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Housing For Grandparents To Break Ground This Year

Posted on November 14, 2013 by [tribune](#) in [Special Section](#) with 0 Comments

BY NATALIA KOZIKOWSKA

Staff Writer

Last week, a report surfaced that a one-of-a-kind housing project intended to help the growing population of grandparents raising their grandchildren in Southeast Queens has been delayed until next summer. But Peter Florey, principal of the managing local development group D&F, denied the claim, saying the project will break ground close to schedule.

The \$15.6 million project, which will be built at the intersection of Guy R. Brewer Boulevard and 112th Road in Jamaica, encountered a minor setback while trying to obtain permits from local and State agencies, but the legal issues have been resolved and construction will begin in December.



A photo rendering of a new one-of-a-kind housing project intended to help grandparents raising their grandchildren.

"I'm not too sure where it [the report] came from, but it's not true," Florey said. "We are expecting to close before the year ends and it's not being delayed. We are hoping to have a ground-breaking before the end of the year and everything is going along very well."

"As is always the case, there are always little delays that you run into when you put something of this magnitude together," he added. "We were hoping that it was going to close a little earlier, but it is certainly not being delayed until the summertime. It's going forward."

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The five-story, 53-unit housing project will provide free, on-site childcare, counseling and handicap-accessible apartments. Although a majority of the housing complex will be dedicated for grandparents who are caregivers, a number of units that will also be set aside for seniors without kids.

"What's important about the grandparents' residence is that the grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren don't often fit well into traditional senior housing because those are all one-bedroom units and often lack the kinds of care that grandparents will need in taking care of their grandchildren," Florey said. "This type of housing is unique because it offers supporting services to those grandparents and to their grandchildren that are specifically tailored to this group and their needs."

According to the American Association of Retired Persons, nearly 5.8 million children are living in a home where grandparents are the householders.

Florey said he believes that the housing complex will play a vital role in New York City, where the number of grandparents who take care of their grandchildren has been steadily increasing.

"It is [a growing trend]," he said. "It's particularly prevalent in Queens, as well as the rest of the City. We are seeing more and more grandparents with sole custody that are caring for their grandchildren."

Grandparents and seniors living in neighborhoods encompassed by Queens Community Board 12 will be given first priority in the new low-income housing unit. The remaining units will be awarded through a lottery system.

D&F's partner, the Cavalry Baptist Church in Jamaica, helped secure money for the project and has been instrumental in spearheading the complex. The initiative was first proposed by a group of senior congregants who believed there needed to be housing that addressed the City's changing demographics.

The project will be the first of its kind and is being funded by a combination of public and private sources. The State issued \$11 million in low-income housing tax credits. Queens Borough President Helen Marshall has also pledged \$500,000.

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