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Omni Housing Development to complete revitalization of 52-unit \$12 million South End project in Albany



Elevation rendering of phase I of the South End Revitalization project



Row house #2 under construction.



Shown (from left) are attendees of the official tour: Duncan Barrett, COO of Omni; Ron Canestrari, assembly member; VanAmerongen; Steven Longo, Albany Housing Authority; and Jennings.

generated enthusiasm for the catalyst the project provides for further revitalization. Mayor Gerald Jennings highlighted this by saying the city now has "visual affirmation that the South End Plan is coming to fruition." Deborah VanAmerongen, commissioner of the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal, said, "DHCR is proud to be a part of the effort to make the South End neighborhood a place that residents and the entire city can be proud of."

A \$12 million affordable housing project underway in the South End section of the city is spearheading a revitalization effort that will transform a blighted neighborhood. A total of 52 new and rehabilitated units are being developed by Omni Housing Development LLC for Albany Housing Authority in the first phase of the South End Revitalization. The housing project is the initial component of a comprehensive, multi-phase neighborhood renewal plan generated by a diverse team of area residents, local officials and members of the design and development community.

Two locations in the neighborhood were selected for the project, with the goal of establishing core areas of influence that will stimulate private investment in businesses and additional housing renewal. 42 of the 52 units are being developed by rehabilitating a 1920s era apartment building located on a heavily traveled street that parallels the city's Lincoln Park and forms the northern boundary of the South End. The remaining 10 units will be newly constructed row houses on a quiet, centrally located residential block.

The rehabilitation of what was a crime and drug infested apartment building is providing the most noticeable example of the South End's changing face to the area residents and those that drive by going to and from the downtown area. The gut renovation of the three-story brick Eagle Court apartments is reconfiguring the 60 former units into 42 one and two bedroom units that range from 528 to 1,008 s/f. Three of the units will be handicapped accessible. All units feature Energy Star windows, heating and ventilation systems, lighting and appliances and will exceed the NYS Energy Code by at least 20%. These improvements will provide safe and modern apartments to low-income individuals and small families currently living in substandard units.

To begin to accomplish the renewal plan's goal of making the South End a more sustainable neighborhood with home owning residents, the 10 new row house units under construction will be offered to qualified low-income families in a lease-to-own program. The two-story three and four bedroom energy-efficient homes average 1,344 s/f. Exterior architectural details reflect the mid to late 19th century row houses common in the South End. Families that participate in the Albany Housing Authority lease-to-own program will own the home after 15 years with no additional debt.

Omni is on schedule to complete the first phase of the revitalization project by the end of the year and plans to begin a second phase in 2009. The overall plan calls for 350 housing units and commercial and retail space to be developed in five phases over ten years. This is good news for a neighborhood that has high unemployment as new jobs are being generated by the construction. AOW Associates, the general contractor, and its subcontractors have filled some positions with South End residents.

Funding for the project has been provided to Albany Housing Authority by the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal's Housing Trust Fund, federal tax credits allocated by DHCR, KeyBank NA, Key Community Development Corporation and the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York.

City and DHCR officials were recently given a tour of the construction progress which