



## IPad Enhances Leasing Process at Rhode Island Property

"If a picture is worth 1,000 words, imagine what we can do with a slide show and a virtual tour!" says Lenore Coughlin, Property Manager at Cherry Hill Apartments in Johnston, Rhode Island. Cherry Hill's proposal for incorporating an iPad into the leasing process won Preservation Housing Management's first ever "iPad Leasing Contest". PHM Regional Property Supervisor Brenda Hernandez presented her with a free iPad as the prize.



Johnston is experiencing a spike in waiting lists for affordable housing due to hard economic times in the state and an increasing number of visitors are coming from as far away as Georgia and Florida as well. "Frequently, there are no vacant apartments to show a prospective tenant who shows up unexpectedly, leaving me in a bind because people do want to see a unit on the spot," said Coughlin. When the applicant is from out of town, it's especially disappointing. A virtual tour would let them view apartments without having to go inside one."

Demographics and technology drove Coughlin to enter the iPad contest. "Technology is increasingly being used by everyone including seniors. Also, our disabled applicants also tend to be younger these days and having the iPad to show them the amenities will be a real plus. Beginning with events we hold right here at Cherry Hill, we can capture the fun on video and photos. For example, when we host the Providence Civic Orchestra of Senior Citizens or the annual spring Egg Hunt when grandparents invite their grandchildren to decorate eggs and run amuck on the grounds. "My goal is to make Cherry Hill an applicant's home of choice; I want visitors to envision themselves living here all of which is enhanced with the appropriate media that I can use right here in the management office or on the grounds."

Coughlin sees equally exciting possibilities for the iPad's use in leasing through the ability to visually showcase the wider community's offerings for entertainment, activities and services. "There is so much to see in our little town and surrounding area and now we'll be able to let applicant experience it with a touch of a screen - → Mickey G's Clam Shack parked in the driveway in early September serving the tenants fresh clam cakes, chowder, watermelon and cornbread; Rhode Island's breathtaking scenery during New England's four seasons; holiday events downtown. We have some of the best restaurants you'll ever find in a small town, but showing someone a folder full of menus doesn't mean much. Pictures and diners' reviews mean more than a piece of paper. As it turns out, there's an app for that."

But the tour doesn't stop there in Coughlin's plans. Local shopping centers, houses of worship and nearby beaches can be showcased on the iPad. Johnston is conveniently located closely to the state capital and easily accessible from several highways, so showing an applicant how easy it is to get around with a map app can sell its location. Accessibility to services is also important and Coughlin plans to load information about medical centers, community programs and quick links to Rhode Island Housing and HUD. "A huge plus with an iPad - the information can be translated into a different language and even into sign language with the flick of a finger."

"Over the last several years, Cherry Hill has undergone a slow and difficult renovation period; from duct tape fixes to the recent high score of 99b on our most recent REAC inspection. Luckily, most of this progress has been digitally captured thanks to our trusty site camera. I would be proud to show the before and after pictures as a slide show to demonstrate how much confidence we have in our site today.

"I want prospective tenants to fall in love with Cherry Hill; I want them to move in and never leave. I want them to see the look on Fannie's face when we presented her with a gift at her 100th birthday party. I want to introduce them to their future neighbors, their future apartment and their future stomping grounds - without ever having to leave the management office. And now, we'll have the ability to make it real for them."