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## Visit A Tour De Force

By JOHN W. ALLMAN [jallman@tampatrib.com](mailto:jallman@tampatrib.com)

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**ORLANDO** - After seven years spent looking at drab white walls, deteriorating facades and cramped alleyways snaking through Central Park Village, it didn't take long Thursday for Mary Williams to want to move.

Maybe it was the lobby, which resembles an art deco museum, or the spacious indoor theater where residents can play personal DVDs or watch free cable television.



Tampa Housing Authority officials, along with members of Central Park Village's council, visited Orlando's City View, an eight-story residential facility just off Interstate 4, to get an impression of Bank of America's plans for Central Park.

**KELVIN MA / Tribune**

redevelopment project that might replace one of its oldest and largest public housing properties.

Orlando's \$36 million, eight-story facility sits just off Interstate 4, in a historic black neighborhood called Parramore. Local markets and landmark buildings, some from the 1800s, ring the structure.

The tour came three days after Bank of America unveiled an ambitious proposal for replacing Central Park with a mixed-use community of affordable apartments and high-rise luxury homes for sale just outside Ybor City.

At the unveiling, reaction was mixed, as Williams and board chairwoman Hazel Harvey expressed concern about the height of the proposed buildings, which would be between seven and nine floors.

"I've got to process this," Harvey said Thursday, visibly impressed. "It's gorgeous. It is very nice."

Board members Rubin Padgett and Gerald White said they worried about Tampa's housing population acclimating to such an environment.

Perhaps it was the secure entrances and well-lit walkways from an adjacent, attached parking garage.

Maybe it was the model apartment with a garden bathtub, walk-in closets, computer alcove and breakfast bar.

"Seeing is believing," said Williams, 63, Central Park's longtime resident council president, wide-eyed and gleeful as a child, standing near a rooftop pool overlooking downtown Orlando.

It was the reaction Tampa Housing Authority officials wanted when they toured City View, offering a first-hand look at the type of urban

"It's been said black folks can't afford anything like this. Is it truly affordable?" White asked. "Can we really place poor folks in a facility like this?"

"We're doing it here," responded John Sabatier, Bank of America's vice president of community development banking.

City View is similar in several ways to the Central Park proposal, only it encompasses one building instead of five. Also, the land already was designated as a special tax district, which provides needed dollars for infrastructure improvements.

Tampa's own Community Redevelopment Area proposal must be approved by the city council and county commission. It goes before the county June 7 for a vote. The county rejected a previous CRA request for Central Park Village in 2004.

City View in Orlando was developed by Bank of America's Community Development Corp., which worked with the Orlando Neighborhood Improvement Corp., to renovate the 3.95-acre site and create 266 rental apartments starting at \$487 monthly up to \$1,535, plus 25,000 square feet of retail space.

Of those, 108 apartments are set aside for individuals making less than 60 percent of the average median income.

In Tampa, Bank of America is partnering with other private investors on its proposed 28-acre development, which would include up to 800 mixed-income apartments plus 60,000 square feet of office space and 35,000 square feet of retail.

Of those, up to 667 would be considered affordable, said Leroy Moore, housing senior vice president and chief development officer.

A portion of the land would be sold to private developers to build condominiums and retirement housing.

The housing authority also would have the option to build a new administration building, and Bank of America is offering to refurbish a historic church, turning it into a black history museum.

**Reporter John W. Allman can be reached at (813) 259-7915.**