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New Housing for Seniors in Braddock Seen as Boost in Area

By Moriah Balingit

Construction of a 53-unit senior housing development on Braddock Avenue is well under way, with the building due to open next spring.

Braddock officials see it not only as a new home for seniors but part of a grander plan to refurbish the Braddock Avenue corridor, which they hope eventually will experience new development.

"This is just the beginning," said Councilwoman Tina Doose. "We have momentum, and we definitely want to change the face of Braddock as a whole."

Construction began in late February. The project is complemented by the renovation of the adjacent UPMC Braddock entrance, which, when finished, will face Braddock Avenue. Currently, the main entrance is on the side of the building on Fourth Avenue.

Cassandra Collinge, of the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development, which contributed to the project, said the work will improve the look of the avenue.

"I think the location on Braddock Avenue is critical to help the revitalization of Braddock and to having visible progress on the main street," she said.

The apartments will be restricted to those who are older than 52 and make 50 percent or less of the median income.

Ralph Falbo, whose company, Ralph Falbo Inc., is developing the project, said the Braddock Avenue site was an ideal place to put a



senior citizen apartment building. It's across from UPMC Braddock at the intersection of Braddock and Fourth, enabling residents to walk easily to appointments at the

hospital. The building also will be on a bus line.

Mayor John Fetterman said he appreciated the building's architecture, which is intended

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to complement the surrounding streetscape and reflects Braddock's architectural legacy.

Additionally, the building will feature murals depicting Braddock's history, to be chosen by a committee of local residents.

Most of the \$13 million project was funded through Pennsylvania Housing Finance Authority tax credits and loans. The Allegheny County Department of Economic Development contributed \$1.4 million, and another \$175,000 came from the county's Department of Human Services.

Mr. Falbo has built nine other houses in Braddock to be sold to low- and middle-income families through the Heritage Health Foundation.

Councilman William Zachery said there is a need for high-quality, affordable senior housing in the area and that people are already clamoring for the apartments. He believes the complex will attract seniors outside of Braddock, who could bring new business into the community.

He said he hoped the apartment complex would anchor a local shopping district.

Mr. Falbo said his goal has been to bring development to Braddock since he toured the community eight years ago with his wife, Mimi, who was then the CEO of Braddock Hospital, now UPMC Braddock.

Amid the blight, he saw hope for redevelopment.

"We try to go into depressed neighborhoods ... to try and work to build communities back," he said.

