

Paying it forward, 65 years later: New affordable housing project in Bethlehem clears hurdle

• Amy Unger | April 24, 2025



BETHLEHEM, Pa. - An affordable housing project in south Bethlehem has cleared a major hurdle.

Earlier this month, Lehigh Valley Industrial Park (LVIP) completed its purchase of a four-acre piece of land near one of its industrial parks, LVIP VII.

According to county property records, the sale was finalized almost one year to the day after LVIP first announced what it intended to do with the property.

Now, property records show LVIP paid nearly \$4.5 million for two adjacent parcels at 1400-1416 E. Fourth St. One of the properties is the former home of Szilagyi Fuel.

Since announcing the project, LVIP has completed environmental assessment studies and cleared the site, including removing four 20,000-gallon fuel oil tanks from the Szilagyi property, said Kerry Wrobel, president and CEO of LVIP.

Philadelphia-based developer Penrose will spearhead construction on the site. Plans call for two four-story buildings with market-rate and affordable one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartment units, as well as 15 townhomes.

LVIP will officially pass the baton to Penrose once the latter secures financing and low-income housing tax credits.

Wrobel said LVIP had been considering possibilities for the land for years. At the same time, it had looked into incorporating residential development on a tract of land within the 1,000-acre LVIP VII. "It turned out to not be a good fit, but our interest was really piqued and this was a way we could give back to the community, by addressing such a strong need for affordable housing units in the region," said Wrobel.

According to Wrobel, the land donation is a full-circle moment for his company: "Our founding fathers cobbled together the dollars to buy the land for the first industrial park. The city of Bethlehem actually built City Line Avenue, which was the first road in LVIP I, and agreed not to be paid until the land was sold. This is sort of paying it forward from 65 years ago."

With financing still up in the air, Wrobel said it's too soon to know when construction will begin. He expects the permitting and land approval process to take about a year.