



Appleton's RiverHeath pursues 'green' housing

Project slated for occupancy in 2011

By Steve Wideman • Post-Crescent staff writer • December 9, 2010

APPLETON — After 30,000 tons of cement and months of work, the stage is finally set for construction to begin on RiverHeath, the \$55 million housing and commercial development planned for the riverfront beneath the College Avenue bridge.

About a half-dozen state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly townhomes will be built to kick off the project that will ultimately include 178 residential units and 114,500 square feet of commercial space on 15 acres between the Banta Bowl and Telulah Park.

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"We took 30,000 tons of cement from the old College Avenue bridge and crushed it to use for the new RiverHeath Way. Now we just have to wait until the weather turns in spring. The townhomes should be ready for occupancy by the end of next summer," said Mark Geall of Tanesay Development, the Chicago-based firm behind RiverHeath.

The first phase of the project — construction of the townhomes and 56 residential units, along with 20,000 square feet of retail and commercial space — will total \$20 million, Geall said.

The project moves ahead as the nation continues to recover from a recession that hit the housing industry hard and tightened credit for developers like Geall, a Neenah native.

"We weathered the economic storm and that's a testament to our partners and Chris Oats, who works in our sales office. It's also a testament to this area. We walked away from a project in Milwaukee, but stayed with this one," Geall said. "Everyone had a tough time economically, but the Fox Cities has come out of the recession faster than other areas."

Tanesay will partner with BerHoff Homes of Appleton to build the energy-efficient LEED Platinum townhouses, Geall said.

The LEED Platinum designation is part of "LEED for Homes," a nationwide, voluntary rating system promoting the design and construction of high-performance green homes. The program is part of the U.S. Green Building Council, a nonprofit organization committed to a prosperous and sustainable future through construction of cost-

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efficient, energy-saving green buildings.

"These homes will be so energy efficient they'll practically **pay** you to live there," Geall said.

He said RiverHeath has been approved for funding from the Federal Housing Administration.

In 2009, federal officials notified RiverHeath officials that the project was being awarded \$987,168 in American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funds. The stimulus money will be used to pay for construction of an **innovative**, geothermal exchange system intended to significantly reduce cooling and heating costs for the project.

Geall said the first phase of the project, demolition of a former factory, is complete.

The state Department of Natural Resources in 2009 issued a certificate of demolition for the site, formerly a toxic-ridden home to a drilling oil manufacturer. The DNR previously declared the site free of toxins after a decade of remediation work.

Geall did not disclose the identity of businesses looking to locate in RiverHeath, but said they include a **yoga** studio, coffee shop and other retail businesses.

RiverHeath is located in the city's newest tax incremental financing (TIF) district. Proceeds from property taxes generated by increases in assessed property values due to improvements within the district are used to repay municipal investments. TIF funds will be used to repay an estimated \$9.5 million the city will invest in road, sidewalk and other utility construction costs to **benefit** RiverHeath.

Community Development Director Karen Harkness said RiverHeath's progress speaks to the desirable nature of the site.

"The project itself, being a mixed-use development, is geared to be a successful project," Harkness said.

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