

CT – NORWALK -- LOCAL CONTRACTORS SOUGHT TO REBUILD WASHINGTON VILLAGE –

The Hour – 12/4/2014 – by Robert Koch



Contributed rendering

A rendering of the Washington Village rebuild which was approved late Wednesday night by the Norwalk Zoning Commission.

NORWALK -- With reconstruction of Washington Village slated to commence next year, upward of 100 carpenters, electricians and other tradesmen attended a "Contractor Trade Fair" at Calvary Baptist Church on Thursday evening.

Bob Fields, owner of J&B Home Improvement, LLC, of Norwalk, said he plans to bid on asbestos removal work but added he's qualified to perform many other jobs.

"I understand for the project to go forward, they need to have someone with my qualifications," Fields told The Hour. "I can install windows. I can install doors. I can do plumbing. I can do painting."

The \$106 million Washington Village Transformation project, undertaken by the Norwalk Housing Authority (NHA), Trinity Financial and the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, calls for razing Washington Village and its 136 apartments along Water Street and building in their place 136 public-housing units, 67 workforce housing units and 70 market-rate units in two, three and four-story buildings.

The transformation plan calls for rebuilding the complex with apartments above and parking below to prevent flooding of housing units as occurred during Hurricane Sandy in October 2012.

The NHA, developer Trinity Financial and construction management team Associated Construction/A.P. Construction sponsored Thursday's trade fair to make local contractors aware of the Washington Village transformation plan.

The contractors perused detailing construction drawings of Phase One of the project -- construction of 80 housing units at 13 and 20 Day St.

As a recipient of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban financial assistance, the transformation project must follow the requirement of the federal Section 3 Program.

The program requires that recipients of such funding provide, to the greatest extent possible, job training, employment, and contract opportunities for low- or very-low income residents in connection with such projects and activities in their neighborhoods.

"In our contract, Trinity has a commitment about hiring Section 3," said Candace E. Mayer, NHA deputy director. "It's integral to the whole project. We are committed to that."

Mayer said the Housing Authority will reach out to Washington Village residents and other people in the neighborhood on Dec. 11 about the potential jobs as part of a two-pronged effort to reach subcontractors and individual residents alike.

Alan Ladson, construction manager for Trinity Financial, encouraged the subcontractors to bid on the project and assured them that he personally will be on site to answer their questions as construction proceeds.

"We're going to be breaking ground pretty soon and we're going to be excited about having contractors join us on this project," Ladson said. "I'm the project construction manager and you will see me on the job site all day long. So if you are one of the successful bidders on the project and you're having trouble, listen, I'm always there. You will see this face."

Vincencia Adusei, president of VASE Construction, LLC, the consultanting firm that organized the trade fair, said work on Phase One is expected to begin by the second quarter of 2015.

"I think it's an exciting project and the community should know about it and be able to participate," Adusei said.

In June, more than 100 people gathered at Washington Village as HUD officials announced the award of a \$30 million implementation grant to help rebuild the public-housing complex.