

LOCAL

Asheville City Council approves Haywood Street housing, nixes The Avery, Pedicab



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Asheville City Council approved a housing project that will bring 45-units of affordable housing to West Haywood Street.

A project years in the making, the Haywood Street Community Development, a nonprofit created by Haywood Street Congregation, is fighting to create accessible housing for the city's most underserved residents.

Council unanimously authorized a request at its Feb. 22 meeting for \$1.3 million in funding to purchase land and a \$904,000 Housing Trust Fund loan to construct 45 permanently affordable rental homes at 343 and 357 W Haywood St.

Mayor Esther Manheimer said when the project was first introduced, years back, she anticipated a long road, and was thrilled to see it get to this point.

"We will win, all of us, from you making the incredible effort that you've made," Manheimer said of the Haywood Street Congregation.

Council member Kim Roney said she viewed this as a step in the direction of even more affordable housing projects in Asheville.

"My hope is that when we see this pulled off, because we have to urgently, that more partners will say, 'OK, we have to do this again and again,'" Roney said.

Prior reporting:

Asheville Council committee backs \$2.2M for 'unicorn' Haywood Street apartments

One giant step for affordable housing: Haywood Street apartment passes P&Z Commission

Avery, Haywood apartments head to Asheville City Council Feb. 22 for public hearings

Haywood Street Congregation plans for the development to begin with a single building — with just more than half dedicated to residents earning less than 30% of the area median income. Nine units are set for 60% AMI and 13 at 80% AMI.

The city's matrix for affordable rents lists 80%, 60% and 30% AMI for a one-person household at \$42,100, \$31,575 and \$15,800, respectively. For two-person households, those rates respectively are \$48,100, 36,075 and \$18,050.

Rev. Brian Combs, founding pastor of Haywood Street Congregation, said this housing will exist to be 100% affordable in perpetuity.

"We have slept overnight at shelters, we have visited in camps, we have blessed keys to singlewide trailers, we have been there for moving day at Aston Towers. We have also lived with people in poverty 24 hours a day, seven days a week in our respite center," Combs said.

"We have spent 12 years on the street, loitering on the corner of poverty, listening to people who need housing the most."

Council also approved a needed conditional zoning for the project site, totaling about .86 acres at the north end of the West End Clingman Avenue neighborhood.

The estimated total project cost is about \$10.2 million, and Haywood Street is also seeking \$2 million from the Dogwood Health Trust, has a loan commitment from an area lender for \$4.1 million and will be contributing \$809,000 to the project of its own equity.

In February, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners committed \$749,000 to the project, and Asheville City Council voted in October to become an early funder with \$296,000 for due diligence costs.

Related: Asheville Mayor: Homelessness 'crisis' signals need for outside consultant, RFPs now open

Combs said they hope to break ground in August and expect construction to take 12 to 18 months.

Ultimately, he said, this project is seeking to give people a place to call home — "to be safe, to have a space where you can start collecting memories."

Avery apartments nixed

In other Council action, a large apartment complex proposed for downtown Asheville failed approval. The conditional rezoning request at the corner of Clingman and Hilliard avenues was denied in a 5-2 vote, with members Sandra Kilgore and Antanette Mosley voting in favor.

The Avery proposed 187 residential apartments and about 14,000 square feet of commercial space in two buildings with 201 parking spaces, including 76 structured spaces underneath the larger building.

Manheimer acknowledged that "we do desperately need more housing in the city," and there is temptation to greenlight every project to meet a need, "but I don't think that means we have to take every project in every form it is presented," she said.

"I do want to see this site developed," she said, and she hopes this applicant or another applicant will return in the future with a better fit.

Prior reporting:

With new design changes, Avery apartments get OK from Asheville Planning Commission
'Major improvements,' no decision for Clingman apartment proposal

Located at 363 Hilliard Ave. on about 2.93 acres, it required conditional rezoning approval from council to move forward.

Wyatt Stevens, an Asheville attorney representing the developer, Delray Ventures, called The Avery "one of the more exciting projects that has come before the city of Asheville in recent years."

He said the apartment complex would "anchor development on the western edge of town," an area he said has problems with "vagrancy and homelessness."

Included in the project's conditions is a requirement for 5% of the units, or nine units total, to be affordable at or below 80% AMI for 20 years. Five of the affordable units will accept housing choice vouchers.

The apartments got a unanimous vote in favor from the Asheville Planning and Zoning Commission on Feb. 2, and commission members responded positively to changes made to the building's design following a negative vote from the city's Design Review Committee on Jan. 20.

An informal review of the revised plans was heard again by the Design Review Committee on Feb. 17 and garnered approval. Revisions included façade and aesthetic changes more in line with the city's vision, such as alterations in windows, balcony features and added steps to the sidewalk from entrances along Clingman.

According to City Attorney Brad Branham, the applicants cannot return to council with another proposal for the property for at least a year.

Pedicab rejected

Despite securing Council approval at the first reading of its franchise agreement, Blue Ridge Rickshaw was voted down at its second reading, necessary for final approval. The first reading took place Feb. 8.

More: A passion for pedicab: Blue Ridge Rickshaw seeks Asheville council OK for April debut

Mayor Manheimer and council members Sage Turner and Mosley voted against its approval in the first reading, and were joined by Kilgore in the second, tipping the scales to a 4-3 denial.

Jordan Hrivnak, owner of Blue Ridge Rickshaw, was hoping to open a pedicab business in downtown Asheville, a self-run business that would have brought one pedicab cycle to city streets, with room to grow.

No discussion from council preceded the denial, but Manheimer voiced reservations at the Feb. 8 discussion, and worried it would be a tourist-centric venture rather than benefiting the community as a whole.

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