

HERALD NEWS

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Photos by ELIZABETH LARA/Herald News

Brian Wooten, assistant project manager of Sphere Hembur Inc., examines the former Athenia Steel site on Clifton Avenue, where work is underway to build 125 one- and two-bed room apartments that will rent to seniors and disabled for \$540 to \$790 a month.

No place like home

By AMANDA GERUT
Herald News

A computer lab with free Internet access, elevators, an exercise room, a library and an outdoor walking trail all in an apartment complex. And the rent is less than \$800. **CLIFTON** And the building's brand-new.

Sound like anyone's dream apartment?

Once it's built, it'll be a reality for senior citizens and the disabled who qualify.

After some delay, construction will likely begin this week on the affordable-apartment complex on the former Athenia Steel Co. site on Clifton Avenue.

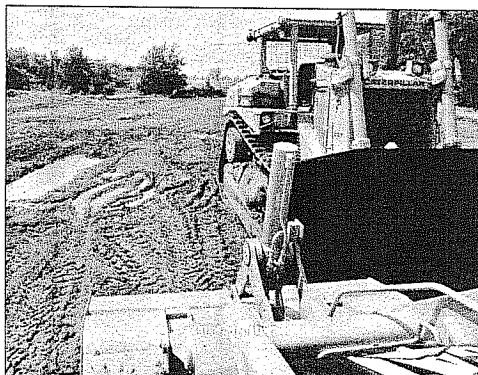
The complex will be ready for occupancy in the fall of 2004. On six acres near the railroad tracks and Paulison Avenue, the four-story building will house 125 one- and two-bedroom apartments that will cost from \$540 to \$790 a month to rent.

The \$15 million project was funded with \$4 million in federal tax credits, a \$7 million package from the state Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, a \$3 million loan from the city's coffers and a \$1 million loan from the developer.

So far, the response has been overwhelming, said developer Ken Regan, vice president of Regan Development Corp. in Ardsley, N.Y.

This is Regan's third affordable-housing project in Passaic County.

Apartments to offer Net, library, walking trail



Heavy equipment is used to prepare the Athenia site for an affordable-housing complex. A groundbreaking ceremony was held Saturday and prospective tenants are already calling.

The group has also developed affordable housing in Orange and East Orange, and they're finishing a project in downtown Newark and Plainfield.

"We're getting probably 40 to 50 calls a day," Regan said Monday, referring to the Clifton project.

At the official groundbreaking on Saturday, seniors filled out applications before thunderclouds rolled in, Regan said.

The midrise apartments are reserved for people over 55 and the disabled.

The maximum income for a one-person household is \$33,120.

A two-person total household income must not exceed \$37,860, and a three-person household must not exceed \$42,600.

The complex is not rent-controlled. Rents will increase an-

nually in proportion to the amount that incomes in Passaic County increased during the year, Regan said.

Although the housing is not limited to Clifton residents, Regan said the majority of responses have been from city residents.

Since the phone number was published late last week, 350 calls have poured in, Regan said.

The developer has received only 12 completed applications, and said he would need at least 700 people to call for applications to fill the entire complex because of the qualifications.

"But I would definitely encourage people to fill them out quickly," Regan added.

The apartments will fill a small need in a city where people over 65 make up 17.6 percent of the population, said Gloria Keemss, the city's program coordinator on aging.

Keemss said she recommended to older residents that they apply early and get their names on a waiting list so that if the need arises, seniors wouldn't have to scramble to find affordable housing.

"I expect these are going to go very quickly," Keemss said.

Regan will visit the Clifton Senior Center at the municipal complex on Clifton Avenue at 10 a.m. Thursday.

Anyone interested in filing an application should call (914) 693-3011.

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