

[wahpetondailynews.com](http://www.wahpetondailynews.com)

## Affordable housing gets green light from city

*By Frank Stanko • Daily News [franks@wahpetondailynews.com](mailto:franks@wahpetondailynews.com)*

With available, affordable housing comes prospective and eventual residents. That's logic the city of Wahpeton is counting on.

Earlier this month, the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency awarded over \$2.6 million in low-income housing tax credits to applicant developers. G.A. Haan Development, based out of Harbor Springs, Michigan, earned \$670,000 in credits, the highest individual amount awarded. G.A. Haan is now moving forward with the Kennedy Park Townhomes, an affordable housing development to be constructed north of Wahpeton's Walmart.

"We haven't had an apartment complex built since 1998," said Wahpeton Economic Development Director Jane Priebe. "(Kennedy Park) coming along, and other projects, like the 50-and-older housing planned near City Hall, gives us a pretty wide variety of options for all income ranges."

Although G.A. Haan is based out of Michigan, most of their

properties are based in the states of North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. Director of Development Ben Ide spoke highly of the low-income housing tax credit program.

“It’s one of the most successful public-private partnership programs that the federal government has ever created. It’s responsible for a tremendous amount of housing development across the country,” he said.

As part of the program, property owners receive an annual federal income tax credit for 10 years. In return, rents must be kept affordable, or below 60 percent of the area median income for at least 15 years. Along with being affordable, homes under the income tax credit program are held to rigid quality standards, according to Jolene Kline, executive director of the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency.

Now that G.A. Haan has its housing credits, it will sell them to investors such as banks or insurance companies. This is a process known as syndication. Proceeds from the sale, brought in as equity, will be used to build the 40-unit, 2-3 bedroom Kennedy Park Townhomes.

“There’ll be anywhere between 1,000 and 1,300 square feet (to a unit),” Ide said. “They’re nice, modern, energy-efficient units. We’ll have a manager’s unit on site with a community building, a space residents can use for birthday parties. There’ll be a playground. It’ll

be a nice development.”

Ide is quick to make the distinction that while the Kennedy Park Townhomes are affordable housing, they are not “Section 8” housing. With Section 8, tenants receive vouchers from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which helps pay for most of their rent.

“It more closely resembles a market rate property. All of our tenants are screened. They go through an exhaustive screening process,” he said.

Comfort and individuality are kept in mind with modern housing developments. Kline mentioned that Kennedy Park will include units that are more accessible to older and disabled residents. Even the decision of having them be townhomes, with individual entrances and garages, was made with care.

“Renters don’t necessarily like having a common hallway,” Kline said.

The influx of affordable housing is just one component of a 20-year comprehensive plan for Wahpeton’s continued development, Priebe said. The plan, approved in 2010, highlighted the city’s southwest, downtown and land along North Dakota Highway 210, as areas of interest.

“If we can attract even a fraction of commuters, we hope to make them residents,” Priebe said.

Ground-breaking for the Kennedy Park Townhomes is scheduled for next spring, and a 2017 opening is expected. For more information, visit [www.haandev.com](http://www.haandev.com).

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Garrison Keillor has sold out his final Minnesota shows as ...

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Police say they found two people dead in a vehicle after respon...

A Breckenridge, Minnesota, woman charged last month with five felony burglary coun...

We're always interested in hearing about news in our community. Let us know what's going on!