

People Inc. ready to begin next Elmwood Crossing project

Maternity building will be converted to housing

NEWS BUSINESS REPORTER

The next phase of work at Elmwood Crossing is poised to begin in just over a month, with a little-noticed conversion project that would bring low-income seniors to live in a former hospital buildings.

People Inc., the region's largest social services nonprofit agency, plans to transform the former Maternity Building at the old Women & Children's Hospital of Buffalo into a senior housing facility.

The vacant 49,410-square-foot building is part of the main hospital complex that developers Nick Sinatra and William Paladino acquired from Kaleida Health after the hospital moved to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

Plans by Silvestri Architects for the Folwell Apartments call for 44 affordable rental apartments, all targeted for seniors 55 and older, with incomes below 60% of the area median. That will include 40 one-bedroom and four-two-bedroom units. Five of the apartments will be aimed at households earning less than 30% of the area median, while 30 will be reserved for those earning less than 50% of the income target.

Seven of the apartments will be reserved for elderly, frail and homeless seniors, with supportive services available "if people need help with shopping or getting the types of services qualified for," said Jocelyn Bos, vice president of housing development at Amherst-based People Inc. Five units will be accessible for those with mobility impairments, while two will be structured for those with sensory impairments.

The project does not require approvals by the Buffalo Planning Board or Preservation Board, as the building is

aside from cleaning the facade, filling in windows to match the exterior and some modification of windows to meet current code.

The \$14.76 million project will be funded with \$5 million in senior housing program dollars through New York State Homes and Community Renewal, along with \$500,000 in city HOME funds provided through the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency to support 10 one-bedroom units. Under BURA rules, the project must remain affordable for 30 years.

People Inc. will also receive \$4.9 million in low-income housing tax credits, plus \$3.77 million in federal and state historic tax credits. The Federal Home Loan Bank of New York is providing \$400,000 through its affordable housing program. Five Star Bank is providing a \$9.7 million short-term construction loan, and also purchased the tax credits.

The nonprofit expects to receive a 15-year payment in lieu of tax plan for city and county property taxes, with annual payments starting at \$9,609 and growing to \$14,534 by the final year.

Officials are hoping to close on the financing at the end of August, allowing contractor CSS Construction to begin the renovation work. The project is expected to be completed in fall 2023.

The People Inc. venture is the most recent addition to Elmwood Crossing, which has been proceeding at a slow and deliberate pace since Sinatra & Co. Real Estate and Paladino's Ellicott Development Co. announced their plans.

The \$150 million multiyear project envisions converting the hospital campus into a mixed-use community, while retaining as much of the historic buildings as possible. Plans for the 8-acre site call for 220 apartments, 27 condominiums, 20 for-sale town houses, a 75-room boutique hotel, a

– features a 65,000-square-foot building with four retail spaces, offices on the second floor and apartments on the top three levels. Five Star Bank has opened a first-floor branch in the building.

The development team also converted the former Hodge Pediatrics building at 125 Hodge into an operating EduKids day care, after more than doubling the size of the 4,000-square-foot building. They also received city approval for the town homes, prior to the pandemic. And they acquired the Gallagher Ramp parking facility. The main hospital complex on Bryant has been untouched until now.



The site of the Elmwood Crossing development, which includes the former Women & Children's Hospital campus, the Gallagher parking ramp and a wide swath of paved area on Utica Street in the Elmwood Village. Buffalo News photo



A rendering of People Inc.'s proposed Folwell Apartments affordable housing complex at Elmwood Crossing. The project will include 44 apartments.

not being modified, and the work is all internal, Bos said.

The project is being overseen by the state Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service as a historic reuse, with limits on what can be done,

day care, an urban grocery, boutique shops and offices – spread over locations on three streets.

To date, the developers have mostly completed a five-story mixed-use building at 451 Elmwood Ave., at the corner of Bryant Street. The \$16 million project – which was delayed by the pandemic

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