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Tampa planners looking for feedback on planned apartments

By [Kathy Steele](#)

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TAMPA - Encore, a planned mixed-use and mixed-income community just north of downtown, has one apartment building almost fully occupied, a second under construction and a third headed for a mid-August construction start. A fourth apartment building, Tempo, is on the drawing board. On Monday Tampa Housing Authority officials will host a community gathering to find out what people think about the design of the 203-unit apartment building. People may view the proposed design, ask questions and offer suggestions about the project. Banc of America Community Development Corp., and Bessolo Design Group are development partners. "We're just starting the design plan," said Leroy Moore, the housing authority's chief operating officer. "We'll be getting feedback in terms of amenities and asking, 'Do you like what we're planning?'" Tempo is a \$40 million project with funding from several sources including a \$30 million federal grant and state tax credits. Construction is expected to begin by the end of the year. Renters will include families, couples and individuals. The apartment complex is part of a \$425-\$450 million project to build a planned community on the 28-acre site of the former Central Park Village, a 1950s-era public housing complex north of downtown that was demolished nearly six years ago. The multi-year Encore project when completed is expected to have mixed-income apartments for seniors, families, couples and singles, a hotel, shops, a black history museum in the former St. James Episcopal Church, a job training center and a redesigned Perry Harvey Sr. Park. A middle school also might be built on the 2.5 acre site of the former Meacham Alternative School (also formerly Christina Meacham Elementary School and India Street School). Before then, however, the housing authority and the University of South Florida plan to plant a community garden on the property. The garden is envisioned as a hands-on learning tool for schoolchildren and a food source for the community, local restaurants and grocers. If a school ultimately is built, the housing authority would move the garden to another location. The Ella, a 147-unit senior apartment building which opened in December, is almost fully occupied. Moore said the only remaining apartment is the model residence used to show prospective tenants. The Trio, a \$26 million apartment building for families, couples and individuals, is halfway built. Leasing will begin by the end of the year and construction is slated for an early 2014 completion. Construction has been delayed on The Reed, a 158-unit senior apartment building. Moore said initial bids were too high so the housing authority has asked for a second set of bids. The \$29 million construction project is expected to begin by mid-August and take about 14 months to complete. Funding for construction for all apartment buildings is in place and despite setbacks, Moore said, "We are officially a year ahead of schedule." ksteele@tampatrib.com(813) 259-7652