

Council on Aging intends to turn former Oleson's into hub for seniors

Posted by MNA Staff on November 17th, 2016

MANISTEE — The Manistee County Council on Aging has signed a letter of intent with Third Coast Development, Grand Rapids, to create a hub for senior programs, services and housing, located on U.S. 31 property owned by the Oleson Food Stores.

A purchase agreement to sell the property to Third Coast Development is pending.

"While a number of steps in the process remain, we are thrilled by the prospect of developing a world class hub right here in Manistee to accommodate the needs of our critically important population of senior citizens," said Sarah Howard, Council on Aging (COA) executive director. "We outgrew our current location years ago.

"When renovated, the new building will provide the space and facilities we need to ensure we provide superior services to all people age 60 or more, regardless of ability or income," she added. "Our mission is to promote the quality of life and independence of our senior population which has a wealth of talent and is essential to the vitality of Manistee County."

Howard said that the Alliance for Economic Success has been instrumental in coordinating this project.

The COA is supportive of the county-wide Meals on Wheels program, which serves lunch daily Monday through Friday at the Senior Center and the county congregate sites.

COA programs include a Healthy Seniors Program, food bank, foot and eye glass clinics, blood pressure and hearing aid clinics, a Medicare/Medicaid assistance program, legal services, Meijer Computer Learning Center, income tax preparation, a senior food pantry, and dozens of events, programs and activities ranging from bingo to daily exercise programs.

"The number of households with individuals aged 60 and over in Manistee County increased by 22 percent between 2000 and 2010 and people over the age of 60 now make up about 34 percent of our total population," Howard said.

Howard explained that Third Coast Development intends to develop first class housing for seniors on the property, with an initial complex of just under 50 units.

"Affordable housing options for seniors is a persistent and growing need just as it is for much of our population," Howard said. "We do not have sufficient housing to meet the needs of our seniors and that demand continues to grow.

"People over the age of 60 are looking to live or relocate here for many reasons, often including being close to their family and enjoying our quality of life in Manistee County," she added. "We are excited about the potential of having new, accessible and barrier free housing adjacent to the new Senior Center."

David Levitt, a principal with Third Coast Development Company, said a deal is pending with a retailer that would also be located on the site and provide added value for seniors and City of Manistee residents.

"We could not be more pleased by this step toward a best practice hub for senior services, programs and living right here in Manistee," said Manistee's city manager Thad Taylor. "The senior population is of great significance to our city and region and their economic impact is often understated. This location is next door to the Dial-A-Ride service and connected to our walkable community."