



FREMONT

Michigan

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Former Fremont High School to have new life as affordable senior citizen apartments that includes public recreation community center

Construction starts today on historic landmark's \$11.8 million transformation

FREMONT, MI — The historic former home of Fremont High School is about to undergo a major renovation that kicked off today with an official groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate its new life as “The Gateway” apartments, launching the largest senior citizen affordable housing development in the city’s history.

“Fremont is a beautiful community in which to live, raise families, work, recreate and age with dignity,” said Fremont Mayor James Rynberg. “The Gateway will add to the pride we share in calling Fremont our home.”

Construction on the \$11.8 million project is expected to be complete early next year and occupancy is scheduled to begin by spring 2015. The Arts-and-Crafts inspired facility is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was originally built in 1926, with additions constructed in 1946 and 1955, and several other renovations completed over the years. Many of the school’s historic features, including the original oak cabinets and hardware, will be preserved during the renovation. One major change from the building’s current condition will be the demolition of an interior portion of the structure to restore the original courtyard. Other changes include measures to improve energy efficiency, such as the incorporation of a geothermal heating system.

“I’m delighted that a prominent landmark like the former high school can continue to be an architectural jewel and a viable asset for our community that will serve generations to come,” said recently retired Fremont Public Schools Superintendent James Hieftje, who helped spearhead the grassroots effort that successfully preserved the structure from the wrecking ball.

Farmington Hills-based Home Renewal Systems purchased the historic building after the Fremont Public Schools District opened a new high school in 2012. Support for the millage that funded construction of the new \$39.9 million high school was predicated on assurances from Fremont government and education leaders that the former Fremont High School building would be repurposed rather than razed.

“The Home Renewal Systems team appreciates the cooperation and goodwill we have been blessed to receive from our partners within the Fremont community and from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority,” said Home Renewal Systems Senior Vice President Shannon Morgan.

“Projects like the Gateway would not be possible without strong leadership and the support of local public entities such as Fremont Public Schools, the City of Fremont and the Newaygo County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority,” Morgan said.

The Gateway development will include 38 two-bedroom, one-bedroom and studio units that feature state-of-the-art energy efficient technology and handicap accessibility. Most of the units will be reserved for low-income seniors age 55 and older, with rents ranging from the upper \$200-per-month for a studio apartment to approximately \$715 per-month for two-bedroom units, depending on income.

The project is expected to include about six market-rate one- and two-bedroom apartments that will be available for up to \$800 per-month. That will make the project even more attractive by bringing more affluent seniors with more money to spend into the downtown Fremont area, Morgan said.

The former high school building, located at 204 E. Main, is in downtown Fremont, adjacent to the library and City Hall, and close to community and commercial services. The school's pool, which was donated by the Gerber family in 1962, and gymnasium were repurposed last year by the Fremont Community Recreation Authority for use as a public recreation facility that is adjacent to the residential complex and features the pool, gymnasium, weight room, lockers and meeting rooms. The school's former kitchen now houses the new Red Chef Bakery and other commercial tenants.

In addition to Home Renewal Systems, the project team includes Quinn Evans Architects in Ann Arbor as the architect, GMB Architecture and Engineering of Holland as the engineering firm, Wolverine Building Group in Grand Rapids as construction manager, Plante and Moran as the accounting firm and Loomis, Ewert, Parsley, Davis & Gotting PC as legal counsel, and KMG Prestige as the leasing firm. Lake Michigan Financial Corp. (LMFC) is the primary investor in the project and is the holding company of the Bank of Holland, which is providing the construction loan. MSHDA allocated a \$1.13 million federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) to Home Renewal Systems in 2013 that will help support financing of the \$11.8 million plan. MSHDA also awarded a \$450,000 grant to Home Renewal Systems last year from the Michigan Housing and Community Development Fund that will go toward the Gateway initiative. Gary Scheuren and Rick Ballard served as development consultants for Home Renewal Systems.

"I'm excited to undertake this project and bring a new purpose to this building so it can continue to be an important part of the Fremont community," said Marcus Ringnalda, Wolverine's project manager.

Among the dignitaries who joined Fremont Mayor Rynberg for the groundbreaking ceremony were state Sen. Goeff Hansen (R-Hart), state Rep. Jon Bumstead (R-Newaygo), Lake Michigan Financial Corp. (LMFC) CEO Garth Deur, and MSHDA Chief Housing Investment Officer Chris LaGrand.

"The renovation of Fremont High School is one more step in the growth of the Fremont community," Deur said. "Lake Michigan Financial Corporation's merchant banking team is pleased that this project will benefit greatly the quality of life for seniors and the community. As a native of Fremont and having family living in the area, I am especially proud to play such a significant part of the Gateway Apartments and the public recreation community center."

For leasing information, please contact Stefanie Bonter of KMG Prestige at (517) 679-7331 or stefanie.bonter@kmgprestige.com. More information about The Gateway is available at <http://www.hrscommunities.com/product/fremont/>

Since its inception in 2009, Farmington Hills-based Home Renewal Systems has successfully completed the renovation or newly rebuilt sale of thousands of homes across the country. More information about the company is available at www.hrsgreen.com.