

New Citizens and Montevue projects under way

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Frederick County broke ground Thursday on a \$28 million project for new buildings to house the Citizens Care and Rehabilitation Center and Montevue Home.

The two new buildings will increase the number of beds available, as well as adding a dementia unit, ventilator unit and outpatient therapy services.

At Citizens, the county-run nursing home, there will be a shift to more private rooms.

The three-story, 170-bed building will have 74 private rooms and 48 semi-private rooms.

That was the best feature to Bessie Hemp, an 84-year-old resident who grabbed a shovel to help with the groundbreaking.

"Everybody will have privacy," Hemp said.

Montevue, an assisted living facility, will increase the number of beds from 60 to 75.

The construction bids came in considerably lower than the county had anticipated.

The county had budgeted \$45 million for construction originally, compared with the \$28 million bid it accepted from Donohoe Construction.

Because of the savings, Citizens was able to add a system on the roof that makes it easier to lift and move patients.

Commissioners President Jan Gardner said that some have questioned why the county would spend money on new buildings at a time when the economy is causing county revenue to plummet.

She said that the county has saved millions, however, by proceeding when the construction industry is bidding low.

"This will be a big accomplishment that our whole community can be proud of," she said.

It is unusual for a county to provide nursing home and assisted living services. Frederick's involvement dates back to 1870, when the Brunner family donated the land on Rosemont Avenue for the purpose of serving the elderly and impoverished.

In recent years, a movement to privatize the homes has failed.

Commissioner Kai Hagen said at the groundbreaking ceremony that he is pleased the county is continuing its commitment.

"It's very meaningful, and it's one more thing we can say about our community that is a little bit unique and very special and worthwhile," Hagen said.

Some amenities are being paid for by private dollars.

For instance, Tommy Dorsey, the son of the late former Frederick County Commissioner Lou Dorsey, has pledged to fund a library.

Jack Tritt, chairman of the Citizens and Montevue Board of Trustees, recognized the many donors and volunteers who have helped the homes.

"When it comes to building communities, and the housing within them, it takes the effort of many to achieve and succeed," Tritt said.

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