



SLC project will upgrade nearly 300 apartments dedicated to seniors and the disabled

\$76 million overhaul of County High Rise and New City Plaza comes as the region's housing shortage is hitting older residents especially hard.



(Chris Samuels | The Salt Lake Tribune) The County High Rise apartment tower in Salt Lake City on Tuesday, July 5, 2022. City and county officials will begin renovating the much-needed and deeply affordable apartments for seniors.

By Tony Semerad | July 6, 2022, 8:39 a.m.

A new \$76 million housing renovation project will extend the life of 299 affordable

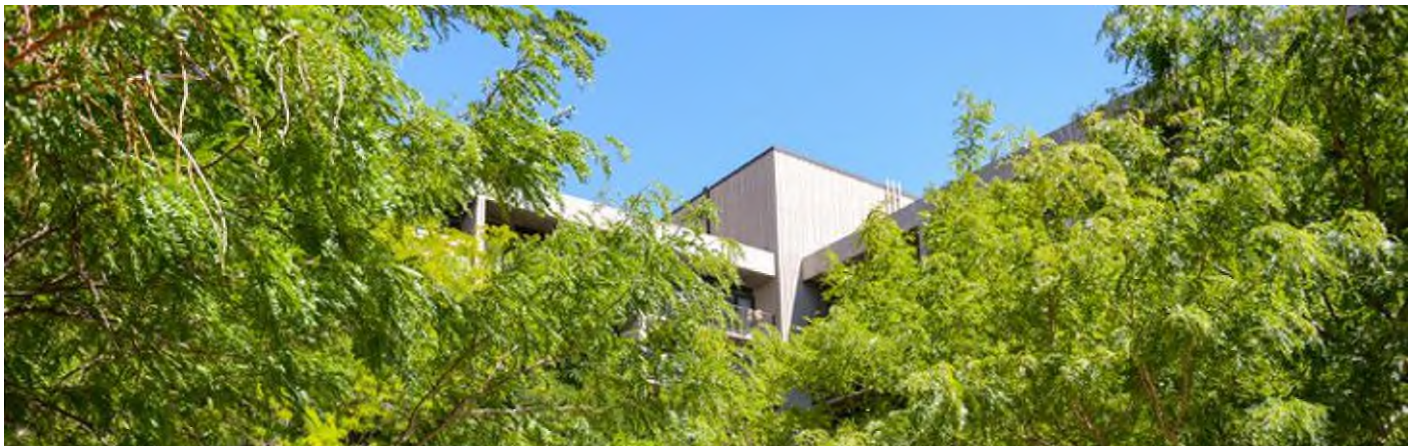
apartments set aside for seniors and other low-income Salt Lake City residents.

Construction, which launched Friday, will modernize the dwellings inside two public housing buildings, [County High Rise](#) and [New City Plaza](#) located near 1960 South 200 East, just east of the Salt Lake County Government Center, and add a one-story breezeway between them.

Officials say it is the largest effort thus far by the county's housing authority — now known as Housing Connect — to maintain some of the region's most affordable dwellings available for the elderly at a time when [Utah is seeing a dire housing shortage and moderately priced rentals suitable to their needs are in especially short supply](#).

Janice Kimball, CEO at Housing Connect, said in a statement the project will keep the apartments affordable and accessible for another 30 to 50 years as part of the agency being “deeply committed to our vision that everyone in our community has a safe, affordable place to call home.”

New City Plaza has, until now, been run by Salt Lake City's housing authority but post-renovation, the two buildings will come under Housing Connect's management.





(Chris Samuels | The Salt Lake Tribune) The New City Plaza apartment building in Salt Lake City, Tuesday, July 5, 2022. City and county officials will begin renovating the much-needed and deeply affordable apartments for seniors.

The renovation will pump an estimated \$133,110 into improvements for each apartment after years of delayed maintenance, officials said. Each living unit will get an updated floor plan, fresh carpets and paint, new cabinets and appliances, and will be wired for high-speed internet access.

The overhaul also aims to improve health and safety in the housing with new power generators and an improved access system. Managers say the project will help unify and create a better sense of community among residents in the two buildings by linking them with the new breezeway and upgraded common areas.

Shantae Goodloe, a spokesperson for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which is kicking in \$39 million for the project, said the work would shift

the two housing complexes away from a history of deferred maintenance and deterioration “to a stable and sustainable trajectory.”

“Over the years, HUD has seen many public housing units lost from the affordable inventory due to deterioration of the property,” Goodloe said. “To preserve properties for the long term, they need periodic investment.”

The project also draws funding from a Federal Housing Administration loan in addition

to federal low-income housing tax credits and a [HOME housing grant](#) from the state.



(Chris Samuels | The Salt Lake Tribune) The County High Rise apartment tower in Salt Lake City, Tuesday, July 5, 2022. City and county officials will begin renovating the much-needed and deeply affordable apartments for seniors.

HUD's \$39 million contribution comes via a new demonstration program that essentially lets local public housing authorities leverage their financial resources to reinvest in their housing stock. It requires them to keep the upgraded housing units permanently affordable to low-income residents.

Under the program — titled [Rental Assistance Demonstration](#), or RAD — the housing will be moved under what is known as [HUD's Section 8 program](#), the federal government's voucher program for helping seniors, low-income families and those with

government's voucher program for helping seniors, low-income families and those with disabilities. Existing residents are consulted through RAD before the conversion and are guaranteed the right to occupy the modernized units and to continue to pay 30% of their income toward rent.

So far, the federal program has freed up more than \$14.5 billion for capital investments to improve or replace 175,000 rent-assisted homes across the country, HUD said, most of them serving low-income families, seniors and residents with disabilities.

A Lakewood, Colo.-based firm called [ej architecture](#) has been selected as the Housing Connect renovation's architect. [Kier Construction in Ogden](#) will be the general contractor.

Announcement of the renovation and preservation of 299 dwellings dedicated to seniors comes at a critical time in what experts say is a widespread housing shortage in Utah and the U.S., one felt acutely by older residents.

The Beehive State has [one of the fastest growth rates in the country for people 65 and older](#), recently released census numbers show. As the baby boom generation ages and home prices and rents alike continue to surge, [among the hardest hit financially are seniors](#), many of whom live on fixed incomes and often require special living arrangements due to limited mobility.

A 2019 study found that of approximately 277,000 senior households in Utah, nearly 72,000 — or nearly 1 in every 4 — are estimated to be “cost-burdened,” forcing them to spend more than 30% of their total income on housing. In addition, 1 in every 8 senior households — about 8,900 in total — spend half more of their incomes on housing.

And that was before the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, which has [accelerated price rises in for-sale and rental housing alike](#) in Utah with exploding demand for homes, particularly those accessible for residents earning below the region's median

homes, particularly those accessible for residents earning below the region's median wage.



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