

“RCI Partner increases accessible units to meet Warriors in Transition housing needs”

Lincoln Military Housing (LMH) assumed privatized housing operations at Fort Sam Houston on March 1, 2005. The five year Initial Development Period (IDP) will conclude in February 2010.

With over 900 historic structures, Fort Sam Houston is one of the Army’s most significant historic installations. It is no surprise that forty-two percent of our privatized homes are historic. During the development of the Community Development Management Plan (CDMP) in 2004, LMH and the RCI office agreed that 10% of new housing would be handicapped accessible. These units were completed during the second year of the IDP.

Since taking over housing operations, LMH has made many modifications to convert existing homes to accessible homes for our Warriors in Transition (WT). These modifications include installing ramps, grab bars, levered door handles, elongated toilets, and flexible shower heads. In 2006, LMH recognized a need for additional 2-bedroom accessible units. They approached the Fort Sam Houston Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) office with a proposal to convert additional accessible units in the junior NCO neighborhood of Patch Chaffee, a historic community.

The original Patch Chaffee homes were constructed in 1931 to 1934 as two-bedroom houses in the Spanish Revival Style. The homes are single-story on broad lots with rear service lane entrances. The houses originally featured deep porches across the entire front of the home. Prior to privatization, the Army reconfigured these homes to a three-bedroom, two-bath home and partially enclosed the front porch.

The existing three-bedroom homes were too small to provide market-rate amenities. Therefore, LMH's development plan was to convert the homes back to two-bedroom two bath homes. The conversion restored the original full front porch and fashioned a more spacious living area. Early coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) paid dividends. Their involvement in the design produced a plan embrace by the SHPO and readily incorporated into the Programmatic Agreement between the Fort Sam Houston and their office.

Typically, these renovated historic homes provide residents with a larger master suite, to include increased space in bathroom and closet. The second bedroom closet space is increased, and a separate laundry area created. The kitchen opens into the dining and family room and features an enclosed pantry.

In assessing the re-design of the 2-bedroom units Patch Chaffee for accessibility, LMH selected units with a mild grade leading up to the home. These homes were best situated to facilitate construction of permanent wheelchair ramps. The interior floor plan remains similar to the original plan, however, the two bathrooms are combined into one, to fully accommodate a wheelchair. The bathroom features an accessible shower, full tub, elongated toilet, special cabinetry and new sinks.

To date, LMH has completed seven accessible units in Patch Chaffee and will likely convert more homes. The Partnership between the Army and LMH continues to make huge strides in renovating and constructing new homes at a remarkable pace. Our partner, LMH considers accommodation of our Warriors in Transition a top priority as they continue to execute the development plan.