

TCD completes first phase in renovating 100-year-old building



Posted: Thursday, June 23, 2016 5:00 pm

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Twin Cities Development staff have been hard at work renovating a former hotel turned apartment building. TCD Executive Director Rawnda Pierce held an open house at The Eastwood Apartments on June 16 to update the community on the work that has been completed since renovation began in August 2015. The initial phase of the project, which included creating 12 one bedroom or studio apartments in the North wing, is nearly complete, with 11 of the apartments ready to go.

"We have seven one bedroom apartments and four studios," said Pierce.

One of those studios is designed to be accessible for someone with a disability, including a roll-in shower.

Phase one was funded by a \$25,000 donation from Platte Valley Bank and Platte Valley Companies. Grants from the Department of Economic Development will be needed for the next phase and beyond.

The Eastwood Apartments was built to house sugar factory workers nearly 100 years ago. In fact, the building will turn 100 in July. Originally, each of the 52 rooms was an apartment, and contained only a toilet, a sink, a shower and a bed - all within a fairly small living space.

Western Nebraska Housing Opportunities (WNHO) purchased the building for this project. The renovation will take those 52 rooms and make them into 36 clean, safe and energy efficient apartments.

"In some instances, we took three rooms to make a one bedroom apartment with a separate kitchen and bathroom," said Pierce.

It's not only the rooms that will be energy efficient. The lighting down the hallways is activated by motion sensors, so that the lights aren't on when not needed.

Functionality was also considered in the plans. The floor covering in the lobby and down the hallways is carpet squares, so that if one needs to be replaced, it can easily be done. Instead of putting in closets in the apartments, they used organizers to make the best use of the space in the room.

Every floor will have a washer and dryer, and air conditioning.

"They've never had air conditioning in this building before," said Pierce, "It's a hundred years old, it's got all new water lines, sewer lines and electrical lines."

They have also put in an instant hot water system with tanks.

Pierce said, "We knew with this many people, someone would run out, so we put in this system."

In addition, there is a brand new fire sprinkler system throughout the building.

Pierce said, "We used the inmate work crew to do most of this work, and when we calculated their hours, it was close to \$70,000 worth of value in what they've done. Tearing out lath and plaster and cleaning everything up."

Pierce said they're ready to go with phase two, they just need the money from the grant. "I've submitted a grant to the state," she said, "but it's very competitive, so we will know in late July or August."