

# Norwalk Redevelopment Agency approves design for final Washington Village phase

By [Kelly Kultys](#) 9:30 pm EDT, Tuesday, August 13, 2019



Photo: Erik Trautmann / Hearst Connecticut Media

## Image 1 of 15

Construction workers continue the build of Phase Two of the Washington Village Redevelopment Project on Tuesday in Norwalk. The Norwalk Redevelopment Agency is reviewing plans for Washington Village Phase 3,

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NORWALK — With groundbreaking scheduled for this fall, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency approved updated recommendations for phase three of the Washington Village replacement project.

“Washington Village phase three is hustling along to get them into construction,” Susan Sweitzer, senior project manager for development for the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency. “They have finished their design and will be moving into their final permitting phase in September.”

The plans for buildings D and E, the last two to be built, were sent out for peer review, which was done by the Harriman Group.

“Our job is to compare the proposal to the design guidelines,” Steve Cecil, principal at Harriman, said to the agency’s commissioners on Tuesday.

The review found that the design was in compliance with the guidelines that are laid out in the South Norwalk Redevelopment Plan, [according to a letter from the group](#).

“We find that the design as indicated in the updated drawings is consistent with the applicable design guidelines, subject to the specific recommendations noted below,” the letter read.

Cecil said he’s seen improvements in the plans take place over the last few years.

“The site design really has advanced a lot and we think really positively to where the site was in 2017,” he said.

The plans have been updated slightly throughout the process as developer Trinity Washington Village Limited Partnership has decided to go with a new architect, DHK Architects, for the final phase.

[Phase three](#) is the largest portion of the project, with 108 total apartments split between two buildings. Fifty-four of the units will be public housing replacement units. The buildings contain a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, ranging in space of about 650 to 680 square feet for a one-bedroom to just over 1,300 square feet for a three-bedroom.

Phase one, which is fully occupied according to officials, consisted of 80 apartments split between two buildings, of which 40 are public housing replacement units. Phase two, which is under construction, calls for 85 apartments, of which 42 will be replacement public housing units.

In total, the site will contain 273 apartments, of which 136 will be replacement public housing units for the former Washington Village.

Cecil said that his group recommended very minor tweaks to the submitted plans, including getting rid of some of the grates in the stairways and making the corner bay units more appealing.

"They are emphasizing more the corners with the bays," he said. "They picked up on that and made this corner special. They really put a lot of attention in these bays. "

Cecil said that he appreciated the improvements that have been made to the design and layout of the site, including the courtyard and outdoor green space.

"This has really turned from being leftover space with some greenery to a real feature," he said.

While it wasn't included as an official recommendation, the Harriman Group did note that they would like to see a reduction in parking on the site.

"We noted the large proportion of the site that is devoted to surface parking, despite the project's provision of parking below the buildings as a practical response to flood plain conditions," the letter read.

The group noted that the determination to have 130 on-site, open spots along with 82 covered spaces underneath the building came from a "zoning calculation" that met the city code. However, Harriman Group said that similar projects that are considered "transit-oriented development" have had less parking and worked out due to other available transit options.

"If a revision in the requirements could be accomplished and supported by the developers, then some of the asphalt paving could be converted to planted open space, which would be beneficial to the district and help attain a more sustainable development pattern," the letter read.

Some parties involved in financing the project, however, did not support the reduced parking, according to Sweitzer.

"The experience of the other projects would inform the recommendation that the parking be reduced," she said. "They did not want to bring this conversation to the table at this time."

Still, she and Cecil said they were able to add some tree cover to the parking area to increase the green spaces.

[The Washington Village replacement project](#) broke ground in 2016 and aimed to provide residents with larger and improved living spaces, while preserving affordable units, bringing market-rate housing to the neighborhood and attempting to address flood-related issues. The project is funded in part by a \$30 million Choice Neighborhoods grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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