

Pine Street Neighborhood Project

A new neighborhood is springing up in center city Hazleton!

The Pine Street Neighborhood Project is taking the place of vacant, decaying factories that once blighted a small section of downtown Hazleton.

Those buildings have since been demolished, and today new homes are about to be built on the now reclaimed land.

Two dozen environmentally friendly and economically efficient homes will make for a better life for those wishing to live, work and play in proximity to the downtown area.

The neighborhood is anchored by the Pine Street Playground, in which the City recently invested \$500,000 in renovations. The playground also serves as an ice rink during the winter months.

The non-profit Madison, Wis.-based Design Coalition created the blue print for the neighborhood, while Wilkes-Barre's Borton Lawson Architecture will serve as the local on-site architectural firm.

The homes will be developed by the Housing Development Corp. of Northeastern Pennsylvania and will target a market of first-time homebuyers and empty nesters of all income levels.

The homes are intended for ownership rather than rent, and they will be built in three phases.

The Pine Street Neighborhood consists of three city blocks bounded by Fulton Court and Hemlock, Pine and Green streets. Twenty-four units will provide residents with about 1,350 square-feet of living space each.

Each of the homes will have a garage, basement and driveway and will be built with energy efficient and environmentally safe materials.

The homes were designed with three things in mind: sustainability, affordability and universal access.

Each of the homes will be created with kitchens, bathrooms and dining rooms on the first-floor levels. Also, "jog-in walls" in the garages, which enable wheelchair accessibility, the lack of a "front step" and wider doors are some of the accessible-friendly aspects of the homes.

The homes will vary in size and will be built on various lot sizes - which average 47.5 feet in length and 75-feet deep.

To ensure sustainability, the homes will be energy efficient and feature a healthy indoor environment... walls will be thicker and the homes will be insulated with a substance other than the usual fiberglass materials, which will enable residents to realize savings in energy expenses.

Roofing shingles will be made of recycled tires and the homes will be sided with a "heat-treated cement." A fireproof paint will assure a 20-year life for the siding.

An energy model for the homes depicts that residents could expect to spend about \$700 a year for related expenditures.

On the exterior, sandstone from the front of the former Geissler Knitting Mills facility will be used to build retaining walls near the playground.

Sidewalks will be lined with trees and short lampposts.

Crosswalks will be handicap accessible and intersections may be designed with materials to alert drivers that children will be in the area.

Some homes will be positioned to face Pine Street - which will be viewed as the main thoroughfare - while others will face side streets, to offset an otherwise routine home arrangement.

Homes will be built only a few feet from sidewalks, which will provide some room for frontal greenspace while maximizing room for backyards.

Project information can be found here <http://www.pinestreethomes.com/>.