

# The Charlotte Observer

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## Low-income housing group buys Charlotte apartments

### HIGHLIGHTS

NHP Foundation purchased The Pines at Carolina Place for \$18 million

The group will keep rents close to current rates

NHP Foundation is looking for more properties to buy in Charlotte



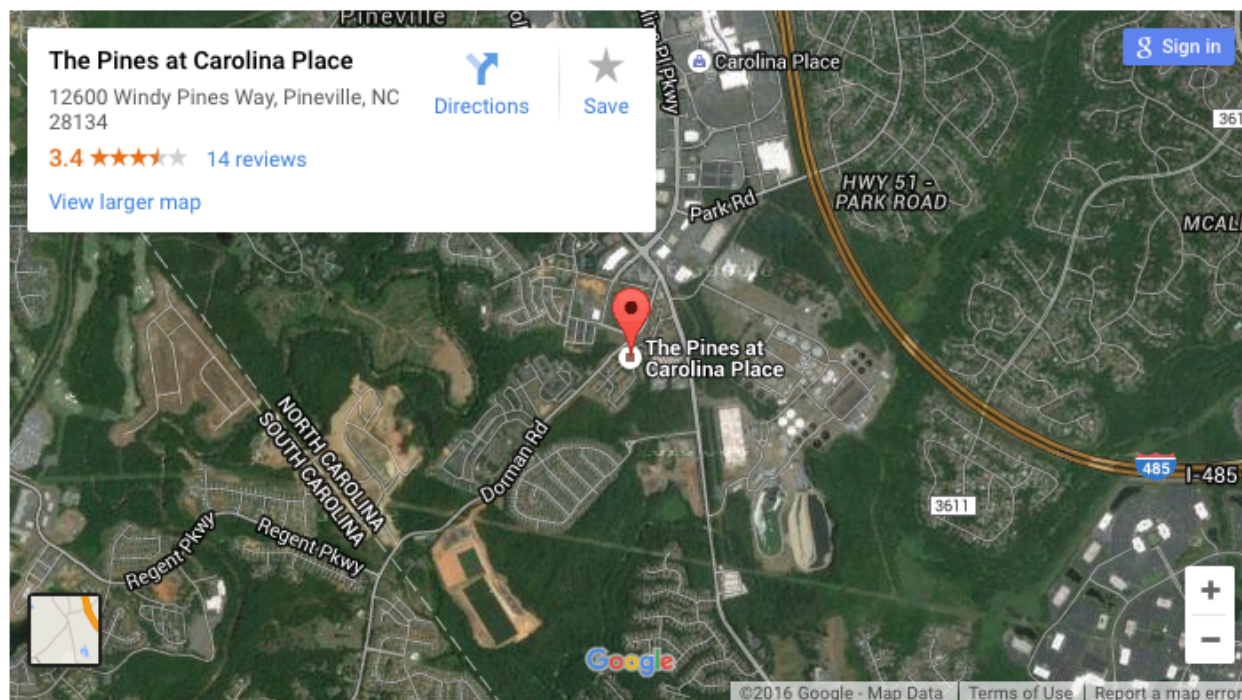
BY ELY PORTILLO

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A non-profit group that buys affordable housing has purchased a 200-unit apartment complex in Pineville for \$18 million, and plans to make other acquisitions in the Charlotte area.

The National Housing Partnership Foundation closed on the acquisition at the end of June. The organization buys properties with lower rents and manages them with the intent of keeping rents low to preserve affordable housing. The NHPF owns 39 properties in 15 states, totaling about 6,600 units.

“We provide housing options for working-class people,” said Jamie Smarr, a Gastonia native who heads acquisitions for NHPF. This is the group’s first acquisition in the Charlotte area. “What we want to do is buy properties and hold the rents affordable, into perpetuity...What we’re committed to doing is buying something and keeping rent increases to 1.5 to 2 percent a year.”



The Low Income Investment Fund, a New York-based group, contributed \$3.7 million worth of equity for the deal. Smarr said such groups, which invest in properties and use low-income tax credits, make the NHPF’s investment strategy viable.

“They expect a return,” said Smarr. “It is much, much lower than what, in particular, a value-add investor would expect.”

Smarr said no residents at The Pines will be displaced. Apartments there are currently listed starting at \$705 a month for a one-bedroom unit. Many residents work at the nearby Carolina Place mall, he said.

“They’re working full-time, but they will find there are less and places they can rent that are decent with the wages they earn,” he said. “We believe that people who work 40 hours a week and still nonetheless earn minimum wage, they deserve nice places to live as well.”