

News Release

City Planning Commission Approves Modernization Plans for Cobbs Hill Village Affordable Senior Housing Community

-- Nonprofit affordable housing agency's latest plans for modernizing the 61-year-old motel-style affordable senior housing community reflect design input from Rochester City Planning Commission --

ROCHESTER, N.Y., April 3, 2018 – The Rochester City Planning Commission on Monday approved new plans for modernizing Cobbs Hill Village, the motel-style complex that has been dedicated to providing affordable housing to seniors for 61 years.

The new plans address modifications requested in January by the Rochester City Planning Commission, including: increased pedestrian connectivity throughout the site, additional outdoor amenities including plazas and bike racks, and exterior design changes including colors, materials, windows and entries. New renderings for the project may be viewed at www.housingupstate.org.

In addition, Rochester Management, the nonprofit housing agency that built and has managed the complex since 1957, has made an unprecedented 40-year commitment to maintain rents in 20 of the 104 affordable housing units at the same level current residents pay today in the existing Cobbs Hill Village. The latest plans also double the number of the most affordable studio apartments in the design to 16 units.

The Planning Commission approved the new plans with minor conditions, such as color, material and landscaping choices, which Rochester Management will immediately incorporate into the project's design.

“We are pleased to be able to move the modernization of Cobbs Hill Village another step closer toward the project's completion date by addressing the Planning Commission's requested modifications,” said Howard Konar, a member of the all-volunteer board of directors of Rochester Management. “Current and future Cobbs Hill Village residents should have the space and modest amenities needed for them to age in place, and do so with dignity, regardless of economic status. Rochester's seniors continue to deserve better.”

In addition to the original plan to have rent levels for every unit in the modernized Cobbs Hill Village meet stringent state guidelines for affordable senior housing, Rochester Management has made a 40-year commitment to keep rates at 20 apartments in the rebuilt community at the same level of those in the existing complex. These 20 new units would remain priced at today's monthly rental rates of \$332 per studio and \$508 per one-bedroom apartment. Importantly, these 20 units would stay at the current rent levels for a period of 40 years, more than twice the duration that any federal funded project provides and

well beyond what is required under the rigorous New York State Mitchell-Lama program for low-to-middle income housing that has governed Cobbs Hill Village since it opened in 1957 and would continue to.

“We are committed to providing high-quality, affordable housing to seniors here in Rochester, which is why we guaranteed that any current Cobbs Hill Village resident would face no rent increase for as long as they live in Cobbs Hill Village,” said Peggy Hill, chief executive officer of Rochester Management. “We have strengthened our commitment to affordability by ensuring that 20 units will remain at current rent levels for a full 40 years. This is in addition to our longstanding commitment to have all units at the new Cobbs Hill Village remain affordable housing under state guidelines.”

Since the Cobbs Hill Village plans were unveiled in 2016, current residents have been advised that they will continue to pay the same rents they pay today in a rebuilt complex, if they choose to stay. The nonprofit will also assist with planning, packing and moving furniture and other belongings to the new units at no cost to current residents who move to the modernized Cobbs Hill Village.

The Cost

No city or county taxpayer dollars are utilized or requested for the current or proposed Cobbs Hill Village, which is funded by the nonprofit Rochester Management through property rental income and mortgage financing.

The total budget for the modernization project is currently estimated to be about \$27.5 million, \$5.2 million of which includes the costs of changes made based on extensive input provided by Cobbs Hill Village residents, members of the surrounding community, and city officials over the last two years during numerous meetings over the last two years.

The Process

Following Monday’s approval from Planning Commission on the modernization plans and renderings, City Council approval is being sought to extend the reverter agreement for the property in order for Rochester Management to refinance and extend the property’s mortgage for modernizing the project. With its approval, City Council will ensure that the site is not removed from Rochester’s limited stock of affordable housing for seniors.

The property’s current zoning, as well as the deed dedicating the site to affordable senior housing, will fully accommodate the modernization project, so no variances are being requested. Existing structures will be replaced by new buildings on the same land that has been dedicated to affordable senior housing since 1957, in no way encroaching on the adjacent Cobbs Hill Park boundaries. A certified arborist has been hired to oversee the health of trees on the project site before, during and after construction.

The Need

As reported by organizations such as ACT Rochester, the city is facing a serious shortage of affordable senior housing. Lifespan, an aging service provider, has found affordable housing to be among the top five concerns of older adults and family caregivers contacting the nonprofit for over a decade. Rochester Management alone has a waiting list of over 300 seniors for its Monroe County apartments.

Numerous organizations, including PathStone, Urban League of Rochester, Ibero-American Action League, Lifespan, Action for a Better Community, and more, have supported the Cobbs Hill Village

modernization project. In addition, New York State has shown strong interest in ensuring that Cobbs Hill Village is redeveloped into quality, sustainable affordable housing which remains part of the state's Mitchell-Lama program.

Today's seniors are living longer and more active lives than their parents and grandparents, so the modernized Cobbs Hill Village is designed to help residents age in place. A variety of apartment sizes and layouts will all be equipped with full-size kitchen appliances and energy efficient HVAC systems. The addition of accessible refuse collection and laundry rooms, a small fitness room, a computer lab, and indoor community space will allow senior residents to remain living independently, taking care of daily tasks with ease, even if their mobility changes. These features will also help residents avoid isolation by having places to enjoy the company of neighbors, friends, and family whenever they choose year-round.

While structurally sound today, the complex's concrete masonry interior walls and aging mechanicals are some of the outdated elements which cannot be addressed through renovation. Its current studio and one-bedroom apartments range in size from 378 to 541 square feet, too small to accommodate wheelchair accessible bathrooms or full-size kitchen appliances. Crossing parking lots and outdoor sidewalks from each of the motel-style units is necessary to do laundry or dispose trash, no matter the season or weather.

About Rochester Management

With roots dating back to the 1940s, Rochester Management has long been committed to providing quality, affordable housing to those in need, including senior citizens, veterans, students and low-income individuals. The nonprofit was founded by citizens in partnership with local government in order to meet the affordable housing needs of our community, and that continues to be our focus today. Today Rochester Management manages more than 3,600 residential units for low- and middle-income individuals, many of whom have spent many years in these homes. Through its talented team of dedicated professionals, Rochester Management is committed to providing outstanding service to the residents of its stable, vibrant and well-maintained communities throughout Upstate New York.

More information on the Cobbs Hill Village modernization project and Rochester Management is available at www.housingupstate.org.

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