



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Grisanti

Groundbreaking For 49 Townhomes In Buffalo's Historic Fruit Belt

MARK GRISANTI December 14, 2012

| ISSUE: **HOUSING**

HOUSING



Transformation of Buffalo's historic Fruit Belt neighborhood continued on Dec. 14 when federal, state and local government officials joined religious leaders in a groundbreaking ceremony for a new townhome project.

The event was held at 145 Maple Street, where a three-bedroom, fully handicapped accessible unit is now under construction.

St. John Fruit Belt Community Development Corp. is developing 49 new townhomes on properties near the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. The \$15.3 million project will include 17 buildings, with two, three and four-bedroom townhomes that will be energy efficient.

The rental properties will feature historically-friendly designs, allowing them to blend in with existing properties in the area. Monthly rents will be \$500 for two bedroom units, \$550 for three bedroom units and \$600 for four bedroom units, plus utilities. Three units will be built for mobility impaired residents and two will be for hearing and visually impaired.

“New York is proud to be a leader on this project,” Lieutenant Governor Robert J. Duffy said. “Under Governor Cuomo’s leadership, the State’s investment of Low Income Housing Tax Credits and New York State HOME Funds are providing quality new housing to low income families while putting New Yorkers to work, bringing opportunities to the neighborhood and dramatically changing the landscape, something that is happening across the state. This is collaboration at its best, government at all levels working with the local community, pooling our resources to produce significant investment that is leading to the re-birth of a neighborhood – everyone wins.”

“This is an important step in our ongoing efforts to help improve the quality of life in the Fruit Belt and in Buffalo,” said Pastor Michael Chapman, consulting CEO of St. John Baptist Fruit Belt Community Development Corporation. “Construction of these townhomes is leading to new employment opportunities for neighborhood residents. We are most grateful for the commitment from Governor Cuomo, Lieutenant Governor Duffy, Congressman Higgins, Mayor Brown and a number of other government leaders. This investment is bringing new life to the Fruit Belt.”

Congressman Brian Higgins said: “Today’s groundbreaking is another significant step forward in realizing the vision of a community of faith. Under the leadership of Rev. Michael

Chapman, the St. John Fruit Belt Community Development Corporation is building on its foundation of providing meaningful opportunities to train, work, build and live within this historic and dynamic neighborhood. This project is a positive and powerful example of what can be accomplished when public, private and philanthropic partners join together with residents to put people's needs first."

New York State Homes & Community Renewal Commissioner/CEO Darryl Towns said: "The State's investment in St. John Town Homes brings affordable housing to the community, grows jobs and encourages further investment in the Fruit Belt. Governor Cuomo has committed to revitalizing Buffalo with a \$1 billion initiative to strengthen the regional economy. I join in congratulating Pastor Chapman for building a better community with meaningful opportunities that will benefit individuals and families, by training and employing Fruit Belt residents in the construction of the town homes, ensuring they learn marketable skills to position them for good jobs."

"St. John Fruit Belt Community Development Corporation's \$15.3 million plan to build 49 new townhomes in Buffalo's Fruit Belt neighborhood is an exciting project that will create jobs and affordable housing opportunities for the many hardworking men and women who work on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and throughout Buffalo," said Mayor Byron Brown, noting that he allocated \$2.75 million in city HOME funds for this project.

"Thanks to the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and other partners, this project will continue to play a vital role in the transformation of this historic neighborhood by enhancing the quality of life for city residents and putting people back to work." State Senator Mark Grisanti said: "This investment in the City of Buffalo is important to this area. LEED certified housing combined with a workforce development which includes training for unemployed residents will be a tremendous asset to this community."

State Senator Timothy Kennedy said: "This major development project will create 49 affordable town homes in the City of Buffalo's Fruit Belt community, and it will have a lasting impact on the entire neighborhood. This project will help put Western New Yorkers to work, while aiming to achieve a goal of 60 percent minority participation and hiring. In addition to the new construction jobs, a major component of this project is workforce development and job-readiness. Many of our neighbors living in the Fruit Belt will be trained with the skills they need to fill the high-demand jobs that these development initiatives require."

Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes said: "I am excited about the new development that is underway in the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus area with the St. John's town homes. This is a sign of growth and investment in Buffalo's downtown area, which is not only good for St. John's Development Corporation, but the workforce development component of the project is great for the community. I look forward to the needs of the community being met and the completion of this project."

Ellicott District Council Member Darius Pridgen said: "The St. John Project is a great example of what happens when government, faith based communities and neighborhoods work together. My hope is that we will see more projects like this across the city that would enhance more neighborhoods."

Each townhome will have a front porch with off-street parking provided in the rear of the property. Every house will be LEED certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), and will include energy efficient mechanical systems and landscaping. Three buildings are single-story handicapped accessible units.

Through a workforce development program, the project has a goal of 60 percent minority participation, which will include training for unemployed Fruit Belt neighborhood residents

for jobs that are in demand. HCR is providing \$10 million in Low Income Housing Tax Credits and \$2.4 million in funds through the New York State HOME program.

The City of Buffalo is providing \$2.75 million in HOME funds. Key Community Development Corporation is providing approximately \$9.2 million in private equity investment. Stratford Capital Group is the syndicator for the project with M&T Bank providing construction financing. General contractors are Lamparelli Construction Company and SLR Contracting and Service Company, both of Buffalo. Foit-Albert Associates of Buffalo provided architectural designs for the townhomes, Hodgson Russ, LLP is project legal counsel and Oxford Consulting Inc. is development consultant.

The Low-Income Housing Credit Program (LIHC) provides a dollar-for-dollar reduction in federal income tax liability for project owners who develop rental housing that serves low-income households with incomes up to 60% of area median income. The New York State HOME Program is a federally-funded allocation to expand the supply of affordable housing stock. HOME funds a variety of affordable housing activities including new construction, rehabilitation/preservation, home improvement and home buyer assistance that are undertaken by municipalities and not-for-profit organizations that serve as local program administrators.