

Senior complex set for Memorial Stadium area

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On a patch of land close to where legends like Johnny Unitas, Raymond Berry, Alan Ameche, Frank Robinson, Brooks Robinson and Cal Ripken Jr. used to rock Memorial Stadium, a trendy, new, long-term senior housing complex is about to break ground.

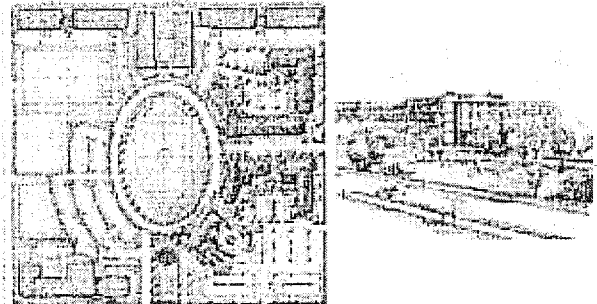
When the Green House Residences at Stadium Place opens in late summer 2011, the vision is to create a community where seniors and their caregivers share daily living in a home-like setting centered near a hearth and open space that includes a huge kitchen, dining room and family room-like area.

"It's going to change people's perceptions about what a nursing home should be," said Mitch Posner, executive director of the Govans Ecumenical Development Corp., based in the 5000 block of York Road. "It's really a home. This is where I'd want my mom to be, and that is the litmus test for all of us."

Posner is spearheading development of the project, set to begin construction in August. It will cost \$12.4 million, most of it already raised through federal, state, local and private contributions. The housing will create 51 new jobs on the 30-acre site in Waverly that also holds a busy YMCA, community playground and 340 other senior housing apartments that opened in 2004.

"Our mission was to create an affordable housing community," Posner said, adding the goal was to focus on senior citizens, but to add activities on the site to include people of all ages.

Former Baltimore Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke, now dean of the School of Law at Howard University, is listed as a private contributor to the Green House Residences. He said last week that the project is special to him because it got off the ground during his administration and represents "all that is good about Baltimore."



The Green House Residences at Stadium Place, a five-story building totaling 40,600 square feet, will include living areas with large, open kitchens.

"When it was proposed, it was unique because it was an intergenerational project that focused on middle- to low-income seniors but also keeping them in touch with young people," Schmoke said, adding that city officials wanted to make certain the Memorial Stadium site remained a centerpiece of the community.

"Once the Orioles made a decision to move to Camden Yards, a big issue became what do we do with that site? I knew that I didn't want to see the stadium rot there because I had as an example in Philadelphia the old Connie Mack Stadium that sat there vacant and pulled down a whole neighborhood," Schmoke said.

Posner said the Green House Residences are part of a national movement in elder care funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The mission is to create a home-like atmosphere for seniors to live and thrive in.

The Green House Residences will be a five-story building, totaling 40,600 square feet. Each floor will hold 12 private bedrooms, each with a bathroom. At the center of each floor will be a large living and dining area and a large open kitchen "where a caretaker will be making home-cooked food and baking cookies at all times of the day, so the smell is that of a home kitchen," he said.

The Stadium Place project will house a total of 49 low-income elderly residents. In addition, Govans Ecumenical Development Corp will move its headquarters there.

There are existing Green House Residences in Youngtown, Ariz., Redford, Mich., Birmingham, Ala., Lincoln, Neb., Pomona, Calif. and Chelsea, Mass.

"With these kinds of houses, already established in many rural settings, researchers have seen a decrease in weight loss and a decrease in the need for the use of nutritional supplements," Posner said, of the impact of the homey atmosphere on the psyche of the elderly. "Here, the household eats together for each meal and they sit together and receive personal care."

On May 19, the Baltimore City Board of Estimates approved a \$500,000 pre-development grant to the development corporation for the project. The funds came from the city's Department of Housing and Community Development.

The YMCA of Central Maryland has developed 13 acres on the Stadium Place site for a large community center and parking lot. In addition, the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation is negotiating

with the YMCA to rehab the grassy field in the middle of the 30 acres – where the old playing field once was home to the Baltimore Colts and Orioles – and turn it into a multipurpose youth athletic field.

The gateway to the site holds ThanksGiving Place, a landscaped plaza with a bell tower and labyrinth, dedicated to the memory of J. Joseph Curran Sr., a former city councilman.

The Green House Residences, Posner said, will further the development of the site as a community hub with a social mission.

“It helps to reinforce the nature of the mission for this project,” he said.

Christine Madigan, senior vice president of Enterprise Homes Inc., which co-developed two other senior housing projects at Stadium Place, said the subsidized apartments have been filled with renters since they opened. Four of the 85 units in one building are market rate, which rent for about \$1,200 per month.

“They have provided wonderful homes for senior residents in the community,” Madigan said.