

FINANCE & COMMERCE

Construction

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Association update: Home builders ready to work

by Jim Roth Guest Commentary

Let's hope legislators remember: Housing investments create jobs

Fifty new affordable apartment homes are on the drawing board, waiting to be built on a site near the intersection of Highway 36 and Snelling Avenue. The new homes will be part of Roseville's Sienna Green project, now being developed by Aeon, one of MCCD's 44 nonprofit members.

Aeon is already moving ahead with the first phase of the project, which involves the rehabilitation of the former Har Mar Apartments. But the new construction phase faces a small funding gap that must be filled before that phase can move ahead.

"If that gap was filled today, we could begin work this summer and create more than 350 construction jobs at the site," said Gina Ciganik, Aeon's vice president for Housing Development.

The Sienna Green project and others like it all across the state can provide a real economic boost for local communities while meeting the affordable-housing needs of thousands of Minnesota families.

During this legislative session, we know that our elected officials at the state capitol will need to make painful choices as they contend with a major state budget deficit. While this process unfolds, we hope they will keep in mind the double benefits that Minnesota receives from its housing investments. These investments will help ease the severe shortage of affordable housing in this state while providing sorely needed construction jobs during this economic downturn.

Unemployed carpenters, electricians and plumbers, all with useful skills, are looking for work in the Twin Cities and throughout Minnesota. More than half of them have faced layoffs as a result of the sharp slowdown in the construction industry. Now, more than ever, affordable-housing development can help offset this contraction of a key local economic sector.

Housing investments not only create jobs — these investments also promote stability and economic security for working families who are struggling to meet their housing needs while contending with essential costs for food and health care.

Even during this budgetary crisis, state investments in affordable housing can yield important economic and social benefits for all of us in Minnesota. MCCD's many housing developers are ready to do their part.

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