

## Oak Courts renovations may mean housing for homeless families

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GREENFIELD — The \$13.2 million renovation of one of the town's low-income housing developments is expected to be completed by the end of this month, and it appears one or more of the homeless families living in Greenfield's two hotels could be among its new tenants and have



The new play structure in front of the new Community Center at Oak Courts in Greenfield.

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permanent homes by July.

Dan Finn, executive director of Greenfield Housing Authority, which manages Oak Courts off of Elm Street, said Greenfield residents, including those who are currently

living in two of the town's hotels, will have priority as the authority fills the last 34 apartments.

The authority received funding for the project through the state

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Department of Housing and Community Development.

Finn said the authority interviewed at least one homeless family living in one of the hotels. He said the authority has also been interviewing families on its waiting list, of which there are about 122.

The first phase of the project, which was completed last October, included the renovation of 16 apartments, while the second phase, which was completed in February, included the renovation of 24 apartments.

Families living in second-phase apartments were moved into the new apartments when renovations were completed and so on.

Finn said there were more than a dozen vacant apartments when the project began, so no families living there at the time were displaced during the renovations.

The final phase will complete the renovation of the final 34 apartments.

The project includes renova-

tion of kitchens and bathrooms, construction of two accessible apartments, which are included in the total of 74 apartments, and a new community center with computers. Each apartment also received a new sprinkler system, new vinyl flooring and new fixtures.

Finn said energy-efficiency upgrades were done to all of the apartments, new siding was installed on all of the buildings and a new playground was built.

He said there were a few issues this past winter, after the first- and second-phase tenants moved in.

"We had some issues with the heating," said Finn. "It was a tough winter, so it wasn't the best time to have those issues, but the contractors and architects

worked to fix them and to modify the heating systems, so we should be all set next winter."

Finn said all tenants will be able to use the new Community Center, and the authority will hold different events there, including the summer lunch program for eligible children from throughout the community.

He said he has requested a full-time service coordinator posi-

tion in next year's budget, which begins July 1. He said he should hear whether that will happen in the next few weeks.

"That person would coordinate programs for tenants and their children," said Finn.

He said those programs might include ones on parenting, employment, education and more.

Finn said more than 300 people will be living in Oak Courts when all of the apartments are occupied. He said tenants pay 27 percent of their total income for rent.

"It's not really subsidized rent, per se," said Finn. "Tenants pay rent based on their incomes, and they also pay all utilities. The authority is funded by the state based on our needs after we've collected all of that."

He said tenants must meet certain low-income guidelines to be eligible for an apartment in Oak Courts.

For example, he said a single person must make no more than \$30,650 a year, while a family of four must make no more than \$43,750 a year.

"This is going to be a great place when it's all done," said Finn.

Most of the buildings at Oak Courts have four apartments and a couple have eight. Three to four people live in each apartment on average, according to Finn.

He said the authority will continue to maintain a waiting list, which he said typically has more than 100 names on it, including families living in the hotels.

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A housing unit at Oak Courts gets updated.

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