Project Gets Boost from Foundation Funding

Avenue Center, a three-story mixed-use community complex, will feature approximately 30,500 square feet of community programming designed to meet the needs of Near Northside residents.

By Lisa Brown | January 13, 2019 at 09:00 PM

When completed in early 2020, Avenue Center will feature approximately 30,500 square feet of housing.

HOUSTON—Nonprofit affordable builder Avenue recently unveiled plans to develop Avenue Center after getting a significant boost in funding. This mixed-use community resource hub is to be constructed across from Moody Park in Near Northside, one of the pilot neighborhoods included in Mayor Sylvester Turner’s Complete Communities initiative.

Avenue Center is one of four area projects receiving funding from the Greater Houston Community Foundation as part of a $6.5 million pledge from the United Arab Emirates to support Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts focused on community revitalization, homelessness, library services and public health. Avenue will receive approximately $2.6 million for the construction of Avenue Center.

Currently in the midst of a capital campaign, Avenue has also raised more than $2 million

“We are thrilled to unveil our plans for Avenue Center, a new mixed-use community complex designed to meet the needs of Near Northside residents,” said Mary Lawler, executive director at Avenue. “Avenue has been working with the Near Northside community for many years, supporting efforts by residents to revitalize an area with a rich history and cultural identity while preserving the neighborhood’s unique character and affordability.”

The three-story development will feature approximately 30,500 square feet of community programing space including Avenue’s headquarters, realty office and homeownership center, along with a health clinic and an early childhood education center, which will help address the shortage of early childhood education capacity in the Near Northside community.

Lawler noted that the goal of Avenue Center is to conveniently co-locate a variety of vital resources for residents—especially low-income families—to improve access to essential support services that will improve the quality of life for neighborhood families and the community as a whole.

“Avenue began building affordable housing in Near Northside in 2000 and from 2009 has served as a convening agency, bringing the community together to identify long-term, sustainable solutions that improve the quality of life for working families,” Lawler tells GlobeSt.com. “Thanks to the generous support of our public and private partners, Avenue is able to advance plans for this new community resource hub, which will provide Near Northside residents, especially low-income families, improved access to supportive services including a community health clinic, disaster recovery assistance, homebuyer education and counseling, and early childhood education. We are excited to break ground on this transformative project in the first quarter of 2019 and look forward to providing more Near Northside families the resources they need to create a safer, healthier and more resilient community.”

Avenue tapped multidisciplinary architecture and engineering firm Page for the design for Avenue Center, which is inspired by the cultural fabric of the Near Northside Community as well as Avenue’s existing development portfolio.
When completed in early 2020, Avenue Center will be centrally located at 3527 Irvington Blvd., near several neighborhood landmarks. These include the community park and walking trails at Avenue Place, MD Anderson YMCA, Carnegie Library, Irvington Park, Moody Park and Recreation Center, and the METRO North Corridor rail line, which connects the Greater Northside community with key districts including downtown Houston, the Museum District and Texas Medical Center.

In recent years, Avenue has constructed 900 affordable homes and apartments in Houston, specifically in the greater Northside community. In Near Northside, Avenue has developed Fulton Gardens, an 88-unit senior apartment development that is situated along the METRORail; Avenue Place, a 95-unit single family development; Avenue Terrace, a 192-unit multifamily complex; and Avenue Station, a 68-unit multifamily complex. In the adjacent Northline neighborhood, Avenue recently announced Avenue Meadows, a new 16-unit single-family development targeted to low and moderate-income homebuyers. These developments offer Houstonians affordable housing prices, as well as access to a variety of amenities, including after-school programs and community enrichment opportunities.

In 2017, Near Northside was designated as one of five pilot neighborhoods for the mayor's Complete Communities initiative, which focuses on ensuring Houston communities have the quality of life elements needed for residents to live and prosper in their own neighborhoods. These elements include adequate access to healthcare, educational resources, healthy groceries, parks and green space, quality public transit and economic opportunities. The initiative seeks to address these elements which are lacking and includes provisions for sufficient quality, affordable housing—something that has become a growing concern across Houston, including the Near Northside community.

Separately, the city's new home development program has a goal to build 20 single-family homes per month for low- to moderate-income families. The homes under this program are funded by federal grants and local tax reinvestment funds, GlobeSt.com learns.