

Emanuel Housing apartment plan in Minneapolis aims to rebuild lives, too

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Published: August 30th, 2011

Many local developers are chasing proposals for shiny new apartment projects with top-dollar rents and fancy amenity packages. But Minneapolis-based nonprofit [RS Eden](#) is gearing up to develop the 101-unit Emanuel Housing project that meets a different market need: affordable housing for people trying to get back on their feet.

"We try not to focus on whatever challenges brought you to us. We try to focus on giving you the strength to be self-sufficient and holding you accountable to that," said Dan Cain, president of RS Eden.

The \$18 million Emanuel Housing complex, near the Metrodome in Minneapolis, will offer units for people who have been homeless, may be struggling with drug or alcohol addictions or have other challenges. All but a few of the units will be efficiency apartments. Units in the project, at 822 Third St. S., will be set aside for veterans, and rents will range from \$460 to \$560 per month.

"The financing is pretty much in place. We need to secure the remainder of the approvals," Cain said. "We hope to start construction sometime early in the spring." The project calls for a renovation of the existing 44,000-square-foot building on the site with adjacent new construction. The existing building, constructed in 1900, is four stories, and the new building will be five stories. St. Paul-based Cermak Rhoades Architects is the project architect.

Forty-year-old RS Eden's roots are as a provider of treatment for alcohol and drug addictions. But the nonprofit agency has expanded into electronic monitoring, drug testing and other related services.

The nonprofit also has become a developer of what it calls supportive housing. Once the Emanuel Housing project is complete, RS Eden will have been involved in more than 400 units of housing as either developer, partner or service provider.

While Cain said RS Eden's housing is not restricted to people with drug or alcohol problems, residents are required to be sober.

"We expect you to live a sober lifestyle. That's an addendum to every lease," Cain said. "We also hold them accountable to those commitments."

Cain said the project has an excellent location that is close to transit connections including light rail and walking distance from the core of downtown Minneapolis.

For Cain, the Emanuel Housing complex is more than an apartment building: It's an extension of RS Eden's mission and philosophy.

"We believe that you rebuild communities from the inside, one person at a time," Cain said. "We know that there are large numbers of low-income people who need jobs. This is going to put workers that need jobs in proximity to where they can gain access to those jobs."

The project is named for a longtime RS Eden staffer, "Scotty" Emanuel, who died three years



The 44,000-square-foot building at 822 Third St. S., built in 1900, is close to light rail transit and about a block from the Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis. (Staff photo: Bill Klotz)

ago, Cain said. "He started out as a counselor ... he was with us for the better part of 30 years before he passed."

The project was up for discussion late Monday afternoon before the Minneapolis City Planning Commission. The staff report from the city's Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) staff recommends approval of the project.

"It's a really well put-together project. It's a good group to work with; they're a good developer and they know a lot about this type of housing," said Wes Butler, manager of multifamily housing for CPED.

Butler said such projects are important to provide a range of housing options.

"You have to strike a balance between the high-end housing and the affordable housing. A project like this really helps to balance out the high-end housing that's going on," Butler said.

Terri Cermak, president of Cermak Rhoades Architects, said the new building will look distinctly different from the older building.

Project funding includes low-income housing tax credits (LIHTC) allocated by the state and city, and a grant from Hennepin County. The \$18 million budget includes land costs and reserves. RS Eden paid \$2.3 million for the building in December 2009, buying it from the nonprofit Council on Crime and Justice, which remains a tenant and will stay after housing is added.

"We have a good relationship with them. We fully support what RS Eden is doing," said Mark Haase, vice president of the Council on Crime and Justice.

RS Eden is the service provider for Alliance Apartments, a 184-unit "sober community" developed and owned by the Minneapolis-based nonprofit Aeon. An expansion of the project, the \$10.3 million Alliance Addition, was completed in November.

"It's all sober housing, and that's what RS Eden specializes in. As long as people intend to be sober, that is who they serve," said Gina Ciganik, vice president of housing development for Aeon. "They're fantastic. They're just no-nonsense. They're a savvy group, and they know how to develop."

As it happens, Aeon is a tenant in the building at 822 Third St. S. but will be moving out to make way for RS Eden's project.

"We're glad they got funded. It's a great project. We are looking for a new home and will move out in the next six months or so," Ciganik said.

Ciganik said Aeon is looking for about 12,000 to 15,000 square feet of space but has not decided yet if it will move into one of the nonprofit's own future developments.

"We're still making some decisions about whether our next move is interim and permanent," Ciganik said.