

Affordable Housing for Seniors Coming to Petersburg

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PETERSBURG -- The groundbreaking yesterday afternoon for the Claiborne Square Apartments was about more than the future arrival of a new senior community.

It was about revitalization throughout Petersburg.

"We expect it to serve as a catalyst to these remaining areas," said City Manager David Canada, mentioning development in such neighborhoods as Gillfield and Harding Street.

Nearly 150 people turned out for a celebration at the future site of Claiborne Square, a \$6.5 million complex featuring 34 one-bedroom apartments and 13 two-bedroom apartments. Forty-three apartments are in the main building, and a separate cottage holds four more units.

The site is adjacent to Tabernacle Baptist Church on Halifax Street. The Masonic lodge, Abram Lodge No. 10, donated the land to the church.

The apartment complex is named in memory of longtime Mason Connie Claiborne.

C.W. Lawrence, Abram Lodge past master, said it was an honor and privilege that the complex is being named for one of the lodge's esteemed, longtime members.

Construction is scheduled to begin early next year and will be certified under the EarthCraft House Multifamily Program, which has strict requirements for energy efficiency and indoor air quality.

The apartments will incorporate such green technologies as solar hot-water heaters and will offer rent as low as \$500 a month. "This solves many of the housing challenges we have in the community," said T.K. Somanath, chief executive of the Better Housing Coalition.

Canada said the project is an important one for the city because it provides affordable housing. And, he said, the city owns many other properties that can be developed to offer additional affordable choices.

The complex further enhances the vision that community leaders have for Petersburg's image. "We are a destination city, where people want to live and work, to play and to rear their families," Mayor Annie Mickens said. "This is about the quality of life for every person who lives here, and we are very grateful for all those people that came together."