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WinnDevelopment begins construction on a \$21.5 million adaptive reuse project

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East Haven, CT WinnDevelopment celebrated the start of construction on a \$21.5 million adaptive reuse project to convert the historic former East Haven High School building into 70 mixed-income apartments for seniors (ages 55+). The four-story academic core of the building, which has been vacant for a decade, will be gutted to create 20 apartments of market rate housing, eight apartments for residents earning 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), and 28 apartments at 50% of AMI. An additional 14 units will be available at 25% of AMI and targeted to help those who are housing insecure. WinnDevelopment will offer services to eligible residents in addressing housing insecurities, along with health and wellness initiatives.

“We’re pleased to have the chance to bring critically needed affordable senior housing to East Haven,” said WinnDevelopment president Larry Curtis. “It is also an exciting opportunity to restore a

beautiful historic building to its former grandeur in a way that contributes to the community visually and economically.”

The conversion of the 104,871 s/f building, built in 1936, will include new windows, curtain walls and doors, exterior masonry re-pointing and repair and numerous site improvements, including upgraded HVAC and utilities, paving, super-efficient exterior wall, slab, and roof insulation, a new elevator, native plantings and EnergyStar qualified LED lighting and appliances. The project will create ample amenity spaces for residents, as well as a property management office.

“This project has been a long time in the making,” said mayor Joseph Maturo. “I am thrilled that the property is going to become an income-producer for the town. With the income and operational savings to be derived from the redevelopment of the front of the property, we will be financing a multi-million dollar renovation of the rear of the property for the benefit of all of our Town’s residents. Generations of our town’s residents walked the halls of our historic high school. I am particularly proud and excited that, in partnership with WinnDevelopment and, thanks to the hard work of this administration we are restoring and preserving this historic building for the use and enjoyment of generations to come.”

Financing for the project is coming from federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA); historic rehabilitation tax credits from the National Park Service and Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO); soft debt from the Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH) Flex Program; construction financing from Bank of America and Citizens Bank; Affordable Housing Program funds from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston; energy rebates from United Illuminating; and low-interest permanent loan from BlueHub Capital (formerly Boston Community Capital). As a project partner, the Town of East Haven agreed to a reduced purchase price and a 10-year deferred property tax structure.

“At CHFA and DOH, we are always looking for way to maximize our resources, whether that’s new construction, rehab of existing structures, or adaptive reuse of buildings,” said Seila Mosquera-Bruno, chairwoman of the board of CHFA. “Seniors in this community, as well as across the State of Connecticut, have built it into what it is now. They deserve to live in a nice quality environment as they enjoy retirement and continue on into their years. The majority of the apartments being in the range of 25 to -5 percent AMI and high-end energy efficiency, which reduces utility bills, will help achieve those goals.”

The final unit mix will feature 67 one-bedroom units and three two-bedroom units. A 1973 addition to the building will be demolished to allow for the creation of 55 of the 86 planned parking spaces.

“Adaptive reuse of buildings that played an important role in the life of a town is always welcomed, especially when it will increase the availability of affordable housing for seniors. CHFA awarded \$14.8 million in equity from federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits for this renovation. The LIHTCs are a critical federal resource that allows developers like WinnDevelopment to leverage the private investment in affordable housing that is necessary to make it happen,” said Karl Kilduff, executive director of CHFA.

The Architectural Team is the architect on the project, and Keith Construction is the general contractor. Construction is expected to be complete by June 2020. The new apartment community will be known as The Tyler.

The project has been designed to meet the Passive House Institute's EnerPHit Standard, with applicable historic exclusions, which consists of several energy efficiency and thermal comfort requirements. It is expected to be the first EnerPHit certified multifamily project in Connecticut.

Specific elements, such as air tight assemblies, LED lighting, extensive insulation measures, and super high efficiency heating and ventilation equipment, will be inspected, tested, and verified by Steven Winter Associates, the project's certified Passive House consultant.

"Both the state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits are financial incentives for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. The rehabilitation of the East Haven High School is the first in the nation to combine historic rehabilitation tax credits with Passive House construction techniques to provide safe, affordable housing to the residents of East Haven," said Elizabeth Shapiro, Director of Arts, Museums and Historic Preservation for the Connecticut State Department of Economic and Community Development. "The Department of Economic and Community Development and the State Historic Preservation Office are excited to be a part of a new chapter in the history of the historic rehabilitation tax credit programs where energy efficiency and historic preservation are combined so effectively," Shapiro added.

The completed building will consume approximately 20% less energy than an Energy Star rated new construction home.

"This project will be the most energy efficient adaptive reuse project in our company's history," said WinnDevelopment senior vice president Adam Stein, who leads the project team. "We will meet rigorous new industry standards for environmentally responsible housing while successfully preserving the historic character of East Haven High School."

Located in a residential neighborhood adjacent to a commercial corridor featuring the senior center, banks, restaurants and retail businesses, the former East Haven High School sits on a three-acre site and served as the town's first public high school. The main building, completed in 1936, it is an example of the work of prominent New Haven architect R. W. Foote, and was designed in the Colonial Revival style. That portion of the building, as well an addition built in 1964, will house the planned apartments.

The attached pool, auditorium and gymnasium structures host a number of municipal programs and remain widely used among East Haven residents, especially by seniors and families. Those portions of the building, totaling 62,651 square feet, will remain town property.

Using proceeds from the purchase, tax revenues and roughly \$175,000 in annual operating savings from the sale of the vacant structure, the Maturo Administration is planning to upgrade the pool and

gym, and to convert the auditorium section into new meeting rooms for town government, as well as performance space for community groups.

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