

East Ward Village Will Help Fill Need for Rental Units

By Gene O. Morris

After looking at additional housing projects for several years, the McCook Housing Authority decided in the last part of 2009 that it was time to take action.

A search for additional housing space began immediately, and by March of 2010 the housing board was ready to move forward, signing a purchase option to acquire the former East Ward School property.

A plan is now in place, calling for the creation of 15 one and two-bedroom residential units in the former school building, and the construction of 12 two-bedroom units on the east half of the square block site.

If all goes as planned, construction could begin as early as the spring of 2011, said Becky Dutcher, executive director of the housing authority. A big step in that direction was taken in August when the McCook Housing Authority was awarded an allocation of \$410,004 in tax credits by the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority.

As soon as those tax credits are marketed and gap financing is arranged, the project will proceed. The need is great and growing, Dutcher pointed out. Since starting in 1977 with 12 units, the McCook Housing Authority has grown to the point that it now has 86 housing units.

The old elementary building, one of McCook's early day ward schools, now has a new chance to serve the community.

"The additional 27 units of East Ward Village are designed for senior living, defined as those age 55 and above. The advantage of this, Dutcher said, is that it will allow senior citizens to downsize from bigger homes, opening those houses up for growing families.