police calls of various kinds. The next year, the calls were reduced to 12,999. More serious crimes were up. Aggravated assaults increased from 31 to 37 and robberies were up from 51 to 67. Burglaries declined from 249 to 233.

More detailed crime statistics, especially those focused on just the apartments, were not available.

"When he came in and cleaned up the area, landscaped everything, hired security and evicted some of the tenants that were living there, things were incredibly cleaned up and things were getting better," said Akron Ward 10 Councilwoman Kelli Crawford.

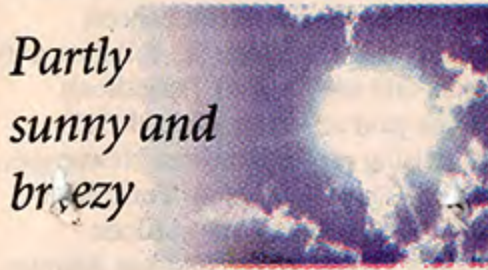
Garry Moneypenny, who has 36 years in law enforcement as a Spring-

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Anthony Moore (left) owner of Moore's Modern Construction, supervises Chuck Davis as he works on a ceiling at the Legends Pointe apartment complex in Canton, which was purchased by Ken Ippolito this year.



Partly sunny and breezy

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field officer and police chief and chief deputy in the Summit County Sheriff's Office, preceded Crawford in the Ward 10 council seat and was there when Ippolito cleaned up King James Court. He is running for the same council spot this year.

Asked whether Ippolito's work made a difference, he said: "You know that's where you had that girl who was killed [earlier this year] by a stray bullet. But where that occurred was not the King James area but the area in the back that was not purchased by him. But my overall opinion is this: He clearly beautified the area. He turned it into not all subsidized but some people who were renting. I know he did record checks [on people wanting] to move in and I know people were denied a chance to move in. He was very responsive to when I received citizen complaints."

On the whole, Moneypenny said, building improvements do help fight crime.

"If people don't feel good about where they live, they don't take care of where they live," he said.

Quick results

The Canton project was finished quickly. Ippolito took control of the buildings out of bankruptcy court on July 22 at a price of \$701,000. Repairs cost \$500,000 and the work was completed last week.

At one point he had 56 employees on the site, including five men who consider themselves homeless.

"I appreciate everything he's done for me," Chuck Moore, one of the former homeless workers, said while he finished drywall last week. "Without him, I don't even know where I'd be right now; I'd probably be in a shelter."

Ippolito was standing nearby and quickly added: "And Chuck has shown his appreciation by being a superstar and outstanding worker."

The son of the Cleveland Browns' former doctor Vic Ippolito, he often uses sports metaphors, gives employees nicknames like "closer," "legends" and "superstar" and frequently talks of "positive mental attitude."

'A great identity'

"We want everyone to have a great identity. That's why the nicknames," he said.

He also claims to get strong



KAREN SCHIELY/Akron Beacon Journal

Kevin S. Radsick, renovation supervisor for RLI Enterprises, says tenants at Legends Pointe apartments in Canton are grateful for the renovations and beautification.

effort from his employees for even the most menial jobs.

"Day One we had 20 people picking up litter all day," he said.

Then they concentrated on removing 588 trees that "created crime and drug activity because it was dark and shady."

Residents pleased

Kevin Radsick, who was in charge of the operation for Ippolito, said Legends Pointe was not a pretty place when he took over.

"When Ken bought the property, 22 people were here, [it was] drug infested, crime infested," he said. "He puts money out for flowers, picnic tables. People come out to us saying, 'Thank you for making us a good clean place to live.'"

Iris Matos was one of the 22 people living in the apartments when Ippolito took over.

"Oh, it's 100 percent nicer," she said. "We are a low-income family and they replaced my whole apartment, new appliances and air conditioning. I mean, that was a 180-degree turnaround for the place."

Her neighbors have changed, too.

"A lot of nice people have moved in," she said. "Middle-class people and stuff. I mean, I really like the place now. We had a pool that was green. You felt like a Green Monster would come out of there."

She pays the same rent, \$425 a month for a two-bedroom

apartment.

"Most of the apartments were all empty," Matos said. "Now they are all full. I'm happy. ... I'm very pleased."

Moore, the formerly homeless man and drywaller, said it is satisfying to make people happy.

"We done some [work] down below and they moved in and I've just finally met some of them," he said. "They really enjoyed it. It turned out nice. The place gets really cozy after it's carpeted, it's painted. It's like a brand-new building."

Ippolito said the repairs were made without making anyone move. Those on subsidized housing who couldn't afford higher rent were allowed to stay in their old home at the same old rate. They also had the chance to move to nicer apartments.

Rents start at \$435 a month. Most are conventional leases, but some are government subsidized.

Legends Pointe is the 29th apartment complex Ippolito has developed. At any given time, he owns two or three, but he plans to sell them and move on to the next project.

He isn't shy about saying he makes money on the deal.

After putting about \$1.2 million into Legends Pointe, he hopes to sell it for about twice that amount.

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