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CMHA plan to demolish former United Way HQ is ‘full steam ahead’ following Columbus Downtown Commission approval to proceed

The building will be razed in Spring 2025, making way for a new \$29 million, five-story development that will include 82 apartments serving middle- and low-wage earning families and people with disabilities

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The **Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)** announced today the **Columbus Downtown Commission** has approved its plan to demolish the former **United Way of Central Ohio (UWCO)** headquarters.

The commission’s decision Tuesday, Jan. 28, was the final step in a city review process that allows CMHA to proceed with the construction of **AspireCOLUMBUS**, a new, nearly \$29 million, five-story affordable housing community in the heart of downtown that will predominantly serve middle- and low-wage earning families as well as people with disabilities.

“We are now going full steam ahead with this innovative and exciting development,” said **CMHA Chief Operating Officer Scott Scharlach**.

“Downtown Columbus is increasingly becoming a magnet for people of all income levels looking for a place to call home,” said Scharlach. “CMHA is committed to ensuring affordable housing options will exist for residents to live, work and play downtown, and the new AspireCOLUMBUS site is a perfect location to help make that dream happen.”

The scope of work consists of razing the entire former United Way building, including foundations, footings, and all associated overhead or underground utility services. The unground structures and all unsuitable soils will also be included in the contract. The adjoining parking lot will remain and be available for hourly paid public parking.

Construction will begin in mid-2025 on an 82-unit mixed-income development that includes a mix of studio, 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom apartments. The groundbreaking is tentatively scheduled for this summer, with the grand opening for occupancy anticipated in 2026.

One of the keys to moving the project forward is a commitment by the **Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA)** of \$17.5 million in federal 9% Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) for AspireCOLUMBUS that will provide more than half (60%, or nearly \$16 million) of the total development cost. CMHA is funding the construction and securing long-term financing through the issuance of taxable general revenue bonds.

“CMHA is eager to advance on the new AspireCOLUMBUS property as our vision will help provide affordable housing for all in a desirable location,” said **CMHA Vice President of Planning and Development Bob Bitzenhofer**.

CMHA’s plan for AspireCOLUMBUS features 17 studio units, 33 1-bedroom units, 23 2-bedroom units and nine 3-bedroom units, with 70 total parking spaces on a surface lot. Of the 82 total apartments, 31 units (or 38%) will be rent-subsidized by CMHA’s Housing Choice Voucher program. Residents in those units are anticipated to be at 30% of Area Median Income, which in metro Columbus is an annual income of about \$21,700 for an individual and \$27,900 for a family of three. CMHA plans for 12 apartments (or 15% of the inventory) to be at market rate. Current estimates show monthly market-rate rents will range from \$1,211 for a studio apartment to \$2,280 for a 3-bedroom market-rate unit.

All these types of affordability at AspireCOLUMBUS will be indistinguishably woven throughout the property, according to the CMHA plan. At least 5% of units will accommodate physical, visual and auditory accessibility, similarly spread throughout the building and affordability tiers.

Moody Nolan will continue to lead the design team for AspireCOLUMBUS. Headquartered in Columbus and with 11 regional offices across the U.S., Moody Nolan has grown since its founding 40 years ago to become the largest African American-owned and -operated architectural firm in the country and is the 2021 recipient of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) 2021 Architecture Firm Award, the AIA’s highest honor. Moody Nolan is the first African American firm in the U.S. to earn this recognition.

About Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority

CMHA helps people access affordable housing through collaborative partnerships, promotes neighborhood revitalization, and assists residents in accessing needed social services. CMHA owns more than 5,600 units of affordable housing, and through its Housing Choice Voucher and Project-Based Rental Assistance programs, it provides rental assistance to more than 160,000 Ohio and Washington, D.C., residents. Learn more at cmhanet.com.

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