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\$23.5M project turns factory into apartments

By ANDREA DECKERT - 12/12/2014

A local non-profit agency has unveiled new apartments, after a \$23.5 million overhaul at what used to house one of Rochester's oldest factories.

DePaul Community Services Inc. opened the DePaul Carriage Factory Apartments this month on Litchfield Street in the city's Susan B. Anthony Neighborhood.

The agency led an effort to convert a warehouse—vacant for some 25 years—into a 71-unit residential apartment building for income-eligible individuals, some with special needs. The building has studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments.

DePaul provides housing services, senior services, addiction prevention and mental health services.

Gillian Conde, vice president, said all the apartments are taken and a waiting list has been started.

The agency learned of the property from city officials and liked its proximity to another DePaul property downtown, she said.

Conde did not know about the building's history initially, but became impressed with its back story.

"It has so much Rochester history," she said.

The building was originally the home of the James Cunningham Son & Co. The business, which at one time was one of Rochester's largest employers, sold carriages and later automobiles. There are several Cunningham cars on display today; one is owned by comedian Jay Leno.

In 1968, controlling interest of the company was sold to Gleason Works. Under Gleason Works, the company was renamed Cunningham Corp. In 1977, all Cunningham-related activities ended.

The agency worked to include some of that history in the building during the restoration project. In the lobby, there is an original Cunningham carriage purchased from John Greenall of the Greenall Carriage House of Windsor, Vt., who had owned the luxury carriage for 40 years.

There are also drawings, photographs and artifacts related to Cunningham and its products throughout the building, Conde said.

Construction began on the building in April 2013. SWBR Architecture, Engineering & Landscape Architecture P.C. and Christa Cos. worked to preserve much of the existing 73,000-square-foot building.

Since the property was used to manufacture carriages, there were solvents, metals, oil, ash and other contaminants in the ground and groundwater. Stantec Inc. led the environmental remediation, which paved the way for reuse.

Michael Storonsky, Stantec's managing principal for environmental services, said more than \$1 million in remediation work was done at the site; his firm had as many as 10 people working there at different times.

The firm removed around 8,500 tons of soil from the property, extracted old piping and installed new utilities. Stantec is continuing to monitor groundwater as part of a normal remediation process.

"We knew going in that there would be problems with industrial solvents," Storonsky said.

The project received support from federal, state and local entities, including Monroe County, the New York State Homes and Community Renewal's Housing Trust Fund Corp. and the Susan B. Anthony Neighborhood Association.

Financial support was provided by multiple parties. Among them, Community Preservation Corp. provided a \$10.35 million construction loan and \$2 million permanent loan. The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council provided a \$3.3 million award and the city of Rochester made a \$600,000 loan for the development.

DePaul has other local projects in the works as well.

The agency is building DePaul Rochester View Apartments in Henrietta, a multifamily housing complex designed to accommodate persons who are deaf and hard of hearing and those using American Sign Language. The apartments are expected to open next fall on West Henrietta Road with 61 one- and two-bedroom apartments.

DePaul also is working with Christa on a proposed \$15 million development in Canandaigua. That project is slated to begin in the spring, pending final approvals.

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