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Construction set to start on CDS complex

By THOMAS ADAMS - 2/14/2014

Work is set to begin in April on a multimillion-dollar affordable senior living complex on Hard Road in Webster, with three additional buildings planned for the site.

The initial \$7.5 million project for CDS Monarch Inc. includes 46 one-bedroom apartments and four two-bedroom units adjacent to the organization's administrative offices at 860 Hard Road.

The Christa Cos. of Victor, Ontario County, will begin construction on the first building in late spring or early summer, CEO David Christa said. The 40,000-square-foot facility is scheduled for completion by spring 2015.

"We've tried to create a community here at CDS Monarch," President and CEO Sankar Sewnauth said. "When you're looking at services for people with developmental disabilities and the aging population, their retirement options are becoming more demanding. We need to provide them more options."

CDS Monarch serves people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as veterans and seniors, providing life-planning and transitional services.

"Our primary mission for the past 37 years has been to support people with developmental disabilities," Sewnauth said. "We provide housing, employment, service coordination, case management and some services to children.

"In recent years, we've expanded our mission to serve the regular population of seniors, as well as veterans who are coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan."

CDS Monarch opened its first special-needs apartment building at 840 Holt Road in February 2012. The 47-unit structure is fully occupied and includes residents without disabilities.

The developmentally disabled historically have stayed in group homes even as they have aged, Sewnauth said. CDS Monarch wants to change that as New York tries to reform its oversight of group homes in response to mismanagement.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has implemented initiatives that encourage the developmentally disabled to live more independently or with their families rather than in group settings, Sewnauth said. That places a greater burden on developmentally disabled seniors.

"So we were thinking to ourselves: How can we address the needs of the population, people who are waiting for services and people who are inside our services who have been with us for many years and are now approaching their retirement?" Sewnauth said.

"Maybe they should be with their peers in an independent living community, as opposed to staying in a group home. That would give them a chance to live a fulfilling life in their community. It would also open up opportunities for people that are waiting for services to move into the group homes."

A \$2.9 million combination of tax credits and funding from the New York State Homes and Community Renewal program will help pay for the first building.

"The other three buildings are planned over the next four to five years," said Christa, CEO of Christa Cos., which includes Christa Construction LLC and Christa Development Corp.

"It takes a year for construction, and then full occupancy takes a couple of months," Sewnauth said. "You have to be in operation before they will consider another application.

"We should be open for business in early 2015. In the fall of 2015, we can apply for the next project. We're hopeful that we can have one of these facilities approved every other year."

Christa Cos. is to construct all four 50-unit buildings.

"We're going to provide communities for people with special needs and developmental disabilities to retire," Sewnauth said. "After these four facilities, based on the need, we will continue to look for opportunities to offer these services.

"We're committed to building community. This allows us to provide another option for people who are within our service system to live a normal life like everybody else."

CDS Monarch was founded in 1977 by a group of parents in search of services for their developmentally disabled children. The non-profit serves 1,700 people.

The development is on a parcel of some 30 acres at Hard Road and Route 104 that Christa Cos. purchased seven years ago. The first project there was an \$8 million Hampton Inn & Suites that opened in 2008. The company then sold 860 Hard Road to CDS Monarch for its headquarters.

Christa wants to build 200 market-rate apartments elsewhere on the property in future years, he said.

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