Low-income housing is largely government funded and can be a huge tax incentive for developers, many are cautious because they are worried about liability and the type of residents they may attract. However, in order to become a resident, you must be referred by a caseworker or social worker. Apartments are filled and assigned by the local housing authority in each state or county. The housing authority works with the property manager to fill any vacancies; however, there are typically year-long wait lists. Residents also must pass a background check and be interviewed. Along with a referral, residents must be employed and make at least double their rent. Rent varies though for each resident based on their income and how large their family is. The break down is complex, covering all levels of income. Rent may be adjusted based on any employment or pay change (www.hud.gov). Typically residents are paying anywhere from 35-50 percent of the median rent in their state. The breakdown for all of this information is covered by Section 42 of the IRS Code. In addition to Section 42, there is also Section 8, also known as the Housing Choice Vouchers Program. These vouchers are awarded based on income and can be used on a variety of housing types, not only low-income developments. They are only awarded to families whose income does not exceed 50% of the median income of the country or metropolitan area. Vouchers are limited to US citizens and not-citizens with eligible immigration status. These vouchers are also limited by the number of government funds (www.hud.gov).

Low-income housing is largely subsidized by tax incentives, such as the low-income housing tax credit. Rent for each individual or family is based on their income. Qualifications for low-income housing and how much residents pay each month can be found through H.U.D. (Housing and Urban Development) and Section 8. Residents are also screened before they are eligible to move in. Many low-income housing communities use an referral only. This is in place to help people that have shown they truly want help and that they will benefit from this type of community. Low-income communities often have programs in place to help with job assistance, language classes, and extra circular activities such as self-defense courses.

As part of my research, I developed two plans for new buildings. One building is a community center with spaces that will benefit each resident. Some of these spaces will be a common area, classrooms, a computer lab, a fitness center, and conference rooms. The other building is an apartment building. Each building will have one, two, three, and four-bedroom units. This research dives into the reasoning behind the building plans and the types of government assistance that is available to the residents.

Throughout this research process, I learned that there is a severe lack in low-income communities and that it would be a beneficial investment for anyone that is interested in it. I also learned that what makes a community like this useful for the residents and what amenities they may need. Each community needs to have resources available to the residents to help adjust to the new environment and get all of the right form filled to qualify for government aid.

WORKS CITED

Upon beginning my research I interviewed the property manager of Bud Bailey Apartments in Salt Lake City. During this interview, I learned that there are often refugee families of eight or nine people living in small three and four bedroom apartments. There are also a lot of small children that live in the apartments that would need help finding their way home after school. I used this information to help develop my plans for the apartments and buildings. When designing each unit I kept the family sizes in mind and I designed each unit with spacious bedrooms that are equal in size and can accommodate an queen size bed or two twin beds and a dresser. I also made sure each unit had plenty or storage as well as its own laundry room. Each unit, with the exception of the one-bedroom, has two spacious bathrooms. In addition, each unit is ADA compliant. ADA stands for Americans with Disability Act of 1990. This means that each unit is wheelchair accessible and can accommodate anyone with special needs, such as being blind, deaf, or a myriad of other possibilities. There is also a large open concept living space for family to gather and spend time together. Each apartment also has large windows in each bedroom and living room to allow natural light to flood their space. The exterior of each building, as well as the ends of the main corridor, are color coded. This is a method of wayfinding that will help children, and adults, find their way home if they have been in the community center or outside. The exterior of each building has panels that are blue, yellow, or green, as well as they, are labeled building A, B, or C. Inside the building, at each end of the central corridor, the wall is painted a specific color (shown below). Each floor number is also painted to match the color on the end walls. Children, as well as adults, will associate their apartment with a certain building color, i.e. blue, and floor color, i.e. yellow.