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LIHI breaks ground on South Seattle apartments

- ***The developer says the pandemic is taking a toll on affordable housing providers as costs rise and rent collections fall.***

By **LYNN PORTER**
Journal Staff Reporter

The Low Income Housing Institute broke ground Monday on a 106-unit apartment project at 7357 43rd Ave. S., one block from the Othello light rail station in Seattle.

Runberg Architecture Group designed the seven-story development for a site across from the Othello Park and Playfield. Walsh Construction Co. is building the project, which is expected to be complete in November 2021.

Called Othello Park, it will be open to people making up to 60% of the area median income. It will have studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and two live-work units. The apartments will range from 420 to 1,320 square feet.



Rendering provided by Runberg Architecture Group [\[enlarge\]](#)

The Othello Park apartments are expected to be done in late 2021.

In a press release, Runberg said Othello Park aims to be a resource to the community. At the ground level, residents and community members can access a community room, community kitchen, computer room, leasing office and supportive services.

A generous seventh-story community space with an outdoor terrace will provide views across the park and neighborhood to Mount Rainier, an amenity the architect said is not often found with affordable housing.

The project is designed to meet the Evergreen Sustainable Development Standard. An internal courtyard will bring light and air to the interior of the site and provide space for bioretention planters that will handle 75% of on-site stormwater management. There will also be 94 bike parking stalls.

The project team includes KPFF Consulting Engineers, civil; Quantum Consulting Engineers, structural; JRS Engineering, envelope consultant; Merit Electrical, electrical; A3 Acoustics, acoustic engineer; Emerald Aire, HVAC; O'Brien360, sustainability consultant; and Karen Kiest Landscape Architects.

Steven Strickland, real estate project manager with Seattle-based LIHI, said Othello Park is estimated to cost \$36.7 million. It is being funded by the city of Seattle, King County, National Equity Fund Inc. and U.S. Bank.

Strickland said the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for affordable housing providers. Rent collections have decreased due to widespread unemployment and pandemic-related operating expenses and property and liability insurance costs have greatly increased. Looking ahead, he said, there will likely be a decrease in lending/financing activity and potentially major decreases in critical government funding.

The drop in rent collections is more heavily felt in affordable housing, which had a lot of low-wage workers even before the pandemic, he said. “It’s just made things worse.”

LIHI has had a “significant decrease in rent collections” due to COVID, he said, and the pandemic has made it even harder for people to find stable housing in the region.

Strickland said Walsh Construction actively enforces a COVID-19 site-specific health and safety plan, employee and subcontractor protocols and jobsite safety practices. “They do a really good job of thinking of that stuff ahead of time,” he said.

Barring another COVID-19-related shutdown or supply chain issues and such, LIHI does not expect construction schedule impacts for Othello Park because of the pandemic, he said.

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