New Granada Square development moves closer to construction

A rendering of the proposed New Granada Square development. The theater can be seen in the center of the photograph.

By Tim Schooley – Reporter, Pittsburgh Business Times
Jan 16, 2020, 5:10pm EST

The joint venture for redeveloping the New Granada Theater into a mixed-use arts district got a key vote enabling the plan to go forward in the middle Hill District.

At its January meeting on Thursday, the board of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh voted to sell 12 parcels to Granada Apartments, a joint venture of the Hill Community Development Corporation and Cleveland-based CHN Housing Partners, to build out the New Granada Square developments that will complement the mixed-use renovation of the theater.
The parcels were mostly a block of open land neighboring the historic theater building. The venture aims to build out the New Granada Square developments that will complement the mixed-use renovation of the theater.

New Granada Square will include a new 24,000-square-foot office building and a five-story mixed-use building with 40 apartments, affordable to residents with incomes at 80 percent of area median income. The development will also include 7,500 square feet of first-floor commercial space.

The project is estimated to cost $14.5 million, part of a larger $45 million development of an entire block.

“I’m just really thrilled,” said Marimba Milliones, president and CEO of the Hill District Community Development Corp. “We’ll have multiple announcements throughout the rest of this year, but this is a substantial step forward in making this acquisition.”

The URA will sell the lots, bounded by Centre Avenue, Wylie Avenue, Devilliers Street and Erin Street, to the joint venture for $125,000 plus costs.

The new URA board vote comes after the joint venture was awarded a nine percent low income tax credit last year, a competitive program that, along with other funding, puts the Hill nonprofit and its development partner near fully financed for the new project.

“We’ll be under construction this summer on the apartments,” said Milliones

After that, work will begin on renovating the third-floor of the Granada Theater, a revitalization strategy that calls for adding enue.

Milliones said the plan for the full renovation of the theater will be to launch a capital campaign soon.

The development will work from a master plan to base the project around the African American cultural legacy of the community. The Hill Community Development Corp. is also working with a key future tenant of the plan: the University of Pittsburgh, which is expected to take 20,000 square feet in the development with a new Community Engagement Center.

CHN Housing Partners has developed 5,000 affordable housing units largely in Ohio but is pursuing its first project in Pittsburgh, said Milliones.
With the new apartment project targeting artists as potential residents, New Granada Square is expected to help anchor a new cultural corridor along Centre Avenue in the Hill District.