

[Back to article](#)



Printed on page B1

## first new west bartow construction project in decades

# Senior Housing Complex Opens in Bartow

By [Suzie Schottelkotte](#)  
THE LEDGER

Published: Thursday, November 26, 2009 at 10:41 p.m.

BARTOW | The Manor at West Bartow, a 100-unit elderly housing complex, is the first new construction project in that community in decades, local leaders said.

"It's a great project for this community," said Rufus Stephens, a longtime West Bartow resident. "We were hoping this would stimulate more development, but with the economy the way it is, that might take awhile. But that's OK. It will come."

The Manor opened to new residents last month at 450 N. Gordon Ave. So far, managers have filled 54 rooms, said project spokesman Steve Boyer, and applications are pending for additional residents.

The Lakeland Housing Authority pulled together financing to build the \$10.5 million complex, including assistance from local government. Bartow's Community Redevelopment Agency provided \$400,000 to extend Gordon Avenue, which opened that area to future development. The county waived fees totaling about \$425,000, and the Housing Authority qualified for an \$850,000 loan through the Florida Housing Finance Corp. Combined with \$9.1 million in financing, the public assistance made the project work, Boyer said.

The CRA initiated the assistance as a loan, but converted it to a grant last year.



PAUL JOHNSON | THE LEDGER  
THE MANOR AT WEST BARTOW, a new senior housing complex, is now open with 100 units for residents 62 and older.

Terry Hunter, a longtime member of the CRA, said the agency always had planned to extend Gordon Avenue, and this project provided that opportunity.

"This allowed us to get the road built, which allows the property across the road to become available for development," Hunter said. "It provides access, and that was our interest in it."

The Manor is built on five acres that had been a cow pasture, said Stephens, who served on the CRA and the West Bartow Front Porch Revitalization Council.

"Lakeland Housing Authority was a good match for what we wanted to do with that site," he said. "The community viewed that as a good site for housing, but the owners wanted to see it developed as a commercial site because they could get more money. This way, it worked out well for everybody."

Stephens said the community worked with the Lakeland Housing Authority to bring the project off the drawing board.

"They had a good track record, and we were glad to see that," he said. "And when you don't have any other suitors, what do you do? But it's all worked out well."

The Manor provides housing for residents 62 years old and older who have limited income and qualify for rental assistance, Boyer said.

"Some pay as little as \$182 a month for a \$700-a-month unit at market rate," he said. "We have all kinds of activities for the residents, too."

The authority staged a barbecue this week to celebrate the project's opening.

Hunter said he's hopeful the project will trigger additional development in that area as the economy recovers.

"Before, that area was landlocked and nothing could happen," he said. "Now that it's open, we're looking forward to more growth in that area."

[ Suzie Schottelkotte can be reached at [suzie.schottelkotte@theledger.com](mailto:suzie.schottelkotte@theledger.com) or 863-533-9070. ]

This story appeared in print on page B1

Copyright © 2009 TheLedger.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.