

Affordable housing rises in West End church

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Friesen Tokar Architects

It's a church sanctuary that soon will offer another kind of sanctuary to low-income families in the West End. After seven years of dreaming and planning, the conversion of St. Matthew's Anglican Church to affordable community housing will begin within the next month.

St. Matthew's Non-Profit Housing Inc. formally announced plans Monday for the 24-unit, \$4.6-million WestEnd Commons. The huge brick church will be converted into 24 apartments with an interior courtyard and play area. The work starts within the next month in the basement and in the foundation of the church, said architect Ken MacKinnon. The church, originally built in 1913, was destroyed by fire in 1944 and rebuilt after the Second World War.

Twenty of the rent-geared-to-income apartments are for newcomers and aboriginal families. Of those, 16 of the units will be subsidized by Manitoba Housing. Four are being set aside as supportive housing units for tenants with mental health issues, and will receive rental support from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

The city, federal and provincial governments are contributing \$2.27 million through the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative. A mortgage that St. Matthew's Church secured will contribute another chunk of funding to ensure that 90 per cent of the project's costs are covered. A capital campaign is being launched to fund the remaining \$460,000 and an additional \$270,000 to increase the energy efficiency of the project.

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