



Entry Form 2018 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

Entry Deadline: Friday, June 15, 2018, Midnight ET

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Entry Title: Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

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Entry Summary: A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

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“Ten years ago, a Pleasantview Homes mom corralled her four kids indoors when gangsters she called the “Dogs” started their routine assembly outside. Sure enough, a reporter noted at the time, a gunbattle erupted - the kind of flying bullets that a few months earlier struck a kindergartner and, before that, killed another little girl. It would be the last year for such outbreaks at the low-income housing project near 30th and Parker Streets. In 2008 the government demolished the barracks-style complex and 23 acres – once home to 182 families - sat vacant.”
(Omaha World-Herald, October 2, 2017)

The Challenge - Pleasantview Homes Housing Development

Pleasantview Homes was a public housing development that provided homes to 182 low-income families in one of the oldest neighborhoods in North Omaha, but it was also an extremely dangerous area that was notorious for the violence that erupted around it. The riots of North Omaha in the late 1960’s, combined with the high loss of jobs and disinvestment in the area, contributed to the increasing concentration of poverty and racial segregation. As the years passed, the plague of drugs, murders, and gang activity took a toll on the area and it became a place where low-income families lived in fear.

In 2008, the Omaha Housing Authority received approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to relocate the Pleasantview Homes’ families and demolish all of the buildings. With violent crime in the North Omaha at an all-time high, including 26 homicides and 154 gun assaults, the community knew it was time to make a change.

The Solution - The Highlander Redevelopment Area

Founded in 2011, Seventy-Five North Revitalization Corp. (“75 North”), a 501(c)(3), had one purpose: *to facilitate the revitalization of healthy, sustainable, mixed-income community* where Pleasantview Homes once stood and help “break the cycle of poverty and community deterioration.” Named for the highway that bifurcates North Omaha, 75 North’s mission to redevelop and transform the area has been supported by Purpose Built Communities and Susie Buffett’s Sherwood Foundation.

Renamed the Highlander Redevelopment Area for its scenic views from atop one of Omaha’s highest elevations, 75 North acquired nearly 40 acres of vacant land located in historic north Omaha that was ripe for redevelopment. Once the demolition of the Pleasantview Homes was complete, 75 North partnered with co-developer Brinshore Development, LLC to create a vision for the area that includes mixed-income apartment homes, duplexes, and townhomes in conjunction with open green spaces, a recreation area with a playground and swimming pool and various retail options. The site also includes a 65,000 square-foot commercial and community center called the Accelerator. As part of the three-tiered model pioneered by Purpose Built Communities, 75 North understood that for the community to thrive the Highlander Redevelopment Area must address the housing, education and wellness needs of the community.

Highlander Housing

The nearly \$20 million first phase of development of 101 units, including a mixture of affordable and market-rate units, is complete and 100% occupied. The development included multiple partners and funding sources, including the issuance of tax-exempt bonds and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits from the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (“NIFA”).

Highlander offers row houses, townhouses, courtyard and walk-up style apartment homes in 1, 2 and 3 bedroom styles at attractive rental rates. Designed for families, singles, young professionals and seniors, Highlander is a vibrant, pet friendly neighborhood filled with an array of apartment styles.

Residents can enjoy a large variety of unit and community amenities including sustainable and energy efficient components in each apartment home. There is also a community garden, site security, secure off-street parking, a business center and fitness center. These are all opportunities once unimaginable in this neighborhood.

A second phase of development of 60 affordable and market rate units for seniors is currently proposed. The vision of the second phase will incorporate intergenerational support and activities in the area.

Building a connection with the Neighborhood

Not only did 75 North envision what could be developed on the vacant land, they also identified and nurtured key community partnerships that would improve the quality of life for future residents and the surrounding neighborhood.

Located near the redevelopment area, the Howard Kennedy Elementary school is and traditionally has been one of the lowest performing schools in one of the highest poverty concentrated areas within the Omaha Public School district. Focusing on the education pillar and with assistance from 75 North, the new principal learned about the Purpose Built Communities’ school cradle-to-grave model and has implemented a robust S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) curriculum. More importantly, the administration and staff saw the need to bridge services and communication with the families in the neighborhood.

Ensuring the Highlander community has access to facilities to address the wellness component, the Charles Drew Health Center is located just steps from the Highlander redevelopment area. The center is a non-profit and provides medical, dental and pharmacy services to residents. It also offers community enrichment programs such as a farmer’s market, Father’s for a Lifetime, Healthy Families – a healthy lifestyle program for children and teens, interpreter services, Omaha Healthy Start and Woman, Infant and Children (WIC) programs.

The Accelerator Community Center

The Accelerator community center is a multi-purpose community center that offers an large event hall-flex space, several eateries, educational opportunities and activities that emphasize wellness and fellowship—all focused on enriching the lives of residents in the Highlander community.

According to Feeding America, forty percent of all children living in North Omaha are “food insecure.” Over half of all children in the affected area “rarely” eat fresh fruits and vegetables. The Accelerator is home to Whispering Roots urban farm, an organization dedicated to bringing healthy fresh food, innovative agricultural techniques and S.T.E.M. education to students. The Highlander Marketplace is a weekly family-friendly event dedicated to entrepreneurs and local artists showcasing their local goods, entertainment, and food. Vendors participating in the marketplace are eligible to receive WIC certification allowing for their acceptance of Farmers Market Nutrition coupons.

The Center also includes a coffeehouse and a food hub with three micro kitchens that is anchored by the nationally recognized restaurant, Big Mama’s Kitchen.

Two area colleges, Creighton University and Metro Community College, have satellite offices and classroom space in the Accelerator. Residents can sit down with an advisor to talk about navigating the next steps in a career or speak with a nutrition specialist to decrease stress factors in their life. A number of educational programs are offered to residents of all ages, including a monthly Plant-Based Nutrition discussions on the benefits of plant-based diets.

Finally, the Accelerator hosts a series of free outdoor fitness classes throughout the summer, including a Boot Camp style class and Yoga.

Conclusion

Through its innovative, holistic and community-centered approach to development, 75 North has breathed new life into what was once a dangerous and dilapidated area by transforming it into a dynamic mixed-use development and sustainable community. The community space is designed to celebrate not only the area, but also the residents. Green space built on the past now encourages fellowship and nurtures connections with friends both old and new. Creative housing options afford community members a place to call home that is both safe and welcoming. Educational opportunities to grow and thrive that were once a dream are now a reality for the children of Highlander. 75 North, in partnership with Purpose Built Communities and support from their partner organizations has built a new and vibrant neighborhood that serves as a model for other communities across the country searching for answers to solve their toughest and most challenging communities.

Highlander Redevelopment Area Supplemental Information

Then.....



And Now.....



http://www.omaha.com/news/metro/visions-of-hope-as-ground-broken-for-highlander-development/article_47bafa95-f2d5-5d00-a260-10d2dd5c5e2d.html

Visions of hope as ground broken for Highlander development

By Christopher Burbach // World-Herald staff writer Oct 12, 2015



Othello Meadows



Susie Buffett

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 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."

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A new look: Using construction to revitalize neighborhoods



Developers say Crossroads Mall project is on track, though financing deal with city isn't yet set



Strong, reinvented Kennedy Elementary at the hub of Highlander neighborhood revival

MORE INFORMATION



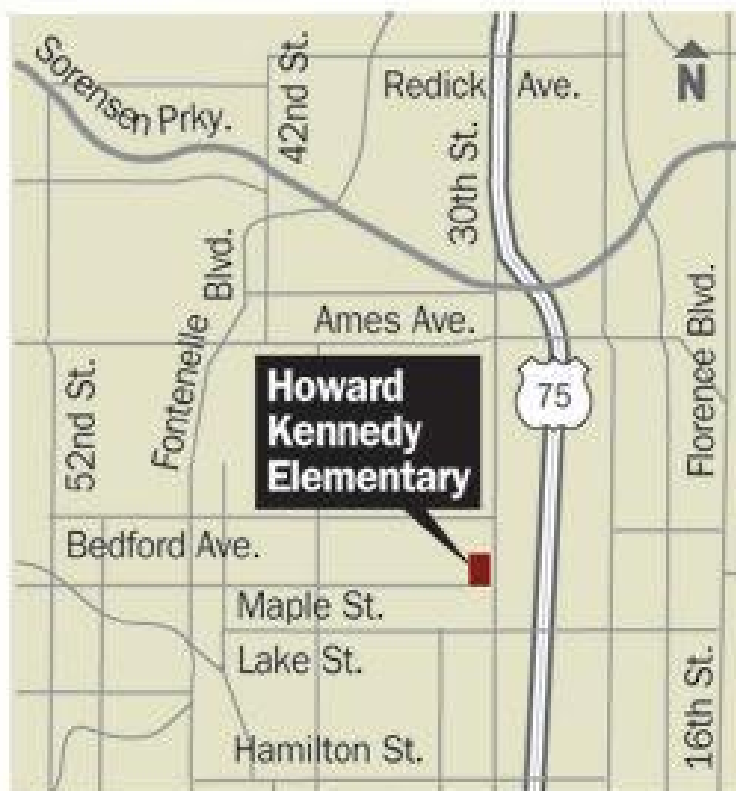
North Omaha area is undergoing a renaissance, and Highlander development is the cornerstone

http://www.omaha.com/news/metro/nonprofit-hopes-to-transform-ops-s-howard-kennedy-elementary-school/article_69a23888-67ea-5146-b992-7460c40d0df6.html

Nonprofit hopes to transform OPS's Howard Kennedy Elementary School

By Erin Duffy // World-Herald staff writer Oct 21, 2014





THE WORLD-HERALD

A potential partnership between the Omaha Public Schools and a neighborhood revitalization effort could shake up Howard Kennedy Elementary, one of the district's poorest schools.

The Seventy-Five North Revitalization Corp. — the nonprofit behind a planned redevelopment of north Omaha's former Pleasantview Homes housing project — believes improving Kennedy is key to transforming vacant lots in a poor, high-crime area into a flourishing neighborhood anchored by new housing and a high-performing school.

But the shape those school improvements might take — and the impact on the school's students and staff — isn't clear yet.

Headed by Omaha native Othello Meadows III, Seventy-Five North is part of the Purpose Built Communities network.

Purpose Built Communities is a nonprofit consulting firm co-founded by Warren Buffett in 2009 to assist local agencies devoted solely to reviving blighted neighborhoods and helping residents climb out of poverty by focusing on building mixed-income housing, a “cradle to college or career” school pipeline for kids and access to resources like health care and job training. Eight projects are planned or underway in cities such as New Orleans, Indianapolis and Birmingham, Alabama.

The Omaha offshoot, the Seventy-Five North project, is taking on north Omaha’s Highlander neighborhood, which is bound by U.S. Highway 75, Parker Street, Lake Street and the Prospect Hill Cemetery.

In May, the organization bought the 24-acre site of the former Pleasantview housing project, which was demolished in 2009, for \$775,000.

There, the group plans to build about 300 housing units, a mix of affordable and market-rate housing available to both rent and buy, funded by private donors, tax credits, grants and other financing options.

Seventy-Five North receives significant financial backing from the Sherwood Foundation, Susie Buffett’s education-focused foundation.

Future projects could include adding early childhood education programs and a community center, and any work will most likely lean heavily on nearby organizations such as the Urban League of Nebraska, Charles Drew Health Center and Salem Baptist Church to provide wrap-around social services to residents.

Then there’s Kennedy, the local school, the subject of a presentation by the group to the OPS board on Monday night.

Meadows said his group is interested in folding Kennedy, a stately, century-old pre-K-6 school with distinctive columns at 30th and Binney Streets, into its plans for the surrounding neighborhood, part of a realization that education or housing alone can’t help kids escape the host of problems associated with grinding poverty.

“Everywhere you go within that Purpose Built network and see a neighborhood that’s really functioning, more often or not there’s a high-performing school at the heart of it,” Meadows said.

There's no shortage of community help at Kennedy now — the school offers everything from federally funded after-school tutoring to a variety of mentoring programs. But Seventy-Five North's involvement would go deeper, Meadows said.

"We don't want to be just another add-on, we'd like to figure out how our neighborhood and how our community helps that school reach its full potential," Meadows said.

He stressed that Seventy-Five North would not be taking over or running Kennedy for OPS.

"We're not educators," he said.

But alongside OPS, the group is exploring ways to boost results at Kennedy, where nearly 98 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and less than half of fourth-graders scored proficient on state math and reading tests last year.

Strategies could include adding a curriculum heavy on science, technology, engineering, the arts and math, and ensuring that the school has "a high-quality principal and best-in-class teachers."

Other options on the table include a longer school day or school year, similar to the extended learning schedule at Wilson Focus School.

A look at other schools involved in Purpose Built Communities could provide a hint at Kennedy's direction.

The Purpose Built Communities model is Atlanta's East Lake neighborhood, where in 1995, a \$150 million public-private project began transforming the crime-stricken area dubbed "Little Vietnam."

Housing projects were torn down and replaced with new apartments, businesses such as bank branches and grocery stores took root, and property values bounced back.

In 2000, the East Lake Foundation started the Drew Charter School, Atlanta's first charter school.

The school now boasts some of the highest public school test scores in Georgia and has a lengthy waiting list for enrollment. Last year, 98 percent of fourth-graders scored proficient on state reading tests and 97 percent in math. The student population is primarily black and 58

percent of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch last year.

Over the last several months, OPS staff and school board members flew to Atlanta and toured the East Lake section and Drew Charter School.

While some communities have created their own charters, others forged public-private partnerships with local public districts. Nebraska is one of eight states that don't allow charter schools.

Two years ago in Spartanburg, South Carolina, the low-performing Cleveland Elementary was rebranded Cleveland Academy of Leadership as part of the Northside Initiative neighborhood revitalization.

The school introduced a revamped curriculum focused on math, science and literacy. Strict behavior rules are enforced and students now wear uniforms and attend school longer, following a 205-day school calendar instead of the typical 180 days. State test scores have been inching forward and disciplinary problems have decreased, school officials report.

OPS Superintendent Mark Evans said more discussions with the school board, school staff and community are needed before any changes to Kennedy are made.

"That's what we're trying to get the board to tell us, what their thoughts are," he said. "We know it's a unique opportunity because of that whole revitalization project and we want to be a part of that."

The district could start meeting with Kennedy staff over the next month or so, discussions that could involve contract talks with teachers and staff if the school year or day is lengthened. A vote by board members on the partnership is at least several months away, and even if they approve the collaboration, it's unclear when parents and students would begin seeing any changes.

Board President Justin Wayne said the district needs to proceed with caution. He asked if it was wise for the district to take on another project while it's busy juggling several others, including a bond issue and implementation of a long-term strategic plan.

He also pointed out the precedent that the OPS-Seventy-Five North partnership could set. If the board approves that plan, why couldn't another neighborhood group or several parents implement sweeping changes to their own school, from changing the magnet theme to setting a longer school year?

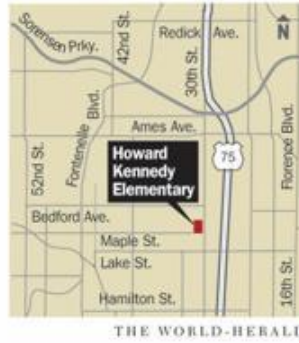
Other board members applauded the overall project.

"We have an opportunity here to change what north Omaha looks like, what Omaha looks like," board member Yolanda Williams said.

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Staff at OPS's Howard Kennedy Elementary seek role in Seventy-Five North's redevelopment plans



OPS board wants more say on bringing Howard Kennedy Elementary into revitalization project



Buffett-backed plan to transform crime-plagued north Omaha neighborhood passes 1st test with city

http://www.omaha.com/money/north-omaha-s-highlander-redevelopment-draws-praise-from-attendees-at/article_e335e2f6-ed0f-5dec-868d-7c59b70cfb87.html

North Omaha's Highlander redevelopment draws praise from attendees at anti-poverty conference

By Cindy Gonzalez // World-Herald staff writer Oct 3, 2017



Crews work on the Rise at the Highlander complex near 30th and Parker Streets in Omaha. All 101 housing units, the food hub and community hall are planned be completed by January 2018.

BRENDAN SULLIVAN/THE WORLD-HERALD

Billionaire businessman and philanthropist Warren Buffett might be the headline speaker at a national anti-poverty conference attracting about 450 people to town. But on Monday, the first day of the three-day event, it was north Omaha's new Highlander redevelopment that drew the oohs and aahs.

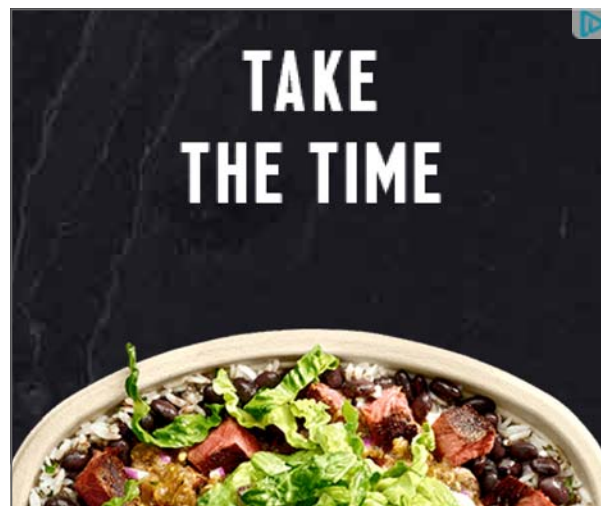
The 23-acre site near 30th and Parker Streets is the focus of an effort by Seventy Five North Revitalization Corp. to reverse disinvestment, crime and generational poverty in the area.

Bus loads went from the opening session of the Purpose Built Communities conference at the downtown Hilton Omaha hotel to the Highlander project, which is to be completed later this year. Tours featured the housing structures (so far, a dozen of the 101 first-phase units are done and occupied) and the Accelerator, a 65,000-square-foot commercial and community center.

“It’s beyond what I expected,” said Timothy Ayers of Orlando, Florida, noting quality of construction and homes.

Ayers said he’d heard a lot about north Omaha a long time ago from native and classmate, Karen Tibbs. The two went to college in Columbus, Ohio. He’d never visited until now, he said, but was impressed with what he saw at Highlander.

The redevelopment is being built on land once occupied by a barracks-style low-income housing project called Pleasantview Homes. Demolished a decade ago, its residents were relocated. Seventy Five North and partners modeled the revitalization after a Purpose Built project in Atlanta, where tenants of mixed incomes and a strong school partnership were said to be key to dramatic shifts.



Jane Smith of Athens, Georgia, said she was struck by row houses designed for multiple generations of a family. She said the variety of building styles (three different architect firms were involved) helps create a feeling that the area is “evolving like a true neighborhood.”

“Clearly, it’s beautiful,” said Heather Benham, also of Athens. “I hope it serves the people it’s intended to serve.”

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MORE INFORMATION



Downtown project transforms old power plant into apartments and reveals plenty of new views

Warren Buffett touts anti-poverty movement to visitors studying Omaha's Highlander redevelopment

College students compete to design a block of Omaha's New North Makerhood district

Revival of central Omaha spreads from Aksarben Village to 72nd Street corridor

Cindy Gonzalez

Reporter - Money

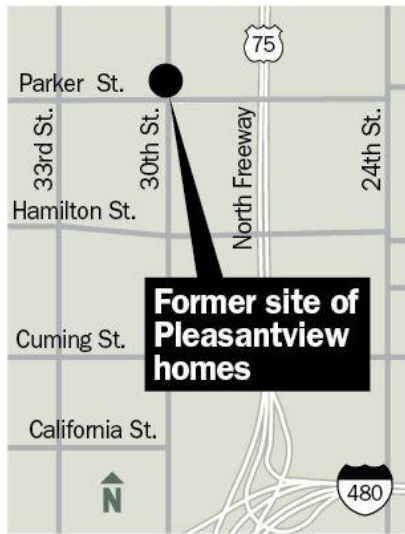
Cindy covers housing and commercial real estate for The World-Herald. Follow her on Twitter [@cgonzalez_owh](https://twitter.com/cgonzalez_owh).
Phone: 402-444-1224.

http://www.omaha.com/money/north-omaha-area-is-undergoing-a-renaissance-and-highlander-development/article_bd840393-4140-5277-aebb-a90c5bf10517.html

FIRST IN THE WORLD-HERALD

North Omaha area is undergoing a renaissance, and Highlander development is the cornerstone

By Cindy Gonzalez // World-Herald staff writer Oct 2, 2017



THE WORLD-HERALD



Cydney Franklin

BRENDAN SULLIVAN/THE WORLD-HERALD



Cydney Franklin of Seventy Five North Revitalization Corp. walks past Founders Row West apartments, part of the Highlander development.

BRENDAN SULLIVAN/THE WORLD HERALD

Bu

Ten years ago, a Pleasantview Homes mom corralled her four kids indoors when gangsters she called the “Dogs” started their routine assembly outside. Sure enough, a reporter noted at the time, a gunbattle erupted — the kind of flying bullets that a few months earlier struck a kindergartner and, before that, killed another little girl.

It would be the last year for such outbreaks at the low-income housing project near 30th and Parker Streets. In 2008 the government demolished the barracks-style complex and 23 acres — once home to 182 families — sat vacant.

Until now.

Reborn as the Highlander development, new and architecturally trendy rental housing is filling the site a few miles north of both downtown and midtown. A 65,000-square-foot commercial and community center called the Accelerator also is rising, next to what will be a playground, a swimming pool and a huge green space for concerts and entertainment.

Those spearheading the development say its amenities and feel are designed to rival other hip residential hubs across the city.

On Monday, hundreds of visitors in town for an anti-poverty conference to be headlined by billionaire investor Warren Buffett will get a peek at the work led by local Seventy Five North Revitalization Corp.

The president of the national group behind the conference, Purpose Built Communities, described the Highlander and related educational and health components the “best in class” for reinventing a once crime-ridden and poverty-plagued area.

Much has yet to be done, said Doug Washington, the first person to move onto the Highlander campus. So far he has neighbors in 13 homes; others will fill as the initial phase of 101 units spread among a dozen buildings wraps up by year’s end.

But when Washington looks out his two-story town house designed by Omaha’s Alley Poyner Macchietto Architects, he already sees a whole different scene from Pleasantview, where he once hung out with buddies.

He likes the rules, including no smoking on the property. A management company maintains landscaping. Washington is looking forward to the workout room and community greenhouse to grow vegetables and fruits.

Besides the Whispering Roots urban farm, the Accelerator tenants also will include an Aromas coffeehouse and a food hub with three micro kitchens, anchored by Big Mama’s Kitchen. Creighton University, Metropolitan Community College and the University of Nebraska at Omaha also will offer programs there.

Said Washington: “This whole area is gonna be popping in years to come.”

The Buffett-backed effort that carries an overarching \$90 million price tag goes back to 2011 and creation of a nonprofit entity to “quarterback” the renaissance.

Seventy Five North, so named for U.S. Highway 75 that traverses north Omaha, is guided by Purpose Built Communities, which has helped turn around crime and poverty in certain neighborhoods of Atlanta and New Orleans. Currently, the group advises projects in 17 cities.

Locally, the target area spans nearly 40 acres bounded generally by Highway 75, Prospect Hill Cemetery, and Burdette and Parker Streets. Within that tract is the old Pleasantview land, purchased from the Omaha Housing Authority.

North Omaha native Othello Meadows III, president and chief executive of Seventy Five North, returned after being away for nearly 15 years, some of those running his law firm in Atlanta. He said the mission to reverse the area's decline began with creating housing contemporary and solid enough to attract professionals and their families. Three architects were selected for diversity and to avoid a "cookie-cutter feel," said senior project manager Cydney Franklin. They coordinate with Illinois-based Brinshore Development.

Town houses, some with three bedrooms designed for multigenerational families, line 31st Street. Underway are new apartment buildings on both sides of 30th Street. All are north of Parker Street.

That 101-unit phase, along with a 64-unit senior structure set to rise next year, will approach the same number of apartments on the old Pleasantview grounds, which critics said was so dense it bred social ills.

So, what's the difference?

"Highlander is a mixed-income neighborhood," said Carol Naughton, president of Purpose Built Communities. "We're not concentrating people in poverty again."

As designed, about 40 percent of the homes are to be rented at market rental prices up to \$1,250; the rest are subsidized, going to people who earn under a certain percentage of the area median income.

On top of that, Seventy Five North has forged a unique partnership with nearby Howard Kennedy Elementary at 30th and Binney Streets, one of the highest-poverty and lowest-performing of the Omaha Public Schools.

Meadows calls the Kennedy partnership a key game changer in lifting a community. The new principal, with funding from Seventy Five North, spent time in Atlanta learning about the Purpose Built school model. Kennedy today has a mostly new staff and an overhaul that includes a curriculum with a heavy focus on science, technology, engineering, art and math.

Just steps from Highlander housing is the Charles Drew Health Center, a partner providing health care. Fitness and nutritional classes are to be offered on-site. “We’re trying to get ahead of health issues,” Meadows said.

To be sure, the redevelopment has challenges, not the least of which was skepticism and decades of programs also intended to combat troubles that beset north Omaha after 1960s race riots burned holes in commercial centers.

But Franklin points to an early sign of encouragement: All but a couple of Highlander’s first 101 units are leased, even before they’re ready.

Support also comes from other community advocates, including the Empowerment Network, which leaders said offered research and legwork upon which Seventy Five North was built.

Philanthropists such as Susie Buffett’s Sherwood Foundation, the William and Ruth Scott Foundation, Walter Scott Foundation, Daugherty Foundation, Kiewit Foundation and Lozier Foundation provide financial backing. Other sources include \$5.9 million in low-income housing tax credits and \$1.2 million in tax-increment financing.

Local members of CREW, or Commercial Real Estate Women, toured the Highlander site recently, and Lisa Lackovic of Endicott Clay Products said they were impressed with the contemporary architecture and quality of materials. “What a difference it will make in that part of town,” she said.

As time goes on, revitalization is expected to ripple beyond the former Pleasantview site.



A couple of miles north, Omaha real estate investor Sam Murante bought an old Bank of the West structure — banking that the 30th Street corridor will fill in commercially, buoyed by growth from anchors such as the Highlander development on the south and Metro’s campus on the north.

It took about two years, Murante said, to secure a tenant for his 7,000-square-foot structure at 30th Street and Ames Avenue. Scooter’s Coffee is transforming a third of the building now. But Murante believes outsider fear eventually will dissipate, and more businesses will come. He intends to build a for-lease retail structure on excess land adjacent to the bank.

Murante likened 30th to South 24th Street some 30 years ago. He said he urged his uncle to buy the old Philips Department Store, and that many thought it was crazy because the area had been in decline. Today the structure is fully occupied.

“Some people might not see it now, but they will,” Murante said, “just like they did in South Omaha.”

Seventy Five North sees hope. Indeed, it has been busy buying lots, houses and parcels outside of the old Pleasantview, but mostly in the broader, nearly 40-acre area. The idea, Meadows said, was to grab the properties as “a pre-emptive strike — before you end up paying for value that you created.”

He added: “We want to protect against speculation and any kind of gentrification.”

The team figured that once the Highlander campus takes off, more people will want to settle in the area. Seventy Five North’s goal is to start building 50 to 70 single family for-sale homes in 2018.

“If you want great stability and help people build wealth, a good way to do that is homeownership,” Meadows said.

Washington, 58, is a north Omaha native who jumped at the chance to return, given the right circumstances and housing. The former chef was living in northwest Omaha, but volunteering at Love’s Jazz & Arts Center on North 24th Street and attending classes at Metro’s Fort Omaha campus. His parents live about six blocks from 31st and Parker.

“I was running back and forth down Sorensen (Parkway) five times a day,” he said. “It got old.”

He saw renderings of the new Highlander, made a phone call and, in mid-May, became the first resident there. He said he had known the people on both sides of him before they became neighbors.

Washington pays market rate rent and said he is accustomed to economic diversity. He said rules and management should help avert problems of the old Pleasantview, and he looks forward to seeing its replacement fill up.

“Hopefully growth will continue north, and down 30th and 24th, to complement what we have here.”

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More than 7 dozen development projects that are changing the Nebraska and Iowa landscape

MORE INFORMATION



Visions of hope as ground broken for Highlander development

Strong, reinvented Kennedy Elementary at the hub of Highlander neighborhood revival

North Omaha entrepreneurs are fulfilling their dreams on their home turf

Warren Buffett touts anti-poverty movement to visitors studying Omaha's Highlander redevelopment

Videos & Websites for the Highlander Redevelopment

Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Xdht12DWEk&feature=youtu.be>

<http://www.ketv.com/article/hardy-coffee-co-moves-hq-to-highlander-redevelopment/19399685>

<http://www.wowt.com/content/news/Highlander-neighborhood-seeing-major-upgrade-with-75-North-Development-Project-449336583.html>

Websites:

<http://livingathighlander.com/>

<http://highlanderomaha.com/>