

Downtown Fargo low-income senior housing project moves forward



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This is an architectural rendering of the Milton Earl Apartments for low-income senior citizens to be built on the fringes of downtown Fargo just west of the the Sanctuary Events Center.

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FARGO — Low-income housing will receive a major boost in downtown Fargo in the coming years.

The Fargo City Commission this week approved a proposal from the nonprofit Beyond Shelter Inc. to move forward with plans for a 42-unit senior living complex on the corner of Fourth Avenue North and Seventh Street just west of Sanctuary Events Center.

Called the Milton Earl Apartments, the four-story complex is estimated to cost about \$10.7 million with most of the financing coming through federal housing funds.

The city, which owns most of the vacant property, will provide the land to Beyond Shelter to help keep development costs down which will translate into lower rents.

The one- and two-bedroom units, with an indoor parking garage on the first level and a rooftop patio, will be for residents with extremely low to low incomes, said Beyond Shelter CEO Dan Madler. It will be available to residents from ages 55 or 62 and above earning from about \$9 an hour to \$18 an hour or possibly living on Social Security. The beginning age range will depend on the type of financing secured. Madler said they will continue working on financing, which they hope to complete this year, aiming for a groundbreaking next summer.

Meetings with the neighbors are also planned before final designs as they want to have the project be consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

City Planning Director Nicole Crutchfield said the approval of Beyond Shelter's proposal is the first step with the city. The next step, a development agreement, likely will be approved in May.

Madler and Crutchfield said they were both excited about the project that has long been in the works as it would provide downtown with a greater range of housing types, more diversity in the population and provide much-needed lower income housing stock.

The project, which also features a large community room, is named in honor of Milton Earl Beebe, an American architect of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who was inspired by European architecture and designed many schools, banks and courthouses across the country on the National Register of Historic Places. He moved to Fargo in 1900 to operate his business on the same block where the new complex will be built.

The new building is designed to fit in with other historic buildings in the area, including the Ivers apartment building and Sanctuary Events Center, which occupies the former St. Mark's Lutheran Church building.

Beyond Shelter has 286 other units of lower-income senior living facilities across Fargo in four different developments, with plans to add 39 more units starting in June to the HomeField Apartments complex on 28th Avenue in south Fargo. It's also working on an 84-unit senior living facility in downtown West Fargo.

The Fargo City Commission also approved another smaller low-income housing project to be constructed by Rebuilding Together, a Fargo-Moorhead area nonprofit.

The city approved agreements to construct a twin home in the 1000 block of 13th Avenue South on vacant city-owned lots that will be given to the developer to help keep construction costs down. The two housing units will be sold to two low-income families.

"It's another attempt to make home ownership attainable in the city,"

Crutchfield said.

Work on the homes is expected to start this spring, with homebuyers taking over the property next spring.

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