

Complex to replace Vidal Court detailed

Homes designed for 'blend of incomes'

By Monica Potts
Staff Writer

STAMFORD — A mixed-income housing complex that would help replace the soon-to-be-demolished Vidal Court was presented to the Zoning Board this week.

"This creates a much better, more stable long-term stock of housing," said Rick Redniss, a lawyer for the Stamford Housing Authority.

The plan uses a state funding program established in 2003 for state projects that mirror the federal Housing and Urban Development Hope VI program, which aims to combine low- and moderate-income housing with market-rate units.

"It's closer to what a natural neighborhood would be," said Richard Fox, executive director of the Stamford Housing Authority. "There's normally a blend of incomes, and that's what we would have here."

The 50-unit complex at 58 Progress Drive — former site of Stamford Hospital's finance and billing departments — would have traditional American-style clapboard townhouses surrounding a common green. The

Renewal in phases

■ The state legislature approved \$25 million in state bond funding to demolish and rebuild Vidal Court in 2003.

■ Three hundred and fifty units in as many as four low-density, mixed-income complexes would replace the 216-unit, high-rise Vidal Court complex in phases.

buildings would be one, two and three stories. Thirty of the units would be reserved for moderate-income renters.

The complex would include about 800 square feet of open space per unit. The green, backyards, pedestrian walks, individual entrances, and front porches are meant to encourage use of public transportation and emphasize a community feel.

"It's kind of what the whole 'new urbanism' is about," Fox said.

The legislature approved \$25 million in state bond funding

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to demolish and rebuild Vidal Court in 2003. The West Side complex was built with state money in 1955, and housing authority officials said in 2003 that it would have needed \$15 million in repairs.

Ultimately, 350 units in as many as four low-density, mixed-income complexes would replace the 216-unit, high-rise Vidal Court complex in phases, said Vincent Tufo, director of development for the Stamford Housing Authority. Progress Drive is the first. It also would

be the first in the state using the state program, Fox and Tufo said.

The Housing Authority used Hope VI grants for the renovation of Southfield Village, now called Southwood Square, and the ongoing renovation of Fairfield Court.

Joe Schiffer, a principle with Herbert S. Newman and Partners, the architect for the Vidal Court revitalization, said they are looking for other sites that will allow designs that resemble residential squares in cities such as Philadelphia and Savannah, Ga. Since many of the units will

go at market-rate prices, the designs have to be attractive to renters who could choose elsewhere.

"It has to be absolutely seamless with any other well-designed residential community that attracts the kind of folks who would want to live in Stamford," Schiffer said.

Tufo said construction should start by early 2009.

"What's interesting here is the entire state of Connecticut has a moderate rent portfolio that is aging," Fox said. "This will be a model for the state to follow in other communities."

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