

Norwalk DPW inherits Washington Village infrastructure project

By Robert Koch



Photo: Alex Von Kleydorff / Hearst Connecticut Media

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The Washington Village Housing Complex is slated for redevelopment. The Norwalk Department of Public Works has inherited the public infrastructure improvements needed for the reconstruction of Washington ... more

NORWALK — The Norwalk [Department of Public Works](#) has inherited the public infrastructure improvements needed for the reconstruction of Washington Village.

[Trinity Financial](#), the Boston-based real-estate development chosen to rebuild the public-housing complex, was supposed to lead the \$9 million

project, which will relocate utilities and raise the intersection of Day and Raymond streets.

While city and federal dollars remain in place for the work, how the project will proceed has changed as members of the [Common Council's Public Works Committee](#) recently learned.

[Lisa Burns](#), principal engineer at the public works department, said it was contemplated that Trinity Financial would lead the project with funding advanced through the [Norwalk Redevelopment Agency](#).

“Redevelopment would release the funds to Trinity as the project progressed,” Burns said. “It was like Nov. 28, Trinity came to our offices and said, ‘We’re not doing the project anymore,’ so now the Department of Public Works is running the project.”

Burns indicated that the cost of the infrastructure work was behind the company’s decision. She said Trinity Financial cited an “astronomically high number,” as high as \$10.5 million.

‘Joint decision’

[Eva Erlich](#), vice president of development at Trinity Financial, said in a statement Thursday that the company is “thrilled to have built a collaborative working relationship with the City of Norwalk over the past 5 years.”

“We look forward to continuing to do so as we work together on the revitalization of Washington Village,” Erlich said. “We made the joint decision with the City of Norwalk for the City to manage the public infrastructure work planned for Day Street and Raymond Street. We’re excited for the opportunity to create a project that the entire Norwalk community can be proud of.”

The Washington Village Transformation Plan calls for razing Washington Village and its 136 apartments and building 273 new apartments in five new

buildings. Work on the first phase — 80 apartments at 13 Day St. and 20 Day St. — is under way.

Relocating utilities and raising the intersection of Day and Raymond streets by six feet to provide an egress in the event of flooding is critical element of the project. Built in the 1940s in a flood plain, Washington Village has been subject to recurrent flooding, including during Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. The transformation plan calls for building apartments above and parking below.

Councilman [Richard J. Bonenfant](#), an at-large Republican on the Public Works Committee, asked if the cost of the infrastructure improvements might climb.

“Do you see a lot of more surprises?” Bonenfant asked. “Somebody else was going to take care of the building of the road and now we’re going to take care of the building of the road.”

Dollars in place

Officials stress that the funding mechanism for the infrastructure work hasn’t changed: \$4 million in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funds, \$1.55 million in Norwalk capital budget money and a \$3.45 million special capital appropriation approved by the Common Council last November.

But the city will now oversee the project with help from a construction management company.

“It’s going to be our project,” said Director of [Public Works Bruce J. Chimento](#). “These people will be answering to us and we can control the project because it’s our roads and our infrastructure.”

The Public Works Committee on Wednesday evening recommended hiring CDM Smith, Inc. to perform construction management, engineering and

inspection services related to the project for a cost not to exceed \$744,320. The recommended contract is headed to the full council for consideration.

Officials have yet to determine whether the contract would be with the city or the Redevelopment Agency. Burns said she would to speak to the city's law department about that.

Councilwoman [Phaedrel L. Bowman](#), a [District B Democrat](#) on the Public Works Committee, asked for assurances that Washington Village residents be kept abreast of the infrastructure work and how it might affect them.

rkoch@hearstmediact.com