

## Ripley Gardens grow on you



Elizabeth Flores, Star Tribune

Adrienne Ford played ball with her 2-year-old son, Zion, at Ripley Gardens. The housing project received the Adaptive Reuse award for transforming a historic property into a successful low-income housing complex. It sits on the grounds of a former maternity hospital listed on the local and National Register of Historic Places.

A \$16 million affordable living complex in north Minneapolis earns awards and makes dreams come true.

By **RODRIGO ZAMITH**



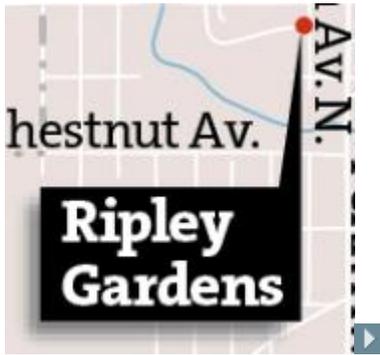
John Dickens, 5, gave his father, Yahya Abdulrahman, a kiss.

**Elizabeth Flores**, Star Tribune



John Dickens made his way out his father's house.

**Elizabeth Flores, Star Tribune**



**[Graphic: Ripley Gardens](#)**

In the middle of north Minneapolis, near avenues of foreclosed houses dirtied by trash and drug deals, lies something of an oasis. Large green spaces, a memorial garden, a two-level garage and -- affordable housing?

"The image that a lot of people have about affordable housing is pretty negative," said Matthew Hendricks, a project manager for Aeon Homes that developed Ripley Gardens. "But some of these properties, you'd never think it was affordable housing walking by."

The \$16 million, 60-unit living complex received the Adaptive Reuse Project award from the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Thursday.

The complex sits on a 1.9-acre site on the corner of Glenwood and Penn Avenues and blends both low-income and market-rate housing. It has been a huge boost for the Harrison neighborhood.

"A development like this provides quality and affordable housing for the community, it's a multi-million dollar investment in the community, and it leverages other investment dollars into the community," said Larry Hiscock, director of the Harrison Neighborhood Association.

"If they're able to be successful, it signals to other people that they can be successful," Hiscock added.

According to Hiscock, land next to the complex with an abandoned gas station and vacant lots was purchased by investors who seek to develop commercial retail space with 30 units of housing above it.

Ripley Gardens resident Yahya Abdulrahman, 52, agrees that the project has become an asset to the community. He said that even though he still sees drug deals and violence across the street, none of it spills onto his block.

"If a person keeps up their property well, you won't even walk on their grass because you see the value and time they put into it, and you respect it," Abdulrahman said.

A good living space can also fuel ambition, he said.

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