

Site Work Underway For New Senior Living Center

Facility will occupy corner of Grant and Watson roads

by Eileen P. Duggan

04/20/2007 - More than four years after a redevelopment proposal for the southeast corner of Grant and Watson roads touched off an eminent domain war between Crestwood citizens, elected officials and administration, something is finally being built on the site. And it does not require public financing of any kind.



Site work is under way, after a January groundbreaking, on Crestview Senior Living, a 132-unit residential complex for senior citizens capable of independent living.

"There is a large and growing demand for our services among seniors," said Caren Ermel, senior vice president of operations for Spectrum Retirement Communities LLC, based in Denver. "Our extensive research in the South County area indicated a tremendous need for this type of community."

The building, to be located off Grant Road southwest of the Value City store on the Grant/Watson site, will include more than 120,460 square feet of living space in the form of studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments.

About 36,000 square feet of community areas will include a bistro, a library with computers, a dining room and a greenhouse. Services covered by monthly rent will include most utilities, transportation, meals, weekly housekeeping and linen service, and a number of scheduled social and recreational activities.

Rents, ranging from about \$1,600 to \$2,800 will be on a month-to-month basis without any buy-in fees. For reservations for a wait list or more information, call 314-842-3939.

Spectrum operates 10 other senior living communities across the country as well as the Homestead at Hickory View in Washington, Mo.

RPA Construction Services of Olivette is the contractor.

Grasso Brothers Inc., the owner of the Grant/Watson development area property, first signed an agreement with Spectrum in September 2005 for the project. Spectrum did not seek any tax increment financing, transportation development district or community improvement district financing.

The city had first issued a request for proposals for the area in April 2002, but the controversy began in early 2003 after Mills Development proposed a \$45 million luxury apartment and condominium complex. Then-City Administrator Don Greer encouraged public financing in the form of tax abatement or TIF. Most

controversially, the project would use eminent domain to acquire the Creston Center, a two-story retail center on the front corner lot.

Crest Development Co., owner of the Creston Center, rebelled and so did a number of citizens. Their protests led to a moratorium on development; a series of informational forums on development tools; legal wrangling; and public squabbles among public officials.

Eventually, the deal died, Creston Center was renovated by its owner, and another public-assistance-free project was announced for a portion of the Grant/Watson area.

A two-story, 16,600-square-foot medical office building is planned for another portion of the site, east of the senior living facility. That project is being developed by internist Dr. Hany Salama, who is not seeking tax abatements, TIFs, CIDs or TDDs.