

Effort prepares Detroit building for homeless

Detroit — Homeless men and women will soon have a safe place to call home and get help.

In a kickoff ceremony Wednesday, social services leaders toured a gutted 1920s-era apartment building on the northwest side, which in the next year will become the 41-unit Arthur Antisdel Apartments permanent housing development. It will be part of Cass Community Services' effort to help some of the estimated 19,000 homeless in Detroit, according to Homeless Action Network of Detroit, which seeks solutions to homelessness in Detroit, Hamtramck and Highland Park.

The \$10 million project expands the organization's facilities to a four-block area. Cass bought the property about four years ago, but in a sluggish economy could not get the financial backing to develop the project.

"For four years we've had to insure it, and secure it and pay taxes on it, and do all the environmental work necessary, so this has really been a long journey," said the Rev. Faith Fowler, executive director of Cass.

The cost is paid for with state and federal grant money, low-income housing tax credits and sponsorship from banks that will cover the structure's renovation and the purchase of surrounding vacant lots on the block.

Unlike traditional temporary shelters and support services for the homeless, the property will provide residents with a sense of community, Fowler said.

"Because they will be permanent, they will become invested in a community, and that's good for everybody," said Fowler of the neighborhood where, aside from the Cass campus, there are vacant lots and abandoned buildings.

And unlike in transitional housing, where when a tenant reaches stability, he or she is forced to find housing elsewhere, those who live in the new development will be allowed to stay indefinitely. Fowler expects that people will be placed on a waiting list.

The multimillion-dollar project provides men and women with housing, a chance to earn their GED, literacy and job training, transportation, addiction counseling, HIV and AIDS testing and health care needs.

The project is expected to take a year to complete.

Cass began providing basic needs during the Great Depression as part of Cass Community United Methodist Church.

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