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Revived building sparkles for new tenants

Orange site takes in middle-income renters

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Suzette Linzer could hardly wait to give her testimonial.

Linzer, one of about 25 tenants who moved into a recently refurbished building at 357-363 Lincoln Ave. in Orange, said her move from a cramped apartment on Scotland Road was a blessing.

Packed into a tight studio apartment for the last two years, the 37-year-old Orange native said finding moderately priced apartments in Essex County can be daunting. So when she heard larger apartments were available for reasonable prices she jumped at the opportunity.

"When I looked at what I was

paying for my studio and what I could pay for a one-bedroom here, I applied and went through the whole process. I was one of the first," she said, noting the close proximity of her new home to her job at a neighborhood church. "Only God could have done something like this."

Linzer joined other tenants, executives of Regan Development Corp. and local and state officials to celebrate the grand opening of the Lincoln Court apartment complex. Tenants began moving in last month.

The 13 three-bedroom, 20 two-bedroom and 10 one-bedroom apartments rent for \$674, \$583 and \$492 a month, respectively.

Yesterday the public got a chance to tour the one-time eyesore, now

renovated with polished wood floors, gleaming tiled bathrooms, brand-new kitchens and a first-floor day care center.

Mayor Mims Hackett Jr. said the grand opening signals rebirth in an area where the five-story building, about a block from the city high school and middle school, stood as an eyesore for about a decade.

"This is for a segment of our community that is normally overlooked — the moderate-income people," Hackett said. "It's the opportunity to get affordable housing for working people."

Sen. Richard Codey (D-Essex) said the focus of the \$8.6 million project is to provide affordable housing to families grossing \$25,000 to \$30,000 annually. About half of the development costs were absorbed by \$3 mil-

lion in federal low-income tax credits administered through the state and \$1.2 million in state balanced housing funds, Codey said.

Developer Larry Regan said his firm, based in Yonkers, N.Y., purchased the vacant building from the city for \$150,000 in 1995 and began rehabilitating the first units about two years ago. He said the remaining 43 units next door are scheduled for completion by October. Regan said the state funds let the company refurbish the building and charge reasonable rents.

Regan has been involved in other renovation projects in Orange and neighboring East Orange, often using funds from the state Department of Community Affairs and the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency.