

Peekskill: New 82-unit affordable housing complex breaks ground

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PEEKSKILL – State, county and city officials on Wednesday launched the construction of 82 affordable-housing rental apartments that will be walkable to downtown and the train station in this northern Westchester County city.

The new development at 645 Main St. will be for households at 40% to 80% of Westchester's median income, with rents for one-bedroom units, for example, as low as about \$900, officials said at Wednesday's ceremonial groundbreaking. Planned are 18 one-bedroom units, 50 two-bedroom units and 14 three-bedroom units. Developer Wilder Balter Partners anticipates completion in summer 2022.



Peekskill Mayor Andre Rainey jumps down from a piece of construction equipment at the site of a new housing project at 645 Main Street in Peekskill following a groundbreaking ceremony at the site Sept 9, 2020. *Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News*

At 40 percent of median income, for instance, estimated monthly rents are \$903 for a one-bedroom unit, \$1,083 for a two-bedroom unit, and \$1,251 for a three-bedroom unit, according to Jack Durkin of Wilder Balter Partners. At 60% of the median, a one-bedroom would rent for \$1,354 a month, a two-bedroom for \$1,624, and a three-bedroom. At 80% of median, a one-bedroom would rent for \$1,806 a month, a two-bedroom for \$2,003, and a three-bedroom for \$2,503.

Speaking at Wednesday's groundbreaking, a couple of elected officials championed it as they took issue with President Trump's recent characterization and criticism of affordable housing that mentions Westchester County, cast by some as a political move by the president for suburban support.

"Well, if you want to talk about affordable housing, what it really is, come to Peekskill. Come stand here on Central Avenue or on Main Street if you'd prefer and take a look at this site," Westchester County Executive George Latimer said to those gathered.

Latimer said the development will help people such as teachers, nurses and firefighters have a place to live, in a county where housing can be expensive. Many of the units will be aimed at the workforce.

"It's not ruining the community; it's saving the community," Latimer said, adding that "this project is a fabulous project."

Amenities will include a parking garage, a community room with kitchen, fitness center, central laundry and a courtyard. A rooftop solar panel will help provide energy efficiency.

State Sen. Peter Harckham, who also spoke at Wednesday's event, said Peekskill's diversity is something to celebrate, adding "it's our strength, it is not a weakness, and we're not going to let people divide us because we believe in diversity."

Peekskill has experienced something of a development boom in recent years, with private investment in transit-oriented development, a restaurant scene, a recreation and entertainment complex that went up along the Hudson River, a system of riverside

walking trails, and an entrepreneur who moved his high-tech manufacturer to the city from the tech hub San Francisco Bay area.

Site work is already underway at the "645 Main" development, on a two-acre, remediated Brownfield site bordered by Main Street and Central Avenue. The development will be three stories of apartments along the Main Street side, and five stories of apartments along the Central Avenue side – Main Street's elevation is higher than Central Avenue's.

Parking in the 140-space garage will be on the first two levels, accessible from Central Avenue.



From left, Bill Balter, president, Wilder Balter Partners, Inc. and Westchester County Executive George Latimer, talk about the new project slated for 645 Main Street in Peekskill following a groundbreaking ceremony at the site Sept. 9, 2020. *Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News*

Mayor Andre Rainey said of 645 Main, with the amenities it offers and rent as affordable as \$900, "here in New York, to see something like that, is very beneficial."

Rainey called it an exciting project where a diversity of people and incomes will be alive that "shows what the city of Peekskill is about."

William Balter, a principal with Wilder Balter Partners, said the site, with its steep elevation difference between Main Street and Central Avenue, is challenging but for future residents will mean being "a block from City Hall; we're a block from the library; a block from an elementary school."

The development involves a \$51 million investment, which includes \$21.9 million in tax-exempt bonds from New York State Homes and Community Renewal, millions more from other state agencies, as well as county and federal sources.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a statement "this new, energy-efficient development builds upon our continued strategic investments in downtowns throughout the state and will provide more than 80 brand-new, affordable apartments for families and the community."