

Washington Village rebuild proceeds with help from TD Bank

By Robert Koch



Photo: Alex Von Kleydorff / Hearst Connecticut Media

Candace Mayer, Deputy Director, Norwalk Housing Authority and Thomas Ivers, NHA's Choice Neighborhood's Director accept a check for 125.000.00 thousand dollars from the TD Bank Charitable trust at the NHA's ... more

NORWALK — Nearly a year after officials stood off Day Street and cast ceremonial shovels of dirt into the air, the first phase of the Washington Village Transformation Plan is moving fast toward completion next year.

The Norwalk Housing Authority, which operates the current Washington Village, hopes to see the new 10-unit apartment building at 13 Day St. done in

April and the nearby 70-unit building at 20 Day finished in August.

Thomas Ivers, Choice Neighborhoods director at the NHA, pointed out the curved woodwork around the entry doors and other Victorian-era features designed to match the architecture of the surrounding neighborhood.

“The quality of the housing that we’re creating and the impact on the neighborhood, which affects the quality of life for all the residents in the area, for me that’s the most exciting part,” said Ivers, standing outside the smaller building Monday afternoon.

Earlier Monday, TD Bank representatives presented housing authority and Norwalk Redevelopment Agency representatives a \$125,000 check to help with phase one of the transformation plan.

“Whether it be tax credits or investing back in the community, it’s a huge part of what we do,” said Michael LaBella, Connecticut market president for the bank.

Ivers said every dollar helps given the complexities of building in a flood plain and brownfields remediation.

The new apartments will be two feet above the 500-year flood plain with parking beneath. In a related project, work is under way raising the intersection of Day and Raymond streets and moving utilities underground.

In June 2014, the NHA and redevelopment agency were awarded a \$30 million Choice Neighborhoods Implementation grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to rebuild the public-housing complex off Water Street.

The Choice Neighborhoods program was developed to replace distressed public housing with quality mixed-income housing while providing residents job training, educational opportunities and other support services.

Trinity Financial, LLC and general contractor Dimeo Construction Co. broke ground on phase one — a \$44 million undertaking — in December 2016. The three-story building at 13 Day St. has reached its full height. The four-story building at 20 Day St. isn't far behind.

Wooden beams, joists and columns delineate the future bedrooms and hallways within the latter building. Two concrete elevator shafts are in place at either end of the building.

On any given day, 45 workers are busy at the two construction sites, trying to get the buildings sealed up before the snow flies. Construction will proceed inside throughout the winter, according to officials.

Ray Dunlap, president of the Washington Village Tenants Association, is one of three residents employed in the project. He said he's helping rebuild his and his neighbors' homes while learning about construction.

“This is a good experience, learning certain aspects as far as how they're building them, the tools they're using, the different materials they're using,” Dunlap said. “It's coming along very well.”

Under Section 3 of the HUD Act of 1968, agencies receiving federal funding must make a good faith effort to award a portion of the construction work to qualified small, minority or women-owned businesses. Local residents must be given priority.

Ivers said Washington Village residents aren't the only Norwalk people employed by the project.

The larger Washington Village Transformation Plan — a roughly \$140 million undertaking — calls for razing the existing 136-unit complex and building 136 public-housing units, 67 workforce housing units and 70 market-rate units in two, three and four-story buildings.

Gov. Dannel Malloy and upward of 170 others gathered at the Day Street

parcels on Nov. 28, 2016, for a ceremonial groundbreaking for phase one of the plan.