

# Fostering a unique community

## Affordable housing complex designed to bring seniors and families together

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The NAYA Generations affordable housing complex planned for seniors and families in Southeast Portland is not Carleton Hart Architecture's first foray into intergenerational housing.

The Portland-based firm also designed Bridge Meadows, which was completed two years ago. The North Portland affordable housing development pairs elderly residents with families adopting children from foster care. This model has been lauded for its health benefits to seniors who volunteer to support families and as a means to facilitate the adoption of more children out of the foster care system.

Native American Youth and Family Center's \$10.5 million NAYA Generations project was heavily inspired by Bridge Meadows. Guardian Real Estate Services is the developer, and the complex will serve a similar population with 30 housing units for seniors and 10 for families. But this project is definitely different, Carleton Hart principal Brian Carleton said.

"This is not Bridge Meadows II," he said. "We're taking some of things we've learned about intergenerational communities and bringing it to our Generations project, (but) there are some physical differences in terms of the site. It's going to be a much denser project."

Unlike Bridge Meadows, the NAYA Generations complex in Portland's Lents neighborhood will focus on Native American culture. It also will include an educational component via a partnership with Portland Public Schools. In the second phase of the project, crews will construct a learning academy for kids in early preschool through kindergarten as well as an attached community center designed to look like a traditional Native American longhouse.

The Bridge Meadows model resonated with the Portland-based NAYA Family Center because of the large number of Native American children in foster care, NAYA Deputy Director Rey Espana said. Additionally, the role of elders as vital and contributing members of a community is a strong part of Native American culture, he said. NAYA Generations is geared toward attracting Native American seniors and adoptive families, but will be open to all races and cultures.

"We want to reduce the number of native children in the foster care system," he said. "The second part is our agency's commitment to education."

One advantage of the NAYA Generations project following Bridge Meadows is that the Carleton Hart team can apply design elements that worked in the previous development and avoid those that are less effective, Carleton said.

Like Bridge Meadows, NAYA Generations will have a central shared courtyard and other communal space geared to encourage interaction among residents of all ages. One lesson learned from Bridge Meadows is that not all residents felt that they had easy access to the courtyard, Carleton said. The four two-story residential buildings of NAYA Generations will have porches that face a series of sub-courtyards as well as a central courtyard to equalize connections to shared outdoor space, he said.

"The design work that we're doing with the Generations project is being very careful to make sure everyone has access to the community spaces," he said. "You have to physically support that with the design work ... It's making sure that everyone feels like an equal member of the community."

Throughout the project, the Carleton Hart design team is working to incorporate various elements

that evoke Native American culture. This will be most apparent in the community center that is directly inspired by Native American longhouses, Carleton said.

"We're using that traditional form so it's going to be heavy timber construction with an open ceiling," he said. "Throughout the learning academy and longhouse we're trying to use indigenous materials."

This was an especially important aspect of the project design for NAYA leaders, Espana said.

"It's really to see what native and Northwest features can be incorporated into the design to really add that flair of native peoples in our area," he said.

When complete, the development will encompass nearly three acres – the entire site that houses the former Foster Elementary School, which will be torn down to make way for the early learning academy. So, housing buildings had to be much more compact than at Bridge Meadows, Carleton said.

"It's going to be a more attached housing approach where even the families will be in town-homes," he said.

A big design challenge, Carleton said, has been finding ways to connect the development to the neighborhood because the site feels isolated and is surrounded by backyards. But the project team worked with the Portland Bureau of Transportation to create a new street that will cross the northern end of the site and connect to surrounding residential streets. Also, a nearby alley will be developed into a bike and pedestrian path.

These efforts impressed Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees the Portland Housing Bureau, another project partner.

"I'm particularly pleased with the design of NAYA Generations and how it fits into the neighborhood," he said. "You see a lot of Bridge Meadows in the NAYA proposal. I think it's got a great feel to it. It's a community within a community."

Construction of the first phase – approximately 35,000 square feet of housing – is scheduled to start in summer 2015 and require about a year. Ground is slated to be broken on the second phase – the approximately 32,000-square-foot early learning academy and community center – in 2016 and wrap up in 2018. LMC Construction is the general contractor.

## NAYA Generations (first phase)

**Location:** 5205 S.E. 86th Ave., Portland

**Estimated cost:** \$10.5 million

**Anticipated construction start date:** summer 2015

**Anticipated construction completion date:** summer 2016

**Owner:** Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)

**Developer:** Guardian Real Estate Services

**Architect:** Carleton Hart Architecture

**General contractor:** LMC Construction



Courtesy of Carleton Hart Architecture

A courtyard designed for the NAYA Generations development in Southeast Portland is expected to draw together multiple generations of people.



Courtesy of Carleton Hart Architecture

An early learning academy is planned as part of the second phase of the NAYA Generations project in Southeast Portland.