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Housing for students, seniors, vets coming

By [Michael Stone](#)

Special to the Guardian

Published: Wednesday, February 11, 2015 at 2:18 p.m.

Three more apartment projects are in the planning stages between the University of Florida and downtown Gainesville — two geared toward students and the other for seniors and veterans.

The Starr Apartments would encompass the lots at 1117, 1119, 1123 and 1125 SW Seventh Ave. The two single-story duplexes already there would be taken out, city records show.

Starr will be a four-story building, with 48 bedrooms among 12 units on the top three floors.

The owner, Melbourne-based KLM Holdings & Development, declined to comment but said it would make more information available later as the project moves forward.

Breaking from the student-centered mold, a five-story apartment building for seniors is planned for Southwest 13th Street near Archer Road.

Arbours at Tumblin Creek — named after the creek at the back side of the property — will have 96 bedrooms among 64 units, according to city records.

The roughly 3-acre site at 1309 SW 13th St. is next to the Indian Cultural and Education Center. It stands out by being a heavily wooded area along the mostly developed stretch of road. A vacant white house, mostly hidden by plants and trees, will be removed, documents show.

The minimum age for tenants will be 55, said Steve Lowitz, a principal with the building's developer, owner and operator, Birmingham-based Arbour Valley Development.

"Elderly often is thought of as 62 or older," he said. "The reason we want to go after a little bit younger population is to address the veteran community."

Arbour Valley has been working with the Gainesville Housing Authority to prepare accommodations for veterans and handicapped veterans, Lowitz said.

"I know what's going on (in Gainesville) with the veteran community and the senior community — nothing has been built in years," he said. "And unfortunately, (Tumblin Creek will be) only 64 apartments. I wish it were double that because the demand is unquestionably there."

The primary reason for the site's selection, Lowitz said, is because of its proximity to UF Health and the VA Medical Center, as well as bus-route access.

Arbour Valley is shooting for a June 30 groundbreaking, with construction taking between nine to 12 months after that, he said.

Starr and Tumblin Creek have received approval from Gainesville's Development Review Board, but city planners still need to give the final go-ahead before construction begins, Senior Planner Andrew Persons said.

Redevelopment of the Sun Key Apartments is in more of a preliminary stage. The complex of older buildings on Southwest 16th Avenue near the 13th Street intersection is expected to be torn down for student housing called The Retreat, Persons said.

"They are planning on basically completely demolishing all the existing buildings. They're going to be rebuilt with a student apartment complex with a lot of individual buildings across the site," he said, adding that amenities will include a pool and clubhouse.

Further information on The Retreat wasn't immediately available.

The developments will add to the several new multi-unit buildings already dotting the residential landscape east of 13th Street.

"Over the last few years, we've seen that trend, especially between downtown and the university — that we're getting more and more redevelopment occurring in those areas," Gainesville City Planning Manager Ralph Hilliard said.

"It's a good location. It's good transit service and sidewalks. You can easily get to the university. You can easily get to (UF Health), which is a major employer in the community."

Still abundant in the area are older single-story houses, including many rentals for UF students, but it's typically more "financially feasible" to stack units upward to create a "higher density" of tenants, Hilliard said.

"I just don't see any (developers) coming to those areas — as the price values are probably going up — who would want to build a single-family structure," he said.

Michael Stone is a Gainesville Sun correspondent.

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