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Foundation aids senior housing plans

By **SHANNON MORTLAND**

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Established as a reactive grant maker, the McGregor Foundation now is taking an active lead in helping local organizations create more affordable housing for seniors.

The foundation, part of the A.M. McGregor Home nursing home in East Cleveland, last spring sponsored a design competition for low-income senior housing. The organization chose four designs and is helping to bring two of those housing projects to fruition, said R. Robertson Hilton, president and CEO of McGregor.

One such project is the renovation and expansion of the former Amasa Stone House on East Boulevard in University Circle, which McGregor built in the 1930s as a nursing home. McGregor closed the nursing home in 2004 and donated it to the now-defunct Northeast Neighborhood Development Corp.

"It can no longer be used as a nursing home or for any kind of health care, but renovating it into senior housing is a very attractive opportunity," Mr. Hilton said.

That's why the McGregor Foundation loaned \$119,000 to the Famicos Foundation to redevelop the property. Famicos is the community development corporation in the University Circle area that recently bought the Amasa Stone property from Ozanne Construction Co. of Cleveland, which planned to redevelop the former nursing home into condominiums before the recession deepened, said David Fagerhaug, director of real estate development for Famicos.

Under the Famicos plan, the 25,000-square-foot building would receive a 19,000-square-foot addition and would be redeveloped into 46 one-bedroom apartments. Mr. Fagerhaug said the \$10 million project likely will be financed through grants and loans from local, state and federal governments.

Famicos already has applied for a \$6 million forgivable loan from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, but Mr. Fagerhaug said the foundation is unsure when it will find out if it will receive the loan because the federal government is tied up with managing the stimulus package. As long as the project adheres to HUD's requirements, the loan does not have to be repaid, he said.

This month, McGregor provided grants totaling \$149,000 for three other senior housing initiatives, one of which is being developed by Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. The nonprofit community development group serves most of Cleveland's Ward 5, which includes the Kinsman, Central and North Broadway neighborhoods.

Burten Bell is working with architects to create a 45-apartment senior housing complex on an empty lot at East 79th Street and Central Avenue, said Timothy Tramble, Burten Bell's executive director. The cost of the project is estimated

at \$5.5 million, which would be financed through grants, Mr. Tramble said. Burten Bell plans to apply for a HUD grant later this year.

The other two senior housing projects that received grants from McGregor are on hold for now because they also would be developed by Famicos, Mr. Hilton said.

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