

Great Need for Disabled Housing

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Lynchburg, VA - A developer plans to bring housing for disabled people to Lynchburg, and the need is as great as ever. Rush Lifetime Homes is working to break ground on Victoria Ridge next month.

Rush Homes already has a waiting list about 100 people long for the 17 apartments they already own. They hope Victoria Ridge will help revitalize the lower-Rivermont area, and give the disabled an affordable place to call home.

Gary DuPriest says accessible housing can't be built fast enough.

"Not only accessible but also affordable because people who are disabled and looking for accessible housing also don't have a lot of income," he said.

The CEO of the Central Virginia Disability Association has been working with Rush Homes to design Victoria Ridge, which would go on this wooded lot on Victoria Avenue.

"The entrances will be accessible, the porches will all be accessible. All the parking will be accessible," DuPriest said.

The plan calls for 24 units. Half of those will have highly-accessible elements for handicapped people, like the wide halls in this Rush Homes apartment in Madison Heights.

"So it allows your wheelchair to go up and down the hall freely," DuPriest explained.

"It has roll under sinks of course. Everything has roll-under sinks," Jeff Smith of Rush Lifetime Homes said. "There's a huge need in this area for accessible housing."

But even with two dozen new units, it will barely make a dent. The Lynchburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority says 142 elderly and disabled people are waiting for accessible housing.

With the aging population, the need for this kind of housing, you probably think, is going to get bigger.

"I believe we've seen the issue grow in the past five years since I've been here," Smith said.

Smith says a mix of tax credits, as well as federal, state and local grants will fund the multi-million dollar Victoria Avenue project.

"We've heard some feedback from that particular community saying, 'We're glad that you're taking an empty lot and doing something with it.' And I'm glad to be doing it," Smith said.

Rush Homes hopes to finish the project by April 2011. Both people we spoke to say they want this project to help provide housing for disabled veterans.