
Article appearing in: **The Star Press**
Date of article: October 29, 2003
Page: News, 1A
Written by: Rick Yencer

Copyright (c) The Star Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.

Housing project moving quickly into play

By Rick Yencer
ryencer@thestarpress.com

The \$48-million HOPE VI grant budget was OK'd along with the design and developers.

MUNCIE -- Muncie Housing Authority officials acted quickly Tuesday to lock in a design and development team to finish Millennium Place, the new, affordable housing neighborhood funded by a \$12.3-million federal grant. The team includes Anthony Conley as project manager with the Munsyana Partnership for Community Reinvestment design team, and the Indianapolis development firm of Flaherty & Collins, which hopes to be general contractor on the next Millennium Place housing project.

The proposed \$48-million HOPE VI grant budget -- combining public and private funds for a massive development where Munsyana Homes now stands -- also was approved Tuesday by the MHA board of commissioners after little discussion. "Do you feel comfortable with the budget?" MHA board member Penny Leach asked. Carl Roudebush, the MHA's HOPE VI coordinator, replied, "I am comfortable with the budget."

Along with the HOPE VI funds -- about \$2.1 million earmarked for the next Millennium project -- rental housing tax credits make up another \$17.9 million. The city has pledged \$2.5 million in federal Community Development and HOME funds.

Roudebush said the MHA had signed a memorandum of agreement with MPCR on Tuesday. Much of the discussion Tuesday focused on what role Flaherty & Collins would play and what assurances the MHA and developer would make to ensure local contractors, suppliers and labors were used on the new housing. MHA Board Chairman Jerome Williams said while the housing authority could not mandate local contractors and laborers, it could make such assurances.

Olon Dotson, who heads the MPCR design team, said the first Millennium project achieved 56-percent minority participation. Case Construction was the local general contractor. He acknowledged that F&C might want to be both general contractor and developer the on the next project. Conley, who is pursuing a doctorate degree form Purdue University in urban studies, was introduced by Dotson as the project manager. Conley recently worked as a writer with Delaware County Youth Opportunity Center. He is the son of local activist Aamir Shabazz. Williams said no decision had been made on developer or contractor agreements. Dotson is drafting a developer agreement with F&C.

On Monday, Mayor Dan Canan met with representatives of local building trade unions to talk about keeping the Millennium work in Delaware County. The mayor appoints the MHA board members. Canan said there was no commitment to guarantee local labor and contractors work on the project. "They said they would keep the work as close as home as possible," said Joe Evans, business agent for Carpenters Local 1016. "We want to see as many local contractors and suppliers used as possible." Evans said he also believed some Munsyana residents should be trained and get jobs from the Millennium construction. "That is a good idea," said Munsyana resident Emma Price.

Design plans for the next 55-unit Millennium project should be ready in April. The Indiana Housing Finance Authority awarded \$705,050 in yearly rental housing tax credits to the project last week.

Contact news reporter Rick Yencer at 213-5833.