

CoStar Group

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Affordable Rental Community Coming to Southern Miami-Dade County Caribbean Village Also Billed as Transit-Oriented Development



Rendering of the 123-unit Caribbean Village in Miami

An affordable housing rental for seniors is under construction 15 miles south of downtown Miami, the first project of its kind in the South Miami Heights neighborhood in a quarter century, the developer said.

Pinnacle Housing Group expects to complete the 123-unit Caribbean Village at 19755 SW 110th Court in unincorporated Miami-Dade County by the first or second quarter of next year, said Mitchell Friedman, a partner at Pinnacle.

Caribbean Village will help address South Florida's affordable housing problem while also giving tenants access to public transportation nearby, officials say.

The 55-and-over residents will be within walking distance of the South Dade Busway on U.S. 1, which connects to MetroRail and other public transportation.

So-called transit-oriented developments are sprouting across the region following the recent opening of the Brightline commuter train service, which connects the downtowns of Miami, Fort Lauderdale and

West Palm Beach.

But Friedman said he isn't aware of another transit-oriented development specifically accommodating seniors.

"All of the TODs on the drawing board right now are more focused on the downtown areas," Friedman said.

The seven-story development will have one- and two-bedroom units with such amenities as a fitness center, lounge and computer lab. Rents range from \$440 to more than \$1,000 per month.

To qualify for the building, seniors must earn less than 60 percent of the area median income for Miami-Dade County, about \$60,000. Some units are reserved for residents earning less than 28 percent of the income limit.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Giménez, Commissioner Dennis Moss and other community leaders are scheduled to meet Friday at the site for a ceremony commemorating the project.

Pinnacle's partners in Caribbean Village are Miami-Dade County and the South Miami Heights Community Development Corporation. Miami-based Pinnacle was selected as the winning bidder after responding to the county's request for proposals for the 3.25-acre site.

Financing included tax-exempt bonds, tax credits and a \$5.3 million loan from Florida Housing Finance Corporation.

With home prices and rents soaring in recent years, South Florida and other major metro areas are facing an affordable housing crisis. A shortage of land has led to steep increases in the cost of dirt, often leaving developers with no other choice but to build luxury residences and rentals, analysts say.

Tax credits and other help from local and state governments are critical to putting housing within reach of the lower and middle classes, said Ken Johnson, an economist and real estate professor at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton.

"What solved our affordability issues in 2007 and 2008 was the bubble bursting," Johnson said. "We don't want the same thing to happen this time."

Friedman said it will take a few months to qualify tenants for Caribbean Village after the building is complete next year.

Many prospective residents are inquiring about the project at the construction site, according to Friedman, who doesn't anticipate any problems filling the apartments.

"None whatsoever," he said.