

Group plans Dubuque housing for disabled vets

Nonprofit would remodel former St. Patrick Elementary School.

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A former downtown Dubuque school used to provide family support, child-welfare and community treatment programs could see new life as affordable rental housing for disabled military veterans.

Dubuque Zoning Board of Adjustment members will meet Thursday to consider a request from Full Circle Communities to redevelop the Four Oaks property at 180 W. 15th St. It is the former site of St. Patrick Elementary School.

"There's not a lot of (handicapped-)accessible housing due to the age of the housing stock and the fact that not a lot of housing

in Dubuque has elevator-served buildings," said FCC Vice President Lindsey Haines. "There's very little accessible options at any rent level, let alone affordable rent. ... We know Dubuque has a lot of built-in services for veterans and those with disabilities, but there just aren't enough housing options for them."

About 4,400 veterans and more than 7,000 people with disabilities reside in Dubuque, based on the latest census estimates. Many of them have low to moderate incomes, Haines said.

Randy Rennison, executive director of the Dubuque County Veterans Affairs office, said an average of 15 to 20 veterans per month contact his office seeking help with rent, utilities and other expenses.

"While you hear about veteran homelessness in the big cities, I think in the rural areas, too, there are quite a few that need assis-

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tance to get back on their feet ... and get them back into the workforce," he said.

The Chicago-based nonprofit plans to invest \$6 million to turn the former school into 36 one- and two-bedroom apartments. Units will be designed to be handicapped-accessible, including roll-in showers, pull-down kitchen shelving and grab bars, said Assistant Project Manager Jordan Bartle.

The building will feature on-site property management as well as an on-site caseworker to coordinate services for tenants, such as health screenings, transportation and financial counseling, Bartle said.

Full Circle Communities, which manages similar housing

developments in Marion, Iowa, and Chicago, is requesting a special exception and variance to the minimum lot size and parking requirements.

The 17,424-square-foot building has been listed for sale by Four Oaks for about one year.

One of the largest private, nonprofit child welfare organizations in Iowa, Four Oaks also works with at-risk students from the Dubuque Community School District. The building houses programs such as Cornerstone and Parents as Teachers.

While it has a signed letter of intent to purchase the building, Four Oaks still is assessing whether to sell, said Chief Advancement Officer Kristin Roberts.

"At this point, we're keeping our options open," Roberts said. "We're always flexible when it comes to looking at where we offer and provide our programs."

child care facility request

Dubuque Zoning Board of Adjustment members will meet at 5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 27, in Room 250 of the Historic Federal Building, 350 W. Sixth St. The meeting agenda can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/2erpyr3>.

Among other items on the agenda is a request from Operation: New View Community Action Agency to open a licensed child care facility at 4135 Pennsylvanian Ave. The property is zoned as general commercial.

Unified Therapy, which owns the building, would occupy the front portion of the structure. The back half would be used for a Head Start classroom that would serve 18 children ages 3 to 5, said Brenda Sullivan, Head Start director at Operation: New View.

Children would attend Head Start from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday from mid-August to early June. Classes would be taught by three Operation: New View staff members, Sullivan said.