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MEMPHIS BLUES EARNS PRAISE FOR ALL-RENTAL CONCEPT

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RAVE REVIEWS



UMH Properties has landed on what it believes is the best value in the housing market for renters.

Memphis Blues Breaks the Mold Among Manufactured Home Communities

**UMH Properties' All-Rental Model Earns
Praise of the Industry, Residents**

By Patrick Revere

Memphis Blues is the first and only all-rental manufactured home community in the United States. And the community with a view of the Memphis skyline is drawing rave reviews from its residents, as well as the praise of the industry.

The community won the award for the nation's best from the Manufactured Housing Institute at the annual Congress & Expo this year.

Memphis Blues resident Alexa Lopez, her fiance Edgar, and their two daughters had just come from Texas for work when his job moved. The family stayed in a hotel for two months while looking for an apartment to rent.

"When I saw this online, I was shocked," Alexa said of the community. "This house, at this cost, with your own parking space and patio and yard. The whole community is beautiful. My girls love the playground and the basketball court."

Though Memphis Blues presents itself as new, it's actually a re-built community, brought back to life after closing in the wake of near record-setting high water levels on the Mississippi River in 2011. It was a flood that closed many parts of the city.

The Garza-Lopez family is the first to live in the new 3-bedroom, 2-bath home.

"I thought it was a fake ad," Alexa confessed. "I called Melissa in the middle of the night and told her I was very interested and she called me back first thing in the morning. It was just too good to believe. You get way more here than you can find anywhere else. A security guard? Friendly neighbors. It's so nice. And we have a lot of little community events and we can meet the other neighbors.

"Honestly, this is way more than what I was expecting," Alexa said. "It's very updated and beautiful. We have laminate hardwood flooring and a vintage-modern

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backsplash, dark wood cabinets, a giant master bedroom, and I love that I have my own little laundry room.”

Alexa said when she found Memphis Blues it became clear that it was what she wanted, and what her family needed. Just the prospect of going for groceries, she said, and returning to a third-floor walk-up apartment with two kids was enough to sell her on the value of having the accessible, independent space their manufactured home provides.

Why UMH Properties Opted for an All-Rental Community

UMH Properties operates nearly 7,000 rental homes mixed throughout its more than 100 manufactured home communities in eight states. The company’s experience is that the 16-foot by 70-foot manufactured home with three bedrooms and two baths sitting on a 50-foot by 100-foot lot in a community with ample amenities is the best rental housing value in America.

“UMH has always asked why a community owner cannot get the same financing on our homes used as rental units that any apartment developer obtains,” UMH President Sam Landy said.

Currently, that financing for apartment units is 4%. UMH asked Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to create a program giving rental manufactured homes the same rates as apartments.

“They came back to us and said the prototype should be an all-rental community. We were just starting construction of Memphis Blues,” Landy said. “After careful analysis, we decided to make Memphis Blues an all-rental community.”

On 150 lots at \$60,000 per house, the owner would pay about 7%, or \$4,200 in interest per house. At 4%, the owner pays about \$2,400. That’s over \$300,000 a year in savings for the whole community.

UMH Vice President and regional manager for Tennessee Gina Beasley

said UMH chose manufacturers Clayton Savannah and Fleetwood Homes Lafayette for many reasons, including potential upgrades such as tile showers, large laundry rooms, energy-efficient double-pane windows, and steel back doors.

“After making the decisions on the manufacturers, our focus went toward the high-end appearance, state of the art amenities, and first-class experience. From the beautiful office and landscaping, to the black wrought-iron gated entrance and custom mural, painted by a local artist, no detail was missed,” Beasley said. “Memphis Blues truly is unique and stands out when it comes to what manufactured housing offers.”

How All-Rental Works for the Residents

“Our experience with renters in our homes has been fantastic,” Memphis Blues Manager Melissa Garrett said. “We completely rebuilt the community, we put

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Alexa Lopez and her daughters, Sofia, 2, and Camila, 4, on the porch of their new home at Memphis Blues, a Tennessee all-rental community from UMH Properties. Photo courtesy of the Garza-Lopez family.

in new streets, utilities, perimeter security fences, management office, and amenities.

“Our homes are energy efficient and come with a full kitchen appliance package, washer and dryer hookups, central heating and air, your own personal yard space, covered deck, two-car driveway, a landscaped yard, and storage shed,” Garrett said.

The new, reimagined Memphis Blues had a June 2017 ribbon-cutting. Today, the community is at 100% occupancy and in the fall will open the expanded section of the community, which will provide 50 more new manufactured homes for rent.

Memphis Blues also boasts a business center, basketball court, dog park, a playground for kids and a huge, relaxing patio with an outdoor fireplace lounge.

Garrett and her staff organize events, including holiday gatherings such as Halloween trick-or-treat, a Christmas party, the annual Easter egg hunt and multiple summer barbecues.

“The residents love getting together with their neighbors. I think it makes everyone feel very comfortable,” Garrett said.

More than 30 prospective renters wait on a list to get in the community. Garrett and her staff work with interested home shoppers. She said they encourage prospects who intend to stay three years or less to rent a home. Those interested in a longer-term arrangement are referred to nearby communities where homes are sold.

Garrett said Alexa Lopez’s reaction to the online listing for rental homes in Memphis Blues is common.

“I post photos and get calls from people asking to see the real photos, the photos of the actual home. I had to tell people that photo is the actual home. I’d say ‘I walked right in there myself and took that photo.’ And most of the time people would say, ‘Alright, I have to come look for myself’.

“People coming here are really amazed how nice the community is and how beautiful the homes are. If you were to walk into this house... for \$799 per month? You can’t find this anywhere else,” she said. **MHV**

Patrick Revere is executive editor for the *MHInsider* magazine, as well as the *MHInsider* blog and *MHVillager*, a lifestyle and resources blog for homeowners and residents. He is an award-winning journalist and writer who has written extensively about manufacturing, real estate, management, technology, the building trades and the labor markets.



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