

## Developments fill increasing need for senior housing

Helmut Schmidt - 12/31/2010



A Fargo senior housing complex is on track to be fully completed by December 2011, and a much larger high-rise renovation is planned to start about the same time, the head of the city's Housing and Redevelopment Authority said. The \$10.5 million Crossroads Senior Living at 25th Street and 17th Avenue South should be framed and enclosed by the end of January, Lynn Fundingsland, executive director of the HRA said last week. One wing of the 82-apartment Crossroads complex will be ready to rent by July. The other wing will be finished by December, he said. It will be rented to low- to moderate-income seniors, he said. Filling it shouldn't be a problem. The project already has 120 people on a waiting list, he said. As Crossroads finishes, the Lashkowitz High Rise, 101 2nd St. S., will begin a roughly \$25 million renovation that will gut each floor, Fundingsland said. The 22-story high rise serves seniors and people with disabilities who meet income guidelines, he said. Rusting cast-iron pipe and asbestos will be removed, and the 249 apartments (248 single-bedroom and one two-bedroom) will be reconfigured to 205 larger apartments that can be rented to the general public if need be, for example, if government housing subsidies are ended, he said. The HRA is planning for a "rolling renovation" of the high rise, not renting apartments when they go vacant. So far, about 30 apartments are vacant, but another 30 will have to be cleared to make a section-by-section renovation of the 39-year-old building workable, he said.

### **'Avalanche of seniors'**

The retirement of the first of the baby boomers has made affordable senior housing "the single largest need in Fargo and in North Dakota," he said. "It's pretty much an avalanche of seniors coming in," Fundingsland said. A Community Partners Research study projects that through 2015, Cass County will add more than 5,400 households age 55 and older. Dan Mahli, Fargo's senior planner for community development, said senior housing is a top priority. "We have an aging community," Mahli said. In fact, the housing authority has received some federal funds for a senior housing project in the Urban Plains area that will follow the high-rise renovation, Mahli said. The frail elderly, the oldest and poorest seniors, are not served by the general housing market and housing costs become a burden for them when the amount surpasses 30 percent of their income, Mahli said. Fundingsland said much of the financing for Crossroads is private. An ownership group was created to build the center and investors will get returns over 15 years. Then, the sole owner will be Beyond Shelter, which helps the HRA finance and develop properties. Similar financing will be used for the high rise, with the building reverting back to HRA ownership in 15 years, he said. Rents at Crossroads will be restricted, but so will the income level of tenants, Fundingsland said. The highest incomes allowed will be 60 percent of Cass County's median income, down to 30 percent of the median income, he said. In 2009, the upper-end limit would have been \$32,760, the Community Partners study said. The apartments will be rented first-come, first-served to those 55 and over who meet the qualifications, Fundingsland said. Groundbreaking for Crossroads was in October, and Fundingsland said the weather held long enough to pour footings, driveway and some of the basement.