



14 Comments

0 Recommend

Recommend

Kennedy Place homes to open by Christmas

Supporters, public figures check progress at housing project

By **AMANDA CASANOVA**
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Aug. 2, 2010, 11:59PM

1 2 3



Brett Coomer Chronicle

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan tours the construction work at the Kennedy Place development Monday in Houston.

Share

Del.icio.us

Twitter

Facebook

Email

Digg

Yahoo! Buzz

StumbleUpon

Recommend

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

Sheila Johnson cannot wait until Christmas this year. If the Houston Housing Authority continues construction at Kennedy Place as planned, she will be bringing her two children back home to one of the newly built homes.

"That's the only Christmas gift I could get," she said of returning to Kennedy Place after relocating in November for construction. "It's the best gift I could get. There's just no place like home."

More than 100 apartment units will be opened at 505 Bayou St., in December, nearly doubling the number of available units in the original public housing complex.

Despite sweltering temperatures Monday, U.S. Secretary for Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan toured the grounds as an assembly of supporters, including U.S. Reps. Sheila Jackson Lee and Al Green, followed.

Using stimulus money

The construction of the 108 new units is estimated to cost \$11.5 million, with federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 covering about 67 percent of the total. The rest of the cost will be paid for by other government funds.

"This is an important moment for our economy and our nation," Donovan said. "I am here at Kennedy Place with \$7.8 million in Recovery Act dollars rebuilding this property to say that it is clear for communities like Houston that the Recovery Act is making an enormous difference."

Originally the site of 60 rental apartments, the new Fifth Ward units will feature central heating and air conditioning, individual garages, carpeting, washer and dryer connections, and a refrigerator and dishwasher.

Amenities, location

The units will range from one to four bedrooms. Also, an amphitheater, walking path, playground and barbecue grills will be constructed on the property.

"It's always more economical to build new," said Dennis Spellman, Houston Housing Authority vice president of external affairs.

"In this case especially, it just makes sense to start from scratch."

Some for middle class

The original Kennedy Place was built in 1982 for about \$3 million. The complex was razed in December with Johnson manning the excavator for the first swing of demolition.

"I was nervous, but I got it done," she said, smiling.

Eighty-percent of the new units will be used for public housing, said Tim Seckinger, Houston Housing Authority interim president and CEO. The other 20 percent will be available for middle-income

applicants.

"For that 80 percent, rent is based on average median income," he said. "For example, if the rent was \$600, then HUD pays about \$400 and the resident only pays \$200."

Former Kennedy Place residents will be given priority placement following a screening of their files. Applications will then be available in October at HousingforHouston.com.

"When I exercise, I walk by here," Johnson said. "I check on the progress then I call the other residents and say 'Oh I see wood. It's on it's way now.'"

"We're just excited. It's almost time to go home."

amanda.casanova@chron.com

[Travel](#) [Hotel](#) [Airline Ticket](#) [Vacation](#) [Discount Travel](#)

Comments

Readers are solely responsible for the content of the comments they post here. Comments are subject to the site's [terms and conditions](#) of use and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or approval of the Houston Chronicle. Readers whose comments violate the terms of use may have their comments removed or all of their content blocked from viewing by other users without notification.

You must be logged in to comment. [Login](#) | [Sign up](#)

Not Logged In [Login](#) / [Sign-up](#)

NOW
85°

Facebook Twitter

Search [advanced search](#) | [archive](#)



Chron.com Web Search by **YAHOO!**

Most read Most commented

More stories Related stories

Police: Several killed at Conn. beer warehouse

Houston, some suburbs under air-quality alert

Just-formed Tropical Storm Colin not expected to threaten U.S.

2 killed in apartment fire on MLK Blvd in SE Houston

Pedestrian hit, killed by car on Interst: 45

Harris County officers arrest teen tied fatal shooting

Brown, Rackers wage friendly war for Texans' kicker job