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Munsyana rebuild could take time

By Rick Yencer
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MUNCIE -- Over the next 4 years, the concrete block buildings of Munsyana Homes will be transformed into the affordable homes and apartments of Millennium Place. 'I am still trying to come down after the announcement,' said Olon Dotson, Millennium project manager. That announcement was Muncie Housing Authority's award of a \$12.3-million federal HOPE VI grant to build 244 units of affordable housing. Muncie was among the 28 cities that shared \$494 million in HOPE VI funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development last week.

Dotson and MHA officials Monday talked about a timetable for the project that also includes a new community and day-care center and a grocery store along South Madison Street. 'I was really surprised,' said Emma Price, who has lived at Munsyana since 1952. 'It's going to take everyone working together.' MHA board member Lillian Dunn said, 'Years ago, it was called urban renewal. This will be something to see.' Housing officials and Munsyana residents beamed with excitement at the news that will bring millions of dollars more in private and public investment.

MHA Board Chairman Jerome Williams wanted to move quickly to begin more construction, although MHA Director Charles Weatherly said it could take at least 9 months to get an agreement with HUD to draw down the money. Dotson said construction was proposed in phases anyway, and would depend on sale of state tax credits to build the mix of new homes, apartments and even a 30-unit complex for seniors.

The proposed Howard Square for seniors, south of the Muncie Family YMCA, could be the next construction project. The MHA already started the first Millennium Place project last fall, using federal housing modernization funds and proceeds from state tax credit sales. Flaherty & Collins Properties, Indianapolis, is the developer and property manager of Millennium Place and Howard Square. Duane Miller, company vice president, said a tax credit application for Howard Square was on file with the state housing authority. Funding could be available this summer.

Three more Millennium projects are proposed along with construction of 44 homes in surrounding neighborhoods, providing a mix of homeownership, public housing and other affordable rental housing. Dotson said the MHA also needed a HOPE VI coordinator to work with HUD and oversee the project. The MHA could hire a coordinator soon.

View the grant application Muncie's application for the federal HOPE VI grant is on file for public inspection at Muncie's Community Development office in city hall, 300 N. High St., and the Maring-Hunt Library, 2005 S. High St.

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