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Aging buildings, populations stir building boom for seniors



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At the moment, there are three senior living projects, valued at a total of \$104 million, underway in Schenectady County alone.

A fourth, adding another \$36 million, will get underway by the end of the year and several others are in the pipeline throughout the region.

As the population ages so too are the buildings many seniors call home. At the same time, seniors living longer, healthier lives are demanding more residential options designed to meet a wider range of needs. And area contractors are reaping the benefits.

"Are we seeing more senior projects? I would say that is definitely the case," said John deForest, executive vice president and principal of Albany-based BBL Medical Facilities, a separate unit of BBL devoted entirely to the health care sector. "There are probably half a dozen, including adult housing, assisted living and nursing, that are being bid on now for starts in 2013."

BBL, which has done more than \$350 million in medical projects in the past decade, is likely to face competition for the new projects from such firms as Albany-based AOW Associates. AOW has done more than 700 health care-related projects since 2000 and is now working with Scotia-based Baptist Health Systems on Judson Meadows, a \$14 million assisted living community in Glenville; and BCI Construction Inc., the Albany company building the new, \$50 million Glendale Nursing Home for Schenectady County.

At the moment, BBL is overseeing construction of Capital Living & Rehabilitation Center's \$50 million nursing home on Hamburg Street in Schenectady. The 240-bed home will replace two aging facilities, The Dutch Manor on Hamburg Street and The Avenue on Altamont Avenue.

deForest said the current activity is round two. The late 1990s saw a number of projects with the emergence of assisted living as an alternative to nursing homes, and the growing popularity of independent living communities. There was then a quiet period.

"Now there has been a resurgence in the past year or two, in terms of the requests for proposals we're getting," he said. "We're seeing it in Florida, we're seeing it in New York."

This time, developers are responding to both the rapidly aging population—8,000 baby boomers turn 65 every day—and the need to upgrade or replace existing nursing homes. Old, institutional buildings—many constructed during the last nursing home building boom of 25-to-30 years ago—are giving way to more home-like, more energy-efficient models.

"It seems like all of a sudden, people are either remodeling or building new nursing homes," said Richard Oliver, president of AOW Associates.

Not all projects will be large. Jo Ann Costantino, CEO of The Eddy, the elder care arm of **St. Peter's Health Partners**, said projects under consideration there would expand existing capacity, add services such as aquatic centers, or renovate older buildings to create a more home-like environments. She said all seven Eddy nursing homes are going over their master plans to determine what projects are necessary.

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