

\$1.2 million Parkview renovation well underway

by Frank Crisler

The \$1.2 million reconstruction of the Parkview Apartments complex will shift into high gear this summer, with a targeted completion date of Christmas.

The "demolition and major remodeling" apartment project began at the end of January, according to Randy Hanson, president of Mills Construction, the Brookings-based contractor which is undertaking the project.

The work began months ago on the interiors of the five buildings being rebuilt, and it has already come a long way. Several buildings have been all but gutted, with walls moved and the layout changed.

For instance, Building Number Two, the largest of the five buildings undergoing major renovation, will go from housing nine one-bedroom and three efficiency apartments to housing just seven—six two-bedroom units and one three-bedroom.

That process—reducing the number but enlarging the space—is typical of the project.

Buildings One and Five will go from four one-bedroom apartments to three two bedroom places.

Building Four continues to have two one-bedroom and two two-bedroom apartments, but they won't

look anything like what they replaced, with updated kitchens and bathrooms, along with new lighting and carpeting.

And Building Three will be converted to storage, with the possibility of being switched back, adding two apartments if the demand rises.

"I think the best feature for those interested in renting an apartment is the mix we can offer," Mary Jo Minor, president of Mills Property Management, said. "We have one-bedrooms, two-bedrooms, even a three-bedroom apartment in the mix. It's a lot more to offer than we used to have."

Parkview Apartments got its start in late October of 1964, when a 50-year, \$188,500 loan from the Farmers' Home Administration was approved for a 20-unit apartment complex.

The housing was restricted to those 62 and over who met income guidelines.

According to the Oct. 29, 1964 issue of *The Arlington Sun*, "Each apartment is a complete home in itself, where the occupants will live independently and with dignity."

It turned out to be exactly what was needed at the time, with the apartments soon filling up and the



Property supervisor Stacy Collins shows the newly-remodeled kitchen of one of the new apartments now available.

complex expanded over the years, eventually growing to 42 units. Indeed, there was a waiting list for decades.

But as the times changed, the demand started to fall off. With better health and home care, fewer residents wanted to leave their homes, and the apartments began to go empty.

As time went on, the buildings started to need more maintenance, and became a greater challenge to manage for the local board. They

called in Mills Property Management about five years ago, and also loosened the restrictions, opening the apartments to those under 62.

Still, the apartments were not filled, which left local board president Otto Piehl and his successor, Tom Aylward, and the other members of the board searching for a solution.

"We were just trying to upgrade

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the property, and didn't quite know how to go about it," Aylward said. "But it had been there since 1964, and it was obvious it needed the help."

That opinion was seconded by Minor.

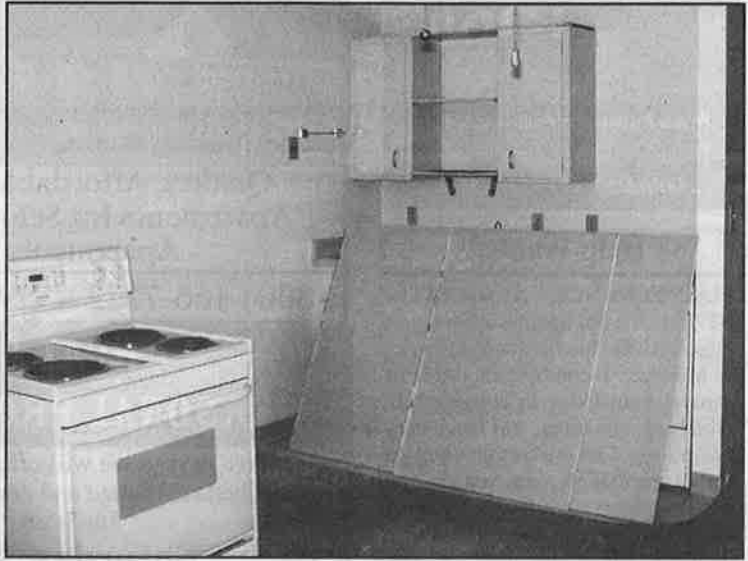
"There were vacant apartments here that were un-leasable," Minor said. "The carpet, the cupboards—the apartments just weren't ready to be shown, and there were no funds to update them.

"Of course, there were other apartments in better shape, and what happened was that we would take the appliances from the empty apartments to replace those in occupied apartments. Pretty soon, there were apartments with no carpet, no refrigerator, no stove—and no money to replace it all."

The answer came by thinking big, and the major renovation project was born in 2008. The eight members of the local non-profit board contracted with Mills Construction to design and oversee the job, with the understanding that the Brookings' business would hire as many local subcontractors as possible.

Of course, constructing the buildings is only half the job: paying for them is another. And as always, the chief challenge was tracking down the necessary federal loans that made the apartments possible in 1964, and are still needed today.

It is now called HOME funding—a federal affordable-housing program through the Department of Housing and Urban Development—and came through with a \$788,240 loan to fund most of the project. An additional \$436,500 was found in other loans, and the local board continues to



The "before" shot of the Parkview Apartments kitchen.

pursue grant funds.

A little more than a year later, with the money finally secured through the efforts of consultant Brenda Thompson, work began in earnest, with subcontractors including Brandriet Drywall, Spilde Electric, Jacobson Construction and Steffensen Construction.

Workers began with interiors in late January and early February, and are now at work on the exteriors, including new steel roofs to replace the old asphalt shingles.

The project is estimated to be finished by Christmas, reducing the 42 apartments to 33. Two of them have already been completed, and are soon to be rented out. Demand has picked up considerably, Aylward said, as word of the project gets out.

As for maintenance, there shouldn't be much concern, as maintenance of the larger, updated apartments is now figured into the budget.

"The program requires that we have enough funds in reserve to keep up the property over the long-term," Minor

said. "We used to budget for one year at a time, now we have to look 10 years ahead, even 20 years ahead."

Monthly construction meetings are held to keep all the principal players updated, and will continue until the project is completed.

As they are completed, the renovated apartments will be available to be rented by those who meet the income guidelines: \$36,500 for one person, \$40,450 for two, \$44,850 for three, \$49,200 for four, and on up.

Stacy Collins is the go-to person on the local level for Parkview rentals, as the property supervisor of Mills Property Management.

But none of it would have happened if not for the leadership of Aylward and the local board.

"We really need to give a lot of credit to the local volunteers," Minor concluded. "They worked very hard over the last two years to get this done. There was a lot of paperwork to get through.

"This is a huge victory for them."