Jefferson Oaks Update

60 new homes will be ready for occupancy this summer

A former kindergarten room will soon be a home with natural light flowing in from the east and south, a former gym will soon be a community gathering space and a classroom where students once learned art will soon be a two-bedroom, two-bathroom home.

Construction has continued through the winter on Jefferson Oaks, our community of 60 brand new homes in Oak Park. The mixed-income community is designed of high quality residential homes built and maintained to be appealing and affordable for hard-working families and individuals. This will be our largest development to date. The vacant Thomas Jefferson School is being transformed into 20 one- and two-bedroom homes. Forty three- and four-bedroom town homes are in various stages of construction on the campus grounds.

“We’re very excited about having the first homes in Jefferson Oaks nearly ready for families that make our communities work,” says Kirsten Elliott, Vice President of Development. “The 60 new homes will bring a vibrancy to the area and help keep this a wonderful neighborhood for decades to come.”

We have created an opportunity for community members to help welcome new neighbors. Our goal is to provide new residents with a Welcome Home basket of basic needs as well as discount coupons from area merchants and a “Welcome to

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Furnace grant will warm things up for many in Unity Park

Many people in Unity Park won’t find the bitter cold so bone-chilling next winter, or in winters following, thanks to a $25,000 grant to CHN from the Fifth Third Foundation.

The foundation was seeking to make a difference for low- to moderate-income homeowners, at or below 80% of the area median income. C.J. Felton, director of Development, said the idea to seek the funding for furnace replacement and repair came after a bit of brainstorming. “There are a lot of homes in Unity Park owned by people who have lived there for a period of time and who have anywhere from minor rehab to major rehab needs. One of the really difficult ones for a lot of people is when their furnaces are not operating efficiently, or broken. These are households without a lot of disposable income and they may be spending $400-$500 a month on their heating bills.”

He said many homes in the area have older, inefficient furnaces, some dating back 30 years. This grant gives us the opportunity to identify people who would benefit by making their homes more energy efficient, thereby reserving some of their household budget. “It also helps with neighborhood stability,” he says.

Door hangers announcing the first-come, first-served project, including the income qualifications, were placed at every home in Unity Park, except those built by CHN.

Our partner in the project is Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLHSA). They will have an expert visit the homes of those who have inquired, inspect the furnace, and then make a determination on the best course of action. If the furnace can be repaired cost efficiently, they will make repairs. For those that need replacement, a brand-new, energy efficient furnace will be installed.

“We figure with these funds we can could help 10 households with replacement furnaces, or if the furnaces only need repairs, there could be 30 to 40 households assisted,” C.J. says.

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the Neighborhood” resource guide. If you, your organization or place of business is interested in helping providing items for the Welcome Home Basket, please contact Lisa Fuhr at LFuhr@chninc.net.

The homes in the school are expected to be available for occupancy in the late spring and the town homes will follow in the summer.

The first floor hallway is in the midst of being updated from the original (near left) as drywall has been installed and the ceiling is being updated.

Our development partners include the City of Oak Park, Cinnaire, Huntington Bank, Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), Minnesota Equity Fund (MEF) and United Healthcare.
Homeownership for low- to moderate-income earners with high credit scores and little debt who have only dreamed of owning their own homes are now finding it is possible through our Homeownership Program.

This opportunity is possible through our work with both Oakland and Macomb counties and their HOME programs.

“For a lot of people with low to moderate income, the down payment is usually the biggest obstacle when trying to buy a house,” says Rebecca Mix, our Development Assistant who works on the homebuyer portion of the program. “We require that they put only 1% of the purchase price down on one of the homes in the program.” She points to the home on Pearson Street in Oak Park, one of the nine homes in the program, which is listed for $124,000. The buyer of that home would only need to have $1,240 to put down on the home.

And additional incentive is that each county will also provide up to $10,000 in an interest-free loan, serving as a second mortgage. The incentive is not provided in cash, but shows up as a line item at the closing. The funds will be recouped by Oakland County at the time the buyer sells the home purchased in the program. For those who buy a home in the program in Macomb County, the loan is forgiven after the homeowner stays in the home paying their mortgage for five years.

Each of the nine homes in the program has been fully renovated and comes with all brand-new appliances: stove, refrigerator and dishwasher. Hot water tanks, furnaces and air conditioning units have also been replaced, unless they were relatively new. “The idea is that the home will be maintenance free for at least five years,” Rebecca says.

Once work on the homes has been completed, an appraisal is done by a third party and the home is then posted for sale for the appraised price. The home is only available to homebuyers meeting the program’s qualifications and is not available for an open market sale.

A monthly mortgage payment is often less than rent, Rebecca says. For example, the monthly mortgage on the home on Pearson Street will be about $900, compared to rent for a similar-size apartment now going for $1,200. “Not only will it save them money in the long run, it also provides for a more stable housing situation,” she says.

People interested in the program must first fill in the Initial Eligibility Screening form on the bottom of the Homeownership Page of our website. Completed forms need to be emailed to rmix@chninc.net or can be faxed, with attention to Rebecca Mix, to 248-928-0122.
Sooner or later, our work will affect you, your family or someone you know – if it hasn’t already. The need for affordable housing is ever increasing in our communities. We want to continue doing this work, however, our work has become more challenging than ever.

In the past, we have accessed a variety of funding sources to build our multi-family communities for low-wage workers and families and others who are vulnerable. Housing Tax Credits have been a major funding source for our multi-family housing developments. Lately, you may have heard news reports about proposed reductions of some of these valuable funding sources. The National Low Income Housing Coalition commented, “If enacted, the president’s FY19 budget request would lead to the largest reduction to affordable housing and community development investments in decades. By slashing funding for HUD, Mr. Trump’s proposed FY19 budget would lead to more than 200,000 families losing vital federal rental assistance and to the elimination of programs that support state and local efforts to address housing needs.”

These certainly are challenging times. We want to assure you that we remain dedicated to seeking viable funding solutions to continue addressing the urgent and vast need for affordable housing.

We need your help and ask that you assist in whatever way you can. There are opportunities including donating to our Critical Needs Fund as well as our Jefferson Oaks Welcome Baskets. Information on both are on our website.

Together we have already made a difference and we remain committed to continuing our work to impact our community through changing lives.