

IN THE REGION/Long Island

'Affordable' Housing for the Elderly

By CAROLE PAQUETTE

IN Hempstead, a town where more than 22 percent of the residents are age 62 or older and many more are approaching that threshold, a number of projects are aiming to provide mature adults with housing that is at the low end of the price range.

"As the baby boomer and World War II generations age into the senior category, we are getting more who are looking into affordable housing units," said Kate Murray, Hempstead's town supervisor.

"Nassau County is an expensive place to live, there are high property taxes and those seniors on a fixed income are finding it more difficult to live close to their children and stay in their neighborhoods," she said. Of the town's 759,000 residents, 170,000 are 62 or over, she added.

The town owns and operates 1,309 affordable senior rental units at 14 sites, and there is a waiting list of 2,750, she said. There are also 1,257 units that are owned by residents and categorized as "affordable." There is a waiting list of 3,000 for this type of housing, which was constructed by private developers through Hempstead's "golden age" zoning category.

This code encourages construction of housing for people 62 and over with a maximum annual income limit based on federal guidelines. The current limit is \$45,000 for one person and \$55,000 for a couple.

A section of the law allows for tax breaks and permits higher density — that is, more units than are typically permitted on the property — for those developers who agree to sell units to people 62 and over for a significantly reduced rate.

There are often units available in both categories, but many people have a preference for a specific location, the mayor said.

Currently, two new affordable senior housing projects are under way in the town and one has just been completed.

In Westbury, on 22 acres of the 173-acre site of the former Roosevelt Raceway, 20 percent of a 396-unit mixed-income rental community, being constructed by the Boston-based developer Archstone Smith, will be categorized as affordable. Of those



Phil Marino for The New York Times

AN AGING POPULATION

A 396-unit mixed-income rental project is being built in Westbury, L.I. Some of the apartments are to be set aside for people 62 and over.

units, 10 percent will be for people 62 and over.

The development consists of 20 three-story buildings with 156 one-bedroom units, 192 two-bedrooms and 48 three-bedrooms. Monthly rent for the affordable units will be \$738, \$883 and \$1,023 respectively. The market-rate units, which will be identical, are to rent for \$2,000, \$2,250 and \$2,500.

Most likely, a lottery will be conducted by the nonprofit Long Island Housing Partnership to determine who will be selected for the affordable units, Ms. Murray said. Priority will be given first to residents of the town of Hempstead, then to Nassau residents outside Hempstead. The project is expected to be completed by spring.

In addition, a project in Levittown was recently completed under the golden-age zoning, and another in Elmont is under way.

The Levittown development, called Victorian Homes, was constructed by MDS Enterprises, based in Wantagh. It consists of 32 two-bedroom apartments, which sold for \$149,000 each. They are in three two-story buildings, which total approximately 30,000 square feet.

About 12 miles west, in Elmont, a similar 29-unit development is being

constructed by Affordable Homes, which is based in Rosedale, Queens. The 955-square-foot two-bedroom units will sell for \$149,900.

Since the developments qualify as a public benefit, they are eligible for a county affordable housing program, whereby the residents pay 1 percent of the purchase price for annual property taxes, Ms. Murray said. The assessed value of the property is frozen for 25 years, although the tax rate may increase slightly.

"We are now looking for more pieces of property, which are difficult to find, and then to get a price that is feasible," she said. "Because Hempstead is a mature township — it was incorporated in 1644 — there is very little open land left."

Among several incorporated areas within the sprawling 143-square-mile town is the village of Hempstead, founded in 1853, the oldest village on Long Island. It has a population of 56,624 and a large demand for affordable housing for its older residents, according to James A. Garner, the mayor.

"The old homes have become unaffordable to maintain, and at least 25 percent of our senior population needs affordable housing," he said, noting that a new project is about to begin.

Earlier this month, the 182-room Quality Hotel and Convention Center on Clinton Street, a major thoroughfare, was sold by the Manhattan-based Applecore Hotels for more than \$10.2 million to Hempstead Properties, an affiliate of Lalezarian Development in Great Neck.

The new owner plans to convert the building into a residential and retail complex with 106 one-bedroom affordable apartments that will rent for about \$1,300 a month to people over the age of 62, according to Ralph J. Trionfo, the president of Upside Ventures, a Manhattan real estate firm that represented both the buyer and seller.

The eight-story, 225,000-square-foot building was constructed in 1971 by Holiday Inn and has been owned and managed by Applecore since 1985.

Hempstead Properties will create 29,000 square feet of retail space on the ground floor. Two ballrooms, a restaurant, three shops and the lobby will be demolished. The new stores are intended to complement the residence and could include such tenants as a pharmacy and medical services, Mr. Trionfo said.

The current hotel rooms will be combined into 700-square-foot apartments that will include a bedroom, bathroom, living room and kitchenette.

The project, whose cost is expected to be about \$20 million, will also restore a portion of the facade and install new heating and air-conditioning systems in hallways and other common areas.

The project is expected to be completed by next fall. It has not been determined how the residents will be selected, Mr. Trionfo said.

Of special concern to the village was a possible tax abatement that the builder might have been eligible for; however, the mayor said, an agreement has been reached that the property will continue to pay its current level of annual property taxes of \$455,000 for 13 years.

He added that he was pleased with the project and the agreement. "It's good," Mr. Garner said. "We get the affordable housing and a built-in situation where the residents can stay in the building to shop. I'm very happy for it, especially with that tax deal we cut."