

News

Houses continue to pop up in Fairgrounds in Chester Township

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By JEFF WOLFE

jwolfe@delcotimes.com

CHESTER TOWNSHIP — Some former residents of Fairgrounds Homes could very well be future residents, too.

That's at least part of the plan with the ongoing construction of the Delaware County Fairgrounds development. The end of the second phase of the project was officially opened Thursday morning with the Fairgrounds Community Center, and the third phase is well under way with the construction of the Bridgeview Senior Residence scheduled to be completed in March.

"A lot of senior citizens that were part of the Fairgrounds want to come back," said Pennrose Properties Development Officer Ryan Bailey. "This will allow them to do that."

The former Fairgrounds Homes section, located just east of Interstate 95 near the Commodore Barry Bridge, was a barracks-style housing area built in the 1930s and 1940s and earned its name because a carnival once was located there several years ago.

"It was all low-income housing," Bailey said. "It was called a concentration of poverty. It obviously was something that did not work."

The first two phases included the construction of 73 rental town homes that were available for lease in February 2009, and the 71 rental townhouses that were made available in December 2010.

"Originally, this was a HUD (Housing and Urban Development) site," Bailey said. "What we've built here has worked very well. We have people with real jobs living here."

The senior citizens who were relocated and wish to return to the Fairgrounds Homes site will have to go through a bit of a process to live in Bridgeview Residence, a 48-unit building that will contain one and two-bedroom apartments. Residents must be at least 62 years old and there will be an approval and referral process through the Delaware County Housing Authority. Bailey emphasized that while the senior residence will have many amenities, such as a fitness center, it will not be an assisted-living facility. Bailey said rent will be based on 30 percent of a resident's income.

The Fairgrounds Community Center is designed to help facilitate residents in several ways. It is 5,000 square feet with on-site management, a 10-station computer lab, a tot lot and a large community room.

"The reconstruction of the Fairgrounds community provides for the preservation of an important affordable housing asset in Delaware County," said Delaware County Housing Authority Executive Director Lawrence Hartley. "It is our hope that the new Fairgrounds Community Center can become a focal point for community activity and services that enhances the quality of life in Chester Township."

The entire fairgrounds building project will cost \$80 million. The second and third phases are being funded by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Equity, the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, the Delaware County Housing Authority and Delaware County Office of Housing and Community Development. The total costs for those two phases is slightly over \$30 million.

The fourth phase will feature 71 high-quality townhouse units, with construction scheduled to start in 2012. The fifth and final phase will add 36 low-income townhouse home-ownership opportunities, with construction scheduled to begin in March 2013.

"The Fairgrounds neighborhood redevelopment improves the lives of nearly 300 families in Delaware County and has been a significant

job creation catalyst," said Pennrose Properties President Mark Damby. "We are honored to be associated with this level of community impact."

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