



nerej

Westbrook Village Revitalization Project breaks ground on Phase 1

June 21, 2019 - Connecticut

Hartford, MA The Housing Authority of the city of Hartford (HACH), Pennrose, LLC, and The Cloud Company, LLC hosted a joint demolition and groundbreaking ceremony to kick off Phase I of its Westbrook Village Revitalization Project. At a press conference at the 80-building, 360-unit state-financed moderate income rental housing complex, HACH executive director Annette Sanderson celebrated the start of the revitalization project and what it will mean to the Blue Hills/Upper Albany Ave. neighborhood. “This project is not just about replacing affordable housing, it’s about revitalizing a neighborhood that has been home to Hartford families and city residents for over half a century,” she said. “The buildings and related systems in the post-war housing complex had reached the end of their useful life and were deemed functionally obsolete by housing officials. As a result, Westbrook Village is no longer able to support itself financially, nor can it continue to serve the low and moderate income community or their need for access to affordable housing,” Sanderson said.

Once demolition is completed, plans for Phase I call for construction of 75 new units, 80% of which will be set aside for households with incomes up to 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The remaining 20% will be rented at market rate. A separate mixed-use commercial component of the revitalization is planned for a 10-acre section at the southern edge of the 40 acre site bordering Albany Ave.

Commercial tenants envisioned for that portion of the project include a grocery store, pharmacy, restaurant, retail store and an office and/or programmatic academic space for the University of Hartford and additional space is earmarked for office and/or residential use.

“In a city where so much private money has been spent building downtown housing in recent years, it’s nice to be able to offer new affordable housing to residents and families in the Blue Hills/Upper Albany neighborhood,” said Marilyn Rossetti, chair of the HACH board of commissioners. “That’s exciting.”

Mayor Luke Bronin celebrated the transformation underway in the Albany and Blue Hills neighborhoods. “Alongside the redevelopment of Bowles Park, the work at Weaver High School and Martin Luther King School, the economic development happening on Homestead Avenue and the Albany Ave. streetscape project, Westbrook Village is part of a string of really important projects that

will serve everyone in the Upper Albany and Blue Hills neighborhoods,” Bronin said.

The project will be financed with a combination of state and private funds, tax credits and subsidies. The Connecticut Department of Housing is providing \$9 million for the relocation of current residents as well as remediation, abatement and demolition of the entire site. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will provide nearly \$4 million in rental subsidy for 15 years to insure the affordability of 24 units of housing.

“The redevelopment of Westbrook Village aligns perfectly with the Department of Housing’s mission to strengthen and revitalize communities by promoting affordable housing opportunities,” said Seila Mosquera-Bruno commissioner CT Department of Housing. “DOH is pleased to have worked with HACH, Pennrose, The Cloud Co., the legislature and city leaders to get this project underway.”

State senator Doug McCrory, whose district includes Hartford, applauded the funding, part of a wider influx of federal, state and local funding earmarked for revitalization efforts in Hartford’s North End. “The economic and quality of life investments being made in this and other North End neighborhoods are long overdue,” he said. “These improvements send a message to residents that they matter. They will have a transformative effect on their lives and the local economy.”

Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) executive director Karl Kilduff said, “The CHFA awards to Westbrook Village in Hartford and others throughout the State which are part of larger redevelopment plans that include housing. Units that were uninhabitable have been demolished and will be replaced with mixed-income housing to improve quality of life for the residents, and increasing the inventory of affordable units.”

“The Westbrook Revitalization Project is a prime example of what’s possible when we think creatively and work collaboratively to meet the needs of our communities,” said David Kooris, state deputy commissioner of Economic and Community Development.

Suzanne Piacentini, Connecticut Field Office director, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development agreed. “Projects like Westbrook Village provide a template for cities throughout New England, and the country, looking for ways to convert dated housing complexes into thriving, affordable neighborhoods,” she said.

The project is expected to be built out in six phases, resulting in a total of about 400 housing units ranging in size from one to three bedrooms, and including rental and homeownership opportunities. The housing authority partnered with a development team of Pennrose, LLC and The Cloud Company (Pennrose-Cloud) on the residential revitalization work, with JDA Development as a co-developer on the retail/commercial component of the project. Phase II will be slightly smaller with 60 units total, 75% of which reserved for households with incomes up to 60% AMI and 25% rented at market rates. Approximately 20% of the affordable units will be reserved as supportive service units, providing housing and specialty programming for households meeting the State’s homeless criteria. Construction on Phase I is expected to be completed within 14 months.

“It is no secret that the condition of affordable housing in the North End has been less than adequate,” said Hartford City Council president Glendowyn Thames. “The revitalization of Westbrook Village marks an important step toward giving the neighborhood residents the modern, safe, affordable housing they deserve.”

“Westbrook Village is more than a revitalization project to me, it was my home,” said president of the Westbrook Village Tenant Association Evelyn Lopez-Ramos “I have seen the plans and am so looking forward to living in the beautiful new neighborhood it will be part of once the project is done.”

“Having lived in Westbrook Village growing up, I can’t begin to express how exciting it is to be a part of this transformation,” said Sandy Cloud, chairman and CEO of The Cloud Co., and the co-developer of the project.

“We are honored to have been entrusted by the city of Hartford and HACH with this project and to partner with them to tailor a plan that meets the diverse needs of the neighborhood,” said Charlie Adams, regional vice president for Penrose, LLC.