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Tampa's Encore project now a reality



The Encore project, a long-awaited residential and retail project located in downtown Tampa where the Central Park housing development once sat, debuts today with the opening of the Ella building.

By Trevor Pettiford, Reporter

Last Updated: Wednesday, December 12, 2012, 10:41 AM



TAMPA -- The first element of a major development project years in the making is being unveiled today in downtown Tampa.

The Encore project is a long-awaited residential and retail project located in downtown Tampa where the Central Park housing development once sat.

A 40-plus acre mixed-use redevelopment area, the development is envisioned as a cluster of affordable apartment homes eventually mixed in with stores, a park, a museum, hotel and grocery store. The project sprawls across the vast area from Nebraska Avenue and Cass Street.

It all starts with today's opening of Ella, a seven-story residential building of one- and two-bedroom units for seniors.

The building will include a swimming pool, exercise center and even gardening plots for residents. The structure is named for the legendary jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald, who recorded and performed in Tampa with other singers of the era such as Ray Charles and Cab Calloway.

One-bedroom units range from \$358 to \$692. Two bedroom units run from \$359 to \$822.

"It's affordable housing, senior, 62 years and older," said Page McKee, the senior vice president and general

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manager of Hardin Construction, the construction firm building the development. "One -and two-bedroom units, 160 units. Affordable housing, so ... what you pay varies on your income."

McKee said the building is the first phase of a massive project that will bring affordable housing and commercial property to the once blighted northwest corner of downtown.

Officials in charge of the project, a joint effort between the Tampa Housing Authority and Bank of America, are optimistic they can attract commercial developers to buy parcels of the project set aside to build office space or perhaps a boutique hotel.

Anchoring the project with a chain grocery store along Nebraska Avenue is also on the wish list.



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