

FIRM PLANS \$52 MILLION IN PROJECTS

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN

September 02, 2015 at 7:00 pm | By Seaborn Larson The Daily Inter Lake

Immanuel Lutheran Communities is planning \$52 million in expansion projects in Kalispell.

They include a \$45 million redevelopment project at Buffalo Hill Terrace and a \$7.5 million senior apartment complex on Meridian Court.

The redevelopment will include 36 new independent living residences at The Villas at Buffalo Hill as well as an auditorium/chapel, pool, fitness center, salon/spa, underbuilding parking, dining room, coffee bar and lounge.

The project will also include 24 assisted-living apartment residences for individuals with memory loss, a memory-care garden and updates to the existing skilled nursing portion of Buffalo Hill.

The final component is expansion of the Retreat at Buffalo Hill with a new 2,000-square-foot rehabilitation and therapy center.

“As baby boomers retire in greater numbers, we’re looking forward to continuing to be the area leader in senior living,” said Jason Cronk, chief executive officer of Immanuel Lutheran Communities. “These apartments will be made to feel like home. They’ll have everything from a balcony to a fireplace, granite countertops, full-size washer and dryer, and more.□

CJMW Architecture of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and MMW Architects of Missoula have been named as architectural partners on the project.

Additional partners include Swank Enterprises, a local contractor; Sawgrass Partners, a senior living developer and adviser based in Illinois; local engineering company Morrison-Maierle; Studio 121, an interior design firm based in Nashville, Tennessee; and Corsi Associates, a food-service consulting firm based in Pennsylvania.

Immanuel Lutheran Communities will take the redevelopment project to the Kalispell City Council in October. If everything is approved, the project will begin next spring, set for a five-year construction period.

The second major development for Immanuel Lutheran is Timber Meadows, a fixed-income senior apartment complex.

Timber Meadows is an 80,000-square-foot, 40-room apartment complex planned on 4.2 acres at 41 Meridian Court. The cost of the development is projected at \$7.5 million.

The facility will include 20 one-bedroom apartments and 20 two-bedroom apartments, 40 single-car garages and 40 separate storage facilities. About half of the apartments will be handicapped-accessible, while the other half will be built for an easy transition into handicapped-accessible apartments if future residents desire.

Each unit will include a washer/dryer and an outdoor patio. To live in Timber Meadows, residents would have to earn less than \$25,000 to 27,000, annually. One-bedroom apartments would rent for \$338 a month; two-bedroom apartments would be priced at \$654 a month.

The project mirrors senior living facilities already built by Mountain Plains Equity, a low-income housing specialist that is a partner with Immanuel Lutheran on Timber Meadows.

Cronk said the nonprofit has been studying the low-income housing market in Kalispell for several years.

"We learned that Kalispell has a greater-than-national-average need for housing for seniors with low or fixed income," Cronk said. "Last year's analysis found that the market could absorb up to 100 apartment residences, and we would [build them] if we could."

Extensive funding for Timber Meadows is expected to come from a tax credit program through the Montana Board of Housing. The credit is usually awarded to about five applicants, and currently about 25 letters of intent from across the state have applied for these tax credits.

The timetable for the project therefore hinges on receiving the tax credits and construction would be delayed without them.

"If we don't get the tax credits, we'll continue applying until we do," Cronk said.

Mountain Plains Equity Group has taken the lead on the application, which is due in October.

"This is what they do, having done more than 30 of these applications," Cronk said.

Immanuel Lutheran held a public meeting with seniors on Aug. 19 to present the future details and amenities of the project.

Lois Katz, who chairs the Flathead County Agency on Aging, attended the meeting and was impressed with the designs for the new facility and accommodations for the growing senior population in the Flathead Valley.

"Over 25 percent of the Flathead County is now seniors," she said. "Even looking for general apartment housing, the rental stuff just isn't available here."

Katz said the highlights of Timber Meadows included more space, laundry in each unit, more storage and fixed income rates.

"I very much liked what I saw there," Katz said. "It's just a whole step up from where I am now."

The project will go to the Kalispell City Planning Board on Sept. 15. City approval for the project is a key step in completing the tax credit application to the Montana Board of Housing.

For more information on Immanuel Lutheran's real-estate developments, call (406) 752-9622 or visit www.ilcorp.org.

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