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Phoenix's Historic Coffelt-Lamoreaux Public Housing Development to Get \$44M Makeover

Posted on March 13, 2015 by Matthew Roy in Planning & Development // 0 Comments



Rendering courtesy of Gorman & Company

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By Luci Scott for Arizona Builder's Exchange

A \$44M renovation of 151 buildings is in the works at the historic Coffelt-Lamoreaux Public Housing Development,

which has Warren Buffett as an investor and which is expected to be a showcase for the nation. It is the biggest project the **Housing Authority of Maricopa County** has undertaken.

More than 38 acres on the southwest corner of 19th Avenue and Buckeye Road in Phoenix contain 301 units, where major work is expected to begin in June.

Co-developers are the Housing Authority and **Gorman & Company** of suburban Madison, Wisconsin, which is using an in-house architect. The landscape architect is **The Design Element**, and civil engineer is Chris Wilson of **Metro Land Consultants, LLC**.

“Our plan is to try to break ground by the end of July, so we’ll probably be hiring subs around April or May,” said Brian Swanton, president of the Arizona Market for Gorman & Company, the general contractor. The construction schedule runs for 18 months, and since the complex is only about 50 percent occupied, the existing residents will be relocated within the project as construction undergoes four phases, the first of which will rebuild about 80 units.

“It’s a very, very old project, built in the early 1950s,” said Gloria Munoz, director of the Housing Authority.

The current buildings are barrack style and, once the project is finished, the development will have a whole new look. Interiors will be gutted and the overhead electrical wiring is going to be taken underground.

Designated for National Historic Register

“It’s going to take a while, but it will be well worth it in the end,” Munoz said. “It’s been designated for the National Historic Register; we’re really excited about that.”

The authority can receive financial help as long as it follows Historic Register architectural design requirements.

The irrigation system built in the 1950s and ‘60s will be re-installed, resulting in savings of water.

Upgrades will include cabinetry, appliances, sinks, flooring, a new community center and a 1.5-acre park in the center of the complex.

“We’ve created a design for intergeneration park design with involvement of the residents and the city’s parks and recreation department,” Munoz said. “It’s going to be absolutely wonderful.”

On 19th Avenue, there is a pool in a city park where children participate in summer programs.

Health Impact Assessment

The design of the development was influenced by a [health-impact assessment](#) in which residents discussed health and safety concerns. As a result, fences will be built. The authority has asked the city that a crosswalk with a light a bus shelter will be installed on 19th Avenue.

Residents asked for access to health care and health services, so the new design incorporates a health clinic in the new community center. In response to a request for healthful food, such as fresh vegetables, the mobile produce service Fresh Express will go to the community every couple of weeks and sell goods to residents.

Since children need exercise, a park was integrated into the design for socializing and outdoor activities.

Good location for transportation

“It’s an excellent location; we need to maintain and preserve this kind of housing that is affordable and in a great location,” Munoz said, adding that the authority has received much help.

“You don’t do it all by yourself,” she said. “It’s a wonderful project; there are a lot of ideas on the table, things we can do to make it a better, healthier place to live.”

Swanton, the Gorman executive, said the renovation is one of the largest public housing redevelopment project's

in Arizona's history.

Rental Assistance Demonstration

Coffelt is the first project in Arizona under a pilot program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development called RAD, for Rental Assistance Demonstration.

RAD allows public housing agencies to leverage public and private debt and equity in order to reinvest in the public housing stock. The RAD program is cost-neutral and does not increase HUD's budget. The program shifts units from the Public Housing program to the Section 8 program, so that providers may leverage the private capital markets to make capital improvements.

The project has received multi-jurisdictional funding. Bonds are being issued by the Industrial Development Authority of Maricopa County with block grant funding is coming from the City of Phoenix.

Coffelt will be a showcase

"There's no question, Coffelt will be a showcase," said Swanton, who added that it is one of the first projects in the country to combine low-income-housing tax credits with historic tax credits, which go to the investor.

"We'll monetize that tax credit by selling it to the investor, and the investor will purchase those tax credits from the U.S.," Gorman is selling the tax credits to the investor, Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, and the money Gorman raises goes into the project.

"The Oracle from Omaha is investing in affordable housing in Phoenix," Swanton said.

Historic tax credits are being purchased by Minnesota-based Stearns Bank.

Swanton praised Munoz for hiring Gorman.

"Gloria was forward-thinking to structure a public-private partnership between two groups to leverage the

collective expertise and to develop financing,” Swanton said.

For her part, Munoz said, “It’s a pretty cool thing to have a project of this age, of this history in the community.”



Rendering courtesy of Gorman & Company

- City of Phoenix
- Coffelt-Lamoreaux
- Gorman & Company
- Housing Authority of Maricopa County
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