

Senior complex Eno Haven to open

By Erin Wiltgen

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A quaint stream meanders its lazy path through the thicket of trees backing up to Eno Haven apartments. Sherrod Banks, project owner, leans over the rail as he takes in the view, admitting his small-town Southern roots influenced this addition of a back porch.

“Even in the winter, when the trees are bare, it’s a beautiful view,” he said. “But in the spring and summer when it’s green and lush, it’s even more beautiful.”

After more than three years of work—and enough rock to deter many a builder—the Eno Haven apartment project nears completion and expects to begin occupancy in March.

The complex, designed as a senior apartment community, sits on U.S. 70-A and features a three-story facility complete with 76 one- and two-bedroom units. A combination of efforts from KMW builders of Greensboro, Summit Consulting of Hillsborough and Banks’ The Banks Law Firm, Eno Haven seeks to provide not only a serene community for the elderly but also quality afford-able housing using federal exch-ange funds awarded by the N.C. Housing Finance Agency.

“I think the market in Hills-borough sort of cried out for senior afford-able hous-ing,” Banks said. “I felt comfor-table and capable in deliver-ing that kind of prod-uct.”

Other than the age minimum of 55 years, Eno Haven requires tenants make 60 percent or less of the Orange County median income, which totals around \$66,000 a year.

But, at least in terms of construction, Eno Haven’s focus remains on creating an appealing living space for seniors. Banks said that older folks tend to have common goals, objectives and tastes when it comes to apartment complexes, such as not living below a group of college students liable to blast loud music at all hours of the night.

“There’s plenty of literature that suggests that elderly people want some kind of exclusivity,” Banks said. “They want more serenity and a little less hustle and bustle, which Eno Haven offers.”

Banks, therefore, has only built on about half of the property, and he plans to leave much of the wooded area natural.

“We have 11 acres, so that creates a lot of green space,” he said. “The sight lines are fantastic.”

Senior-friendly additions have also been embedded into the apartment complex itself. Though not all adults age 55 and older require handicap-accessible facilities, all 76 units are designed as such, with eight fully accessible apartments. An elevator runs in the center of the building. Grab bars and emergency pulls have been fitted in all the rooms, and a few units have even been set aside for the hearing or sight impaired. The Central Orange Senior Center, as well as the SportsPlex, lie within walking distance.

Some senior-specific changes are much more subtle. Each floor is color-coded as a secondary reminder of the different levels. The second floor, for example, has green carpet and green painted walls.

The building's long hallways and staircases on either end also provide an indoor walking facility if necessary.

"If seniors want to get some exercise, you know how some like to go to the mall and walk," Banks said. "Well, they can do that here."

But Banks went above and beyond simply ensuring the apartments were appropriate for seniors. He said he wanted to build quality apartments, places that people would love to come home to. Each unit has a full kitchen, multiple storage closets, ceiling fans in each room and light sconces on living room walls. Communal features include a back porch, garden plot, computer room and library, built-in sitting areas and window seats in the hallways, two laundry rooms per floor, storage rooms, an exercise room, a multi-purpose room and a common kitchen.

At several points during construction, particularly after blowing through the \$90,000 contingency set aside for rock, Banks faced the option to cut out amenities to save costs, such as removing light sconces, ceiling fans or closet doors. He refused.

"I'm in this project for the long haul," he said. "One thing I didn't want to do is cut corners."

And his dedication to the project is evident, Town Board Commissioner Brian Lowen said while touring the facility.

"When you see the design and the craftsmanship, it speaks to the quality of the project," Lowen said. "This is impressive. It looks nice."

Even though construction won't finish until the end of February and occupation won't begin until March, Banks said community interest in the complex has already spiked. Apartment office managers received more than 90 calls from folks who noticed advertising signs posted during construction, and 14 families have already signed leases—before even seeing the building.

"There's a demand for it," Banks said. "Once the doors open, it's going to be even greater."

FYI

Eno Haven features 76 units: 696-square-foot one-bedroom units and 900-square-foot two-bedroom units. The complex is located at 815 U.S. 70-A East.

For more information or an application, call 245-0700 or e-mail eno-haven@cmc-nc.com.

Tax credit and rental information

Eno Have, an \$8.8 million development project, offers affordable housing in part through the use of exchange funds from the N.C. Housing Finance Agency. The exchange fund came as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to help stimulate the construction of affordable housing.

Eno Haven received \$5.3 million in exchange funds, as well as \$500,000 in trust funds from the

NCHFA for building apartments for people with disabilities and a \$1 million loan from Orange County.

Rent for the apartment units is figured on a sliding scale and ranges from \$290 to \$690 per month. About 12 one-bedroom and 7 two-bedroom units have been set aside for those who only earn 30 percent of the area median income. Rent for those rooms starts at \$290 for a one-bedroom. People who fall in the 60 percent bracket would pay about \$575 for a one-bedroom unit.

“That’s the power of the tax credit program,” Sherrod Banks, project owner, said.