

Jefferson Square under way

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Gothenburg Housing Authority breaks ground on project.

Even before the first shovel of dirt was turned to break ground for Jefferson Square, there was a waiting list of interested residents.

Gothenburg Housing Authority administrator Anne Franzen expects that list to grow quickly now that the project is officially under way.

With earth movers rumbling in the background Tuesday morning, a ground-breaking ceremony set the wheels in motion for construction of the housing complex which includes five duplexes and one triplex designed for residents 55 years and older.

“We get so many requests for this type of housing,” Franzen said. “There always seems to be a need and this will be a nice addition to the community.”

The 13 units will each be approximately 1,100 square feet and include two bedrooms, one bathroom and a garage.

Each will be equipped with all new appliances and all are handicap accessible.

Franzen said one unit will be built specifically for handicapped residents.

EAD Constructors of Omaha plans to initially build two units that Franzen said should be complete by the first of the year. More units will be added to the complex as each is completed.

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Phil Bang, senior project manager for EAD, said they'll start building on the west end of the property and move east after the ground is built up two feet.

Franzen said both EAD and Mesner Development Co. of Central City have been involved in similar housing projects in other communities.

In fact, she said, EAD specializes in this type of construction.

Nothing in Gothenburg compares to Jefferson Square.

Franzen said Hillcrest Apartments and Crestview Senior Housing are smaller units designed for less independent residents.

Jefferson Square not only offers two bedrooms and a garage but Franzen said residents will also have a small yard area.

"It will be a nice, homey atmosphere that keeps people very independent," Franzen said. "And at the same time I think older residents like the idea of living in a neighborhood with people their own age."

Yard care, snow removal and building maintenance will be done by the Housing Authority.

Rent in the triplex units will be market rate, Franzen said, meaning the cost will not be based on income.

In the duplex units, some rent will be based on income at 50% of the average median

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household income for Gothenburg of \$38,500. Some will be higher at 60%.

Franzen said that means rent will range from approximately \$365 to \$400.

“The rent is designed for residents on Social Security income with little other means of payment,” she said.

And because the rent is income-based and regulated by a government agency, the application process is a lengthy one.

“We’re talking about a NIFA (Nebraska Investment Finance Authority) application so it will take some time,” she said. “But if someone fills out the paperwork and decides they don’t want to move, there’s no commitment.”

A year ago, the Gothenburg Housing Authority was awarded a \$458,767 grant from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to help build Jefferson Square.

Dawson Area Development contributed \$60,000 and the remainder of the \$1.8 million cost is funded through tax-credit financing.

After 15 years, the Gothenburg Housing Authority will have an option to buy the buildings at a minimal cost.