

Community celebrates start of renovation of Mary Bethune Apartments in West Tampa

83 DEGREES, CHRISTOPHER CURRY | TUESDAY, AUGUST 06, 2019



The transformation of the former North Boulevard Homes site – and West Tampa – continues with the start of the renovation of Mary Bethune Apartments. The **Tampa Housing Authority** and developer The Related Group will partner on a full interior and exterior renovation of the more than half-century-old, eight-story building. When finished in late 2020, the renovated Mary Bethune Apartments will feature 150 apartments of affordable housing for seniors, a new fitness center, community center, clubhouse, media room, and outdoor amenities. Modern touches will include Energy Star appliances, impact-resistant windows, and secure building entry. As with other affordable housing buildings in West River, the mixed-use, mixed-income development under construction on the 44-acre North Boulevard Homes site will reserve first dibs on newly renovated apartments to the former residents. “Our seniors are really an important factor in our community and we want to ensure that they have a safe, affordable place to live,” says Lillian Stringer, Tampa Housing Authority Director of Public Relations. “That is what we are trying to do to provide housing for them.”

Last year, construction started on another affordable housing complex for seniors at the former North Boulevard Homes property. When completed, the six-story Renaissance at West River will have 160 units. Built in 1966, Mary Bethune Apartments is named for the late Dr. Mary Jane McLeod Bethune, the 20th Century educator, businesswoman, and civil rights leader who founded the school that became Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach and co-founded the United Negro College Fund.

Officials from the Tampa Housing Authority, the City of Tampa, the Related Group, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development marked the start of renovation and the continued development of West River with a ceremony on July 19. “This project represents the beginning of West River’s renaissance,” Tampa Mayor Jane Castor says. “The Hillsborough River acts as Downtown’s main artery, and it is important that we dedicate our resources to revitalizing this historic area and providing affordable housing to its residents.” The full 44-acre redevelopment project will include 2,200 residential units, including 1,120 affordable housing units and 1,080 market-rate units, along with retail and office space. It is part of an ongoing effort by the City of Tampa, the Tampa Housing Authority, and other entities to revitalize the area of Tampa west of the Hillsborough River.

The Tampa Housing Authority is also working to develop more mixed-income properties to replace isolated pockets of poverty of older public housing complexes such as North Boulevard Homes. Stringer says the need for affordable housing is dire in Hillsborough County and the Tampa Housing Authority is working to do its part to meet it. Last month, the agency held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark completion of the final phase of Cedar Pointe, an affordable housing community north of East Sligh Avenue in Tampa.