



Arbor Park Village Renaissance in the Inner City By Nancy Loyan Schuemann

Like the Phoenix rising from the ashes, Longwood Apartments has been transformed into Arbor Park Village, a community of quaint townhouses, a centerpiece community center with daycare center and additional housing, and the ambiance of a small town.

Located at East 34th to 40th streets, from Community College to Woodland, Arbor Park Village is a 40-acre planned community. Brick and vinyl-sided townhouses line newly-created streets. Antique-looking light posts on sidewalks and wrought-iron enclosed courtyards stand tribute to the past when neighbors knew neighbors and looked out for one another. From all appearances, Arbor Park could be mistaken for upscale housing. It is, however, a rental community for those on Section 8 or receiving tax credit.

“Fifty-percent are existing tenants (from the old Longwood) and fifty-percent are from outside of the market,” Ms. Christina Alletto, President of Signature Housing Solutions, a subsidiary of the Finch Group of Boca Raton, Florida, the project’s owners and developers, explained. “The overall plan was to bring back the urban community, not to create a suburban community (which doesn’t work in public housing).”

“(Arbor Park) changes the psychology of living at Longwood. It gives people a pride of ownership of their unit and the property around it,” Mr. Mark Dodds, Principle of City Architecture, added. “We wanted to give the whole development a residential feeling. The materials used are those found in conventional residential neighborhoods; brick with stone accents, vinyl siding, colors and patterns. We put streets back where they used to be. We wanted to get away from the institutional look of the 50’s (the parks and brick apartments that once comprised Longwood).”

In late 1988, the Finch Group looked at the property. At the time, Longwood, always privately held, was headed toward foreclosure. The Finch Group, Longwood Group, Cleveland’s mayor and city council, CMHA, CTD, residents, and others studied Longwood and determined that it could not be rehabilitated, but had to be torn down. Residents (about 820) families had been offered vouchers to move out of the area and into alternative housing. The residents, with the support of Mayor Michael R. White, Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs-Jones, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, and Ward 5 Councilman Frank Jackson fought to remain in the neighborhood and participate in its renaissance.

In 1999, Goody-Clancy out of Boston, hired by the Finch Group, sat down with residents to create a long-lasting solution to the property.



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Arbor Park Village



Phase One Construction



Community Center and Apartment Building



Living Room Area



Modern Kitchen With Breakfast

“The Finch Group had developed a conceptual master plan and wanted a local architect to further develop the project and to develop the master plan. In 2000, they called us (City Architecture),” Mr. Dodds stated.

“Through the Finch Group and City Architecture, we were hired on,” Mr. Chip Marous, President of Marous Brothers Construction, explained. “They brought on the Design Team Approach, establishing a budget before the plans were drawn up to help with pre-construction and to keep the project within budget.”

Demolition of the old Longwood Apartments began in March of 2001. The City of Cleveland provided \$10 million in infrastructure, site, roadway, and underground utilities improvements. Construction on Phase 1 of Arbor Park began in August of 2001.

Phase 1 consists of 7 blocks with 228 townhouses (28 separate buildings) centered around a 4-story, 60,000 square-foot community building with 54 apartment units and a Town Square Park at a cost of \$52 million. The completed three-phase project is funded at \$117 million.

Such a massive project, one of the largest in Cleveland, took a great deal of planning and organization. Marous Brothers Construction self-performed all site, concrete, carpentry, and interior finishes.

Marous’ Site Division and Concrete Division undercut and replaced unsuitable soils, poured foundations and slabs, and completed utility connections to each building. Their Carpentry Division systematically erected the wall panels, floor and roof structures, interior partitions, installed all interior and exterior doors, frames, hardware, cabinetry, countertops and trim. Marous’ Interior Finishes Division performed metal stud work inside of the community center/apartment building and installed drywall throughout all structures.

“It was a phased project, releasing blocks at a time,” Mr. Marous explained.

“Coordination was a big issue. We used a rotation system, a road map of where to go with the trades and subcontractors. It was a systematic process ... plumbing, heating, electric ... good organization.”

In a rotation system, the sequence is to complete one clock with a clockwise rotation within that block. In a coordinated manner the trades moved from footers, utilities, slabs, to walls, floors, and roofs. Weekly meetings were held to coordinate efforts with an owner’s representative on-site.

“This is the first time Cleveland undertook something of this magnitude,” Mr. Dodds stated. “Framing was all panelized in the townhomes. It allowed a significant amount of framing to be completed in the shop with the walls delivered and installed on-site. On a large scale it saves a lot of time.”

The townhouses are of slab-on-grade, all wood-frame construction, with pre-manufactured wall panels, open web floor joists, and pre-engineered truss systems. Brick veneer accents the front of some townhouses. Roofs

Bar



Another View



Newest Neighborhood

are asphalt shingles on a wood roof deck.

The attached townhouses feature gas furnaces, central air conditioning, and General Electric Appliances. Each townhouse has a landscaped front entrance and a back door leading to a central, secure courtyard. The rear, landscaped courtyard is shared by a small cluster of townhouses and features pressed concrete picnic tables and benches. Each courtyard has four locked gates for which each tenant has a key. A panic bar exists for quick exits.

“The courtyard gives each tenant his/her own space, a sense of ownership,” Ms. Alletto added. “We believe in this type of community.”

In each unit, the front door opens into a small linoleum foyer. Carpeted stairs with handrails lead upstairs to the bedrooms (units contain from 1-4 bedrooms) and upstairs bath. Sage green carpet covers the first floor living room. A raised laminate breakfast bar divides the living room from the kitchen. All white appliances, laminate counters, and light maple cabinets give the kitchen a warm atmosphere. Light fixtures are sleek and modern. Each unit also contains hook-ups for a washer and dryer and has ample closet space. Parking is on the street.

In order to live in Arbor Park, tenants must attend housekeeping classes, are held accountable, and they and their guests must do nothing illegal or else they will be evicted.

The construction of Arbor

Park has also created jobs for residents. Marous Brothers Construction implemented a successful minority participation program (similar to a HUD Section 3 program), that led to 8% of total project hours being worked by area residents.

“This is an example of how you can create a development and not only change the aesthetics but change the people ... employment, attitude, to get ahead in ways previously denied them. When building, you have to ask, ‘What does it do for the people in the community?’” Mr. Frank Jackson, Councilman for Ward 5 in the City of Cleveland, stated. In addition to Arbor Park, his ward encompasses the home ownership zone around East 46th Street and the new Central Commons housing development.

Marous Brothers also hired a full-time minority participation director and exceeded the City of Cleveland’s goal of 1/3 minority participation by having minority and female workers comprise 36% of their on-site workforce. Sixty-seven workers were hired directly by Marous Brothers Construction and their subcontractors, which has led to full-time employment for many, including some that have been sponsored into the union.

The centerpiece of Phase 1 is the Michael White Apartment/Community Building.

The masonry and pre-cast concrete structure houses a 19,000 square-foot community center, 54 one-bedroom apartments, management offices for Signature Housing Solutions, a Learning Resource Center (for training and computers), laundromat, and daycare center (run by Catholic Charities). In the spring, an \$800,000 Town Square Park with water feature will be added. The water feature is to contain water jets on a padded rubber surface for summer fun for the children. Two full playgrounds and open green space are also available for outdoor enjoyment. A summer camp program is to be implemented in the summer and, next year, an after school program.

“We wanted to take an all-masonry building (with brick veneer), the focal point of an apartment complex with a park, and use a variety of colors and masonry materials so it could have a more monumental presence with a more colorful composition exterior. Horizontal banding (in yellow) accents and breaks down the scale,” Mr. Dodds explained.

The first floor of the Community Building has a tile floor, linear reception area, and neutral tan walls. Tile flooring lead into the daycare center with its pale yellow, green and purple walls with yellow trim. Each spacious room has its own restroom and emergency exits. Ceilings are acoustical tile with fluorescent lighting. A small commercial kitchen in shimmering stainless is equipped to serve meals.

A glassed-in elevator lobby with apartment mailboxes and two Schindler elevators on the first floor lead to the 2nd through 4th floor apartments. Primarily for use by the elderly, the apartments have one bedroom. Communal seating areas are located on each floor as well as a shared outdoor balcony. Handrails line the corridor walls. Emergency stairwells are located on each end of the building. The building is fully sprinkled and has emergency alarms and a security system.

While building continued on other units, the first tenants moved in June of 2002.

Phase 2, encompassing 5 more city blocks and including additional townhouses and single units is set to begin this spring. A small community building is to be included and completion is scheduled in 2004.

Construction on Phase 3, including an additional 3 blocks, is to begin in 2004 with a 2005 completion date.