

SUNDAY NEWS

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BUSINESS★★

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Long labor pays off at Tabor

Community organization turns office space into apartments



A major renovation project at Tabor Community Services yielded 26 new apartments at its East King Street headquarters.

Sunday News/Blaine T. Shahan

By Paula Wolf
Sunday News Staff Writer

It took three years to get the financing for Tabor Place apartments.

"It was longer than we expected," admitted Nevin Horst, president of Tabor Community Services. "The recession made it more difficult."

But the 26-unit project at 439 E. King St. weathered the economic ups and downs.

After seven months of construction, the one-bedroom and efficiency apartments for low-income elderly residents are about to open their doors.

Underwritten by investments from more than 50 county businesses, Tabor Place will hold an official dedication and open house on Wednesday, June 15, from 4 to 7 p.m.

The apartments take up 20,000 square feet of a 25,000 square foot building that Tabor and an anonymous investor bought in 1990.

The building used to house the state health department and other public offices.

In the front, Tabor occupies 3,000 of the 5,000 square feet of office space with plans to expand into the rest when renovations are finished.

E.G. Stoltzfus Jr., Inc. is the general contractor.

Tabor Place's 14 one-bedroom apartments average 700 square feet and the 12 efficiency units 500 square feet, Horst said.

They are reserved for low-income elderly

people age 62 and up, he said.

A refrigerator and range are standard in each unit, and on-site, coin-operated washers and dryers are available, Horst said.

Four of the apartments, on the lower of two levels, are built for wheelchair access. "They have the appropriate height adjustments for sinks, baths and countertops," he said.

Formed in 1968, Tabor Community Services provides housing and rental counseling, landlord/tenant mediation, and consumer credit counseling.

It also owns two apartment buildings in Columbia, with six and five units in each.

Tabor Place "is our single biggest project," Horst said.

Its total cost is \$1,265,000 – \$400,000 for purchase of the building and \$865,000 for construction of the apartments, he said.

To get the money, Tabor relied on three financing sources, including the Neighborhood Assistance Program, he said.

Since Tabor Place met the program's criteria, businesses that invested money in the project received a 70 percent state tax credit and could take the rest as a charitable deduction, Horst explained.

Tabor raised \$865,000 from 54 different local investors – many outside the city – through this program, he said.

The agency also received a \$100,000 grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh.

The remaining \$300,000 came from a sin-

gle investor through the federal government's low-income tax credit program.

Over 10 years, the equity investor will receive federal income tax credit, Horst said.

Since the financing covers the cost of the whole project, there's no debt to service, he said. "And that enabled us to keep the rents low."

There are two sets of income limits for renters because Tabor Place qualifies under both the Neighborhood Assistance Program and the federal low-income tax program.

With the former, income cannot exceed 125 percent of poverty level, which is \$9,200 for a single person and \$12,300 for two people, Horst said.

With the latter, income cannot exceed 50 percent of the median, which is \$14,700 for one person and \$16,800 for two people, he said.

Rental rates are individually determined by income. No Tabor Place tenant will be charged more than 30 percent of his or her income for rent and an electricity allowance, Horst explained.

Even with larger complexes such as Church Street Towers and Lancaster House North and South, housing for low-income elderly people is in great demand, Horst said.

So far the agency has received "a lot of applications. We're going through the screening process now."

Anyone interested can call Tabor at 397-5183 or stop by the office to pick up an application.