

Special Report

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Work to begin on \$50 million housing project

By **ANDREA DECKERT**

Work is about to begin on Upper Falls Square, a \$50 million affordable housing project at Cleveland Street and Hudson Avenue.

DePaul Community Services Inc. and Christa Construction LLC are working together on the project. SWBR Architecture, Engineering & Landscape Architecture P.C. designed the two buildings that have a total of 150 apartments.

DePaul President Mark Fuller said Upper Falls Square is the biggest project in terms of size and cost the agency has undertaken.

It is also a project that may not have happened in 2017, given a last-minute loss of financial backing from Goldman

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Rendering courtesy of SWBR Architecture, Engineering & Landscape Architecture P.C.

The Upper Falls Square affordable housing project is targeted for completion by the end of 2018.

UPPER FALLS SQUARE

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Sachs Group Inc., which wanted to hold off on providing equity until tax rates under the new U.S. president were announced, he added.

The wait could have pushed the project back for some time, Fuller noted, but he said the help of a mix of groups kept the project on track. The group included Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren, who helped get the approvals in place in a timely manner, and M&T Bank Corp., which ended up providing the equity.

"It took a whole team," Fuller said.

The project is targeted for completion by the end of 2018.

Christa CEO David Christa, who grew up near the area where the development is taking place, also credited the group effort for moving the process along, with help from state and city officials, as well as lenders.

He calls the project transformational.

"It's a big deal for the city and one that could have been pushed into (starting) next year if not for the incredible team effort," Christa said.

Fuller spoke with city representatives before the project began to get their feedback on where such a project should be located. The Upper Falls area was a top priority, he said, noting the area has been in need of affordable housing options.

Fuller noted the project will not only provide housing, but such projects tend to help with a drop in crime and an increase in employment rates, based on other housing projects DePaul has undertaken.

The Rev. Raymond Scott, a longtime community activist in the area and a member of DePaul's board of directors,

said the project is the cornerstone of redevelopment in that area.

"This project has created a lot of excitement," Scott said.

In addition to DePaul efforts, Scott credited David Carr, construction manager for the Coalition of Northeast Associations, a neighborhood association representing the Upper Falls area, for the revitalization.

Other redevelopment efforts there include expanding services of the Anthony L. Jordan Health Center, a new PUC Achieve Charter School and a daycare center, Scott added.

Upper Falls Square is located on

roughly 3.2 acres of vacant land that once held condemned homes until they were razed by the city.

The apartments will include studios, as well as one- and two-bedroom units.

Income requirements for 146 of the units are set at 60 percent of area median income and four units are set at 90 percent of area median income.

Roughly half of the residents will receive services under a Supported Single Room Occupancy program, which is a noncertified state Office of Mental Health program that provides long-term or permanent housing where residents can access the support services they re-

quire to live in the community.

Christa and DePaul have been doing projects together for the past 30 years.

Among them is DePaul Rochester View Apartments, the \$17.6 million affordable housing apartment building for the deaf in Henrietta, and the DePaul Carriage Factory Apartments, a \$23.5 million affordable housing project in the city's Susan B. Anthony Neighborhood.

DePaul recently finished an affordable housing project in West Seneca, Erie County, and has some 18 projects in the works across upstate New York, Fuller said.

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