

Work begins on Troy public housing rehabilitation project



LAUREN HALLIGAN LHALLIGAN@DIGITALFIRSTMEDIA.COM Construction is getting underway at the Martin Luther King Apartments on Eddy Lane in Troy.

By newsroom@troyrecord.com, [@troyrecord](https://twitter.com/troyrecord) on Twitter

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TROY HOUSING AUTHORITY This artist's rendering shows one of the buildings in the Martin Luther King Apartments in Troy after a planned \$10 rehabilitation project.

TROY, N.Y. >> The long-planned, \$10 million rehabilitation of the Martin Luther King Apartments officially kicked off Tuesday with a brief ceremony that also celebrated the closing on financing for the work.

Assemblyman John McDonald III, Mayor Patrick Madden and Daniel Crowley, executive secretary of the Troy Housing Authority, were among the local officials on hand to kick off the first part of a two-phase project, which will include the conversion of the complex's 112 existing units into 77 expanded apartments. The second part of the project will involve the construction of 35 new units elsewhere in the city's North Central neighborhood. Officials said in late 2015 the project would provide more green space within the complex, while also helping to improve the surrounding neighborhood with the new housing.

The public housing complex on Eddy Lane, off Oakwood Avenue, was built in the early 1970s and operated by the Troy Housing Authority, with no substantial rehabilitation or upgrades since construction was completed. The project was initially handled by Omni Housing Development, but was taken over last year by Beacon Communities, a Boston-based developer, after Omni's chief operating officer, Duncan Barrett, an affordable housing development expert, joined Beacon as president of its new Albany subsidiary.

"The families living in these homes and future generations of Troy families will benefit from this high-quality, energy-efficient housing," Barrett said in a late March news release announcing financing for the project. "The redevelopment process reinforces the dynamic economic development occurring in Troy and adds to the long-term vitality of the whole community."

Plans call for crews to work building by building within the complex, making the apartments larger and more uniform. Apartments currently range from one to five bedrooms, but the plan is to create mostly two-, three- and four-bedroom units. The exteriors of the buildings will also look more residential and less drab.

The housing authority unsuccessfully applied for funding through the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal in 2015, but was approved to be included in the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's Rental Assistance Demonstration Program, which helped the project to garner \$6.2 million in construction financing and as much as \$12 million in tax credits in March through KeyBank. Upon completion, the complex will set aside seven units for families who are homeless, with a specific focus on homeless veterans. Residents will also have access to services such as home visitation, life-skills training, medical transportation and individual counseling provided by Unity House and Joseph's House and Shelter.

"The collaboration of all involved entities — residents, community partners, developers, bankers and local, state and national government officials — has enhanced this project significantly," Crowley said in the news release.

The authority manages a total of about 1,200 units of low-income public housing and administers 700 tenant-based and 15 project-based housing choice vouchers. It is also the managing partner for Kennedy Senior Housing Associates, owner and operator of Kennedy Towers, a 135-

apartment property that also received assistance through HUD's Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.