Community Housing Network to break ground on Jefferson Oaks development in Oak Park

Completion is expected for fall 2018

By Tyler Clifford

The vacant Thomas Jefferson School building in Oak Park will be redeveloped for a 20-unit apartment complex.

Community Housing Network plans to break ground Tuesday on the 60-unit Jefferson Oaks mixed-income community in Oak Park.
The vacant Thomas Jefferson School building and campus will be repurposed for 20 apartments and the additional 6.8-acre site will get eight new townhome-style buildings for 40 additional homes. Plans include 21 units designated for supportive housing.

The development will be located between Leroy and Saratoga streets along Republic Avenue. Leasing is expected to begin this fall and the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

The $17.6 million projected is supported by the city of Oak Park, Lansing-based Cinnaire, Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Minnesota-based Minnesota Equity Fund and Minnesota-based United HealthCare Services Inc. CHN received $15 million in tax credit reservations from the MSHDA, a part of tax credits for a total of 72 affordable housing units in Oakland County. In conjunction with Cinnaire, United HealthCare invested $14.6 million into the development.

"[United] wanted to become an investor because they are interested in supportive housing. We have 21 units set aside for people who are homeless," said Kirsten Elliott, CHN vice president of development. "People who have stable housing are healthier and have lower health care costs. They want to make sure there is good, quality clean housing for everyone."

The apartments will include one- and two-bedroom units, ranging from 800 to 1,100 square feet, Elliott said. The townhomes will include 1,300-square-foot three-bedroom units and four-bedroom units of 1,400 square feet. All homes will be equipped with washers and dryers.

Families earning between 30 percent and 60 percent of Oakland County's area media income will be eligible for housing. More details on income limits can be found here.

The school's gym will be transformed into a 5,000-square-foot community center that will include a computer lab and library.

Although the school is not designated a historic building, Elliott said they will maintain many historic features such as the facade.

Ferndale-based Susco Shafer Tappas Inc. is the designer. Troy-based O'Brien Construction Co. is the contractor for the project.

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