

Construction begins at Townsend Woods

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TOWNSEND -- After seven years of planning, construction has started on Townsend Woods, a new 36-unit apartment building for low-income seniors.

Funding has been secured and drawings made. A wire fence separates the gardens behind Atwood Acres from the construction site.

The foundation is taking shape and the top soil is pushed into mounds to be reused in the landscaping. The flat site is surrounded by tall pines.

Paul Teixeira, Vice President of Real Estate Services for RCAP Solutions, Inc., has been working with Townsend senior housing since Atwood Acres opened.

RCAP Solutions, known as Rural Housing Improvement at that time, built Atwood Acres 21 years ago. The company still manages the apartment building.

He spoke with residents of Atwood Acres at an April 28 celebration of RCAP's 40th anniversary. "I helped move people in. You still look as young as you used to," Teixeira said to people who have lived there since 1989.

The new building will offer much to seniors hoping to age in safety and independence.

"People should be comfortable for a long time in them," Teixeira said. The architectural firm for Townsend Woods, Studio One of Springfield, has a good sense of how people age in place, he said. Advances in construction and knowledge of facility design has grown over the past two decades.

Fire codes have been met or exceeded throughout the sprinkled building. He said the new one-bedroom apartments will be designed for easy living.

Each one-bedroom apartment will have four rooms. Each bedroom will open straight into the bathroom. The recessed entryways will have a shelves to place bags while unlocking the door. A glass pane will offer residents a chance to see who is at the door before opening it.

The residence will have gathering places and rooms for needed services for the occupants. The exterior of the building will feature a tower with a working clock and a deck over the front portico.

The three-story building will have a common area on each floor. The building will also have a laundry room and a personal care room for services like podiatry.

Although the building will not classify as "green," Teixeira said many many elements will be ecologically-friendly. The siding will be made of a highly insulating cement material, and all appliances will be energy-efficient.

Teixeira said funding for the building came from three sources, \$5.5 million from Housing and Urban Development, a federal program, and \$500,000 each from two state programs; a HOME grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development, and Housing Innovation Funds from the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation.

Townsend donated the Atwood land parcel for senior housing. The new building will be built on the back half of the lot Atwood Acres is on. Although RCAP does not pay property taxes on the the land, Teixeira said a payment in lieu of taxes is make to the town.

He credited Townsend residents Paul and Judy Concemi with making the new project a reality. Paul Concemi approached RCAP about a new building while he was a selectman. Judy retired as Director of Property Management for RCAP last year and now is the volunteer coordinator for the senior center.

An official groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for May 27 at noon. Construction is expected to be completed in Spring 2011.

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