

Norwalk housing development planned

Work to be spread among local contractors

By Frank MacEachern
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NORWALK -- A neighborhood association president is welcoming a planned development that will add 63 rental units to her neighborhood.

"To me, it has been a blessing," said Christine Abraham, president of the West Main Street Neighborhood Association.

"It's not going to hurt, it's going to help," Abraham said about the project Tuesday during a news conference at Norwalk City Hall.

Construction of the project, dubbed Summerview Square, is slated to begin in April, when ground will be broken at one of four sites the development will encompass in the area of West Main, Summer and Jefferson streets.

The proposal received the city's Zoning Commission's stamp of approval in December.

The development also will provide work to local contractors, the development's project manager said.

"Instead of using one lumberyard, we're going to use three or four lumberyards," Neal Berko said. "Instead of using one plumbing company, we are going to use two."

Berko is director of development with Summerview

Development Group, which is overseeing construction. He said Summerview wants to ensure as many companies as possible get work.

"These are hard times, and everyone is willing to work together. These companies are willing to have a smaller part because it keeps them working," Berko said.

Despite the economic downturn, Andrew LaSala, a partner with Summerview, is confident the economy will turn around. The project "indicates a strong future for Norwalk, and we are proud to be part of it," LaSala said.

Mayor Richard Moccia said the development is a good example of how the city can work with developers to get projects off the drawing board and get people working.

The development will occur in four stages, Berko said. He estimated the entire project could be completed in 24 months, but he said that could change depending on how long the recession lasts.

The developers declined to put a price tag on the project or to say what the rents will be.

The rental costs "will be market-driven, and right now we don't have that number," said Lloyd Mallah, representative for the project's owner, White Plains, N.Y., real estate developer Richard Segal.

Ten percent of the units will be set aside as affordable housing, as required by law.

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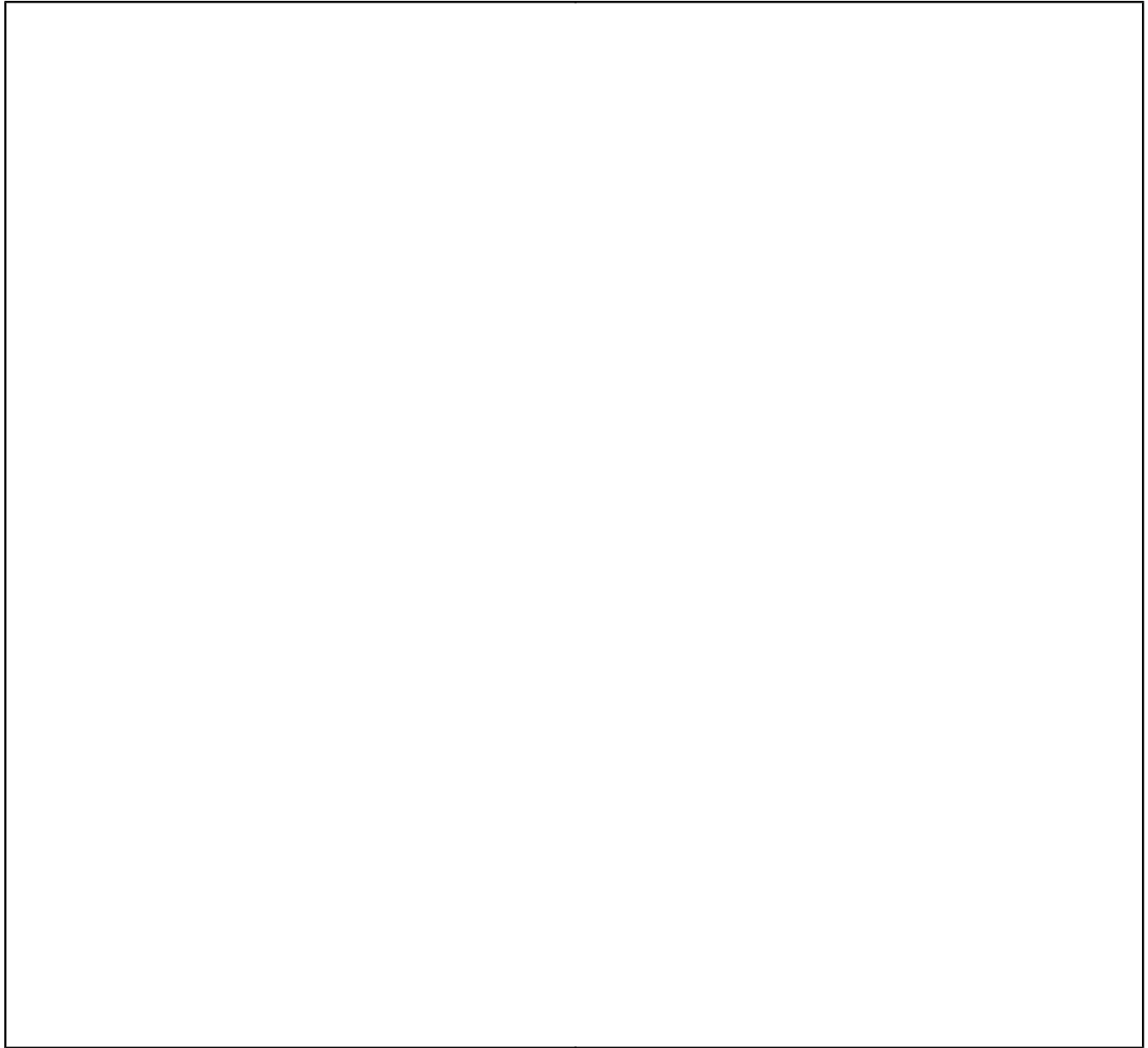
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