

New housing coming soon to Arbor Hill



Albany announces plans build modern housing on part of Ida Yarbrough site

By [Jordan Carleo-Evangelist](#)

Published 07:54 p.m., Thursday, April 12, 2012

ALBANY — The city's housing authority plans to demolish 129 apartments in the low-rise [Ida J. Yarbrough Homes](#) in Arbor Hill and replace them more modern housing.

The first phase of the project is expected to begin this fall and involves demolishing 76 apartments off North Pearl Street between Livingston Avenue and Lark Drive, and replacing them with 43 new units. When both phases are complete, there will be a total of 80 apartments — nearly 40 percent fewer.

The [Albany Housing Authority](#) has just begun the process of relocating some six dozen families to other authority-controlled properties, or private Section 8 housing, as the city's [Planning Board](#) reviews the proposal, said Executive Director [Steven Longo](#).

"It has been renovated several times and is widely considered to have outlived its useful lifespan," Longo said, noting that some of the units are as large as five bedrooms but, to accommodate that size, the living rooms are as small as 10 feet by 10 feet. "Certainly there's going to be more family living space, larger bedrooms."

Other upgrades will include air conditioning and dishwashers, he said.

A formal announcement about the project with the authority's partners, including the city, New York State Homes and Community Renewal and Norstar Development is expected soon. The \$11.8 million price tag will be paid largely through the sale of federal low-income housing tax credits and a nearly \$2.5 million from the state [Low-Income Housing Trust Fund](#), Longo said.

Longo said the site plan will also include space for between 10 and 20 new single-family homes — not built until the project's second phase — for first-time home buyers. Those homes are likely to be built near the intersection of Arbor and Lark Drives and at Livingston Avenue and Manning Boulevard.

Ida Yarbrough's two seven-story high-rise buildings containing 224 apartments, which Longo has said underwent significant upgrades to boost their energy efficiency, are not involved in the project.

But Longo said the authority is considering renovations in its long-range capital plan to make some of the high-rises' relatively cramped one-bedroom and studio apartments more spacious by combining them.

Alberta Chambliss, president of the [Ida Yarbrough Tenants Association](#), said residents are excited about the prospect of newer, modern homes but uneasy about where they will be moved in the interim.

"I'm ecstatic about it because it's long overdue. I'm quite sure they'll look out for us," Chambliss said. "The only thing that I think was missing was a garbage disposal."

Chambliss, herself a resident of a low-rise apartment since 2004, is among those who does not yet know where she'll stay during the construction.

Because there will be fewer apartments in the new configuration of the low-rise homes, Chambliss said some tenants are anxious about whether they will be able to return. Others, she said, don't want to come back. "They're kind of uneasy about it because they don't really know what's going to happen to them," she said.

Longo said the authority will work with each family to find them accommodations, noting it has 23 new units in the Arbor Hill area courtesy of a \$4 million federal neighborhood stabilization grant.

Movement on the redevelopment of Ida Yarbrough also comes as the housing authority elsewhere in Arbor Hill pushes ahead with plans to convert the old St. Joseph's Academy on North Swan Street into loft apartments and studio space for artists. The work on the loft building follows a larger mixed-use development of the Swan Street corridor, once one of the most dilapidated and crime-ridden in the city.

The housing authority last year completed an extensive renovation of the Ezra Prentiss Homes on South Pearl Street and is moving ahead with the third phase of new apartments

and homes in the South End. That project is focused on increasing the authority's portfolio of smaller-scale, neighborhood-based public housing.

jcarleo-evangelist@timesunion.com • 518-454-5445 • @JCEvangelist_TU

Read more: <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/New-housing-coming-soon-to-Arbor-Hill-3478532.php#ixzz1rx88fQSc>