



CITY REPORT

Construction begins on Woodlawn condos

By Jeanette Almada

Special to the Tribune

Construction has begun on the first of 57 condominiums — many to be sold affordably — near Oakwood Cemetery in the Woodlawn neighborhood.

Chicago-based developer Benjamin Van Horne will build 53 units on lots he will buy through the City Lots for City Living program, which sells vacant city-owned land to affordable housing developers for a nominal fee. The program is administered by the Chicago Department of Housing.

Van Horne last week began building the first 12 units at 6604-06 S. Kimbark Ave., on land he bought for \$1 from the city. Two six-flat buildings will contain eight 1,100-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-bath condos and four 1,900-square-foot, three-bedroom, three-bath duplex units, Van Horne said in an interview.

The developer is selling the two-bedroom condos for \$165,000, through Metro-Pro Realty's 53rd Street office. "That price is \$20,000 to \$30,000 less than similar condos in the area are selling for," Van Horne said. He estimates he will sell the three-bedroom condos at the market rate of about \$265,000.

The buildings were designed by John Hanna of Hanna Architects, Chicago.

Van Horne relocated several years ago from St. Louis, where he had worked for a national affordable housing developer. He began searching Chicago for a place to start an affordable housing development company.

"I looked through the entire West Side and South Side for cheap, vacant apartment buildings to start with," Van Horne said. He presented the city with a list of lots he wanted to buy between Marquette Road and 67th Street and from the Illinois Cen-

tral tracks to Dorchester and Cottage Grove Avenues.

"[The city] selected these blocks because the people who live on those blocks have been there for a long time, have hoped that something would get done on those blocks," Van Horne said.

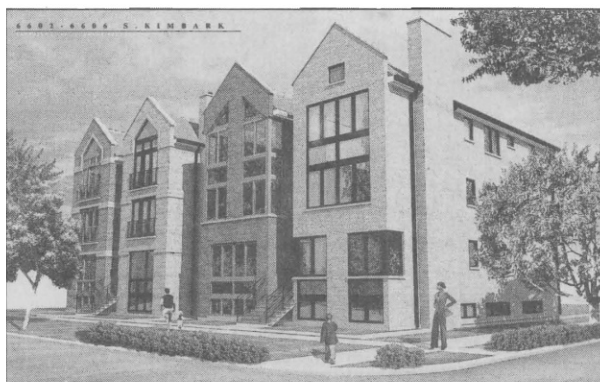
Van Horne's first project in Woodlawn was the rehab of a long-vacant 24-unit apartment building. Built in 1892 and slated for demolition, the Baltimore at 6647-53 S. Maryland Ave., is two blocks west of the Kimbark Avenue development site.

He partnered with Chicago developer Andy Skolnik, who has redeveloped several vacant and historic buildings in the South Side neighborhood and turned the building into 20 two-bedroom, two-bath condos that sold last year for \$112,000 to \$165,000, Van Horne said.

"I am not so naïve as to think that all of my buyers will come from the Woodlawn neighborhood," Van Horne said, "but a buyer in the Baltimore was a woman who grew up in that building and that gave me a great feeling."

Van Horne has contracted to buy six more parcels within eight blocks of the Kimbark site. He plans to build a three-story six-flat on the 6600 block of South Maryland; two eight-flats and one three-flat on the 6600 block of South Ingleside Avenue; and two eight-flats on the 6600 block of South Greenwood Avenue.

"All of those projects will go up on land that I am buying through the Department of Housing [City Lots for City Living program]. In addition to those, I have privately acquired land on the 6600 block of South Maryland, just across the street from the Baltimore, where I will build a four-unit condo building. I intend to live in one of those condos," Van Horne said.



A rendering of the condo buildings planned for 6604-06 S. Kimbark Ave. and designed by John Hanna of Hanna Architects.