

Visions of hope as ground broken for Highlander - Omaha World-Herald (NE) - October 10, 2015 - page 02B

October 10, 2015 | Omaha World-Herald (NE) | Chris Burbach | Page 02B

Under gray skies Friday, the 75 North Revitalization Corp. and its supporters envisioned a brighter future for a north Omaha neighborhood as they broke ground for the Highlander development.

Highlander's housing, educational facilities and programs and businesses are meant to transform the former home of the troubled Pleasantview Homes public housing projects and the surrounding neighborhood, the speakers said.

It will offer children "the strong support and love of a family, in a safe environment, with good schools, in a neighborhood they love," 75 North Executive Director Othello Meadows said.

Susie Buffett, whose Sherwood Foundation is a major donor to 75 North, hailed north Omaha as a resilient community that has been beset by what she called problems of institutionalized racism: poverty, violence, low expectations and lack of opportunity.

Those things are man-made and can be hard to overcome, she said, and the Highlander development is an effort to do so.

Meadows, Buffett and others spoke before an expansive background of cleared ground on a hill near 30th and Lake Streets, with the downtown skyline visible beneath the low clouds.

The nonprofit 75 North will erect 16 buildings containing a combined 109 apartments straddling 30th Street north of Parker Street.

The first phase will cost about \$25 million. Of that, \$11 million is coming from philanthropists, including Buffett's Sherwood Foundation, the William and Ruth Scott Foundation and the Lozier Foundation.

The development also is receiving \$5.9 million in low-income housing tax credits, plus \$1.2 million in tax-increment financing.

Sixty percent of the apartments will be reserved for low- and moderate-income families. The other 40 percent will carry no income restrictions.

Monthly rents are expected to range from \$650 for a one-bedroom apartment to \$900 for a three-bedroom.

Also on the way: a building that will house programming in the arts, entrepreneurship, technology and health. Called the "Community Accelerator," it will be open to Highlander residents and the broader community.

75 North is working with the Omaha Public Schools on an improvement plan for nearby **Howard Kennedy Elementary** School. OPS and 75 North plan to have a community forum on the project at 5 p.m. Thursday at Salem Baptist Church, 3131 Lake St.

At the groundbreaking, attended by about 200 people, Meadows praised the cooperation of north Omaha leaders, city officials and planners and Omaha philanthropic foundations, saying the project shows Omaha at its best.

Buffett recalled teaching sewing classes at Pleasantview Homes in the 1960s and the volunteer work her mother, Susan Thompson Buffett, did there.

Susie Buffett quoted her mother as saying, "If what comes from myself can be occasionally purely motivated or once in a while done only in love, then perhaps it will be worth something."

Contact the writer: christopher.burbach@owh.com

402-444-1057, twitter.com/chrisburbach

CITATION (APA STYLE)

Burbach, C. (2015, October 10). Visions of hope as ground broken for Highlander Susie Buffett pays tribute to north Omaha, where homes, schools in 'safe environment' set to rise. *Omaha World-Herald (NE)*, p. 02B. Available from NewsBank: America's News – Historical and Current: <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/15870FFAAB071B30>.

Copyright (c) 2015 Omaha World Herald