

Green light expected for Miracles Central

Construction of \$13 million project could begin this summer

BY BEVERLY CORBELL
beverly.corbell@djcoregon.com

The Portland City Council is expected to next week approve an ordinance to open the way for development of the Miracles Central project at 1306 N.E. Second Ave., according to Portland Housing Bureau spokeswoman Martha Calhoun.

The ordinance will allow the housing bureau to transfer title of the property to Miracles Central Apartments Limited Partnership, an arm of nonprofit Central City Concern. The City Council will consider the ordinance at 10 a.m. during its June 10 meeting.

The \$13 million project is being developed by Guardian Real Estate Services as a six-story building with 47 units of low-income housing on the upper five floors. The ground floor will accommodate services for people in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction sponsored by Central City Concern.

The building's housing mix is expected to be approximately 21 studios, 22 one-bedroom units and four two-bedroom units. Plans call for 18 of the units to be suitable for incomes up to 60 percent of the median family income, 28 units for incomes up to 50 percent of MFI and one unit for incomes up to 30 percent of MFI.

Recovery from an addiction will not be a prerequisite for living in the new building, said Ed Blackburn, executive director of Central City Concern. Low-income housing is simply a tremendous need in the city, he said.

"There is just not enough affordable housing in this low-income level in the region," he said. "There has been a lot of gentrification in the inner city; people with low incomes moved out and it affected people of color and African-Americans at higher proportions."

Efforts to develop the property began about a year and a half ago, Blackburn said. Ground is expected to be broken in late July or early August, with completion to follow in about 15 months. LMC Construction will be the general contractor.

About halfway through construction, Central City Concern will start a waiting list for the apartments, he said.

"This is much-needed housing for low-income people but it's also for people who would like to live in a supportive community with major lifestyle changes, including employment (counseling) and long-term living stability."

The Portland Housing Bureau in 2010 acquired the 10,000-square-foot vacant lot from the Portland Development Commission. The PHB will make a \$7.1 million loan in tax increment financing from the Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal Area to develop the property. The draft ordinance states that the PHB loan is necessary to leverage nearly \$6 million of other public and private financing. Other lenders and investors include JPMorgan Chase & Co., National Equity Fund, Oregon Housing and Community Services, Central City Concern, Banner Bank and Federal Home Loan Bank of Seattle.

The ordinance will go into effect immediately upon passage, according to the draft ordinance, because a delay would hinder other deadlines. That includes final approval of low-income housing tax credits by



Courtesy of the Portland Housing Bureau

Miracles Central is planned as a six-story, 47-unit building that will provide low-income housing as well as ground-floor counseling space.

the Oregon State Housing Council, which first requires City Council approval. Delays could increase the project cost, the draft ordinance states.

According to plans submitted previously to the PDC by Carleton Hart Architecture, the L-shaped building will have a ground-level lobby, 75 long-term bicycle parking spaces and six short-term spaces, and a common courtyard on the northeast corner of the property. The project's design was approved by the Portland Design Commission in November 2014.

Jennifer Hoffman, project manager for Carleton Hart, said the project is a collaboration between Central City Concern and the Miracles Club, which focuses on serving adults recovering from drug or alcohol abuse. This will be a second location for the Miracles Club, which also offers its services to the public.

"Both Central City Concern and the Miracles Club will provide resident services, which includes peer mentoring, life skills, employment services, health care connections and financial literacy," Hoffman said.

The building is designed by Carleton Hart with residents' comfort in mind, to provide personal space as well as promote a sense of community, Hoffman said.

"Gathering and meeting spaces are available in both an interior common room and an outdoor garden courtyard," she said. "Units are provided with ample daylight, fresh air and outdoor balconies."

City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who will introduce the ordinance, said he is very excited about the project.

"It's in a nice part of town, in an urban renewal area and very close to the Convention Center," he said. "It's a really good opportunity for moderate to low-income housing that will serve many residents and also residents who access the Miracles Club now with another service location."

Even more so, it will open the door for former residents of the neighborhood to return to the area, Blackburn said.

"This was the site of the first African-American community in the city, lost through urban renewal many years ago for (Veterans) Memorial Coliseum," he said. "It's an opportunity for them to come back to a community where they once lived and be able to enjoy the amenities of a city with a vibrant downtown."