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Sunday: Sunny and breezy. High 42. Sunday night: a few clouds. Low 29. Monday: partly sunny. High 40. Details: Page 36.

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\$3.75 (INCL. OF GREATER NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA)

THREE DOLLARS

Five of 33 units will go to unrelated tenants in North Hempstead.

By CAROLE PAQUETTE

THE idea of the elderly sharing an apartment with someone they have never met is not new. It is especially popular in the South and in cities, where older people with limited incomes are looking to share costs and companionship, say real estate professionals who specialize in working with the elderly.

But on Long Island, they say, in spite of a need for affordable housing for those 55 and over, the concept has not taken off, with the exception of some assisted-living facilities. While builders remain skeptical about whether shared housing works, citing concerns about compatibility, at least one group is introducing it in central Nassau: a new 33-unit affordable rental building for people 55 and over in the town of North Hempstead, called Apex Senior Citizen Housing, will contain the units to be shared by two unrelated tenants.

"Sharing an apartment is not just for the economic aspect, but it allows seniors to be independent longer, by replacing loneliness with physical and emotional support," said Howard B. Kimmel, the founder and president of the nonprofit Anna and Philip Kimmel Foundation, which is building the \$7.5 million project.

The issue of compatibility will be handled by an on-site superintendent and regular visits by religious and social service groups, he said.

"The concept of shared living is not a new idea, but it is new for the rental community and Long Island," said Fern Karhu, manager of Prudential Long Island Realty's Sposiss office. Ms. Karhu and Bart Catalella, a senior regional manager for Prudential, are hosts of a radio program, "Living on the Move," which focuses on living options on Long Island for people over 55. The program is heard on Mondays at 7 p.m. on WTLN-AM (540).

About 60 percent of the increasing number of seniors we see are alone," Ms. Karhu said. "They don't have the equity to buy affordable housing and they go to rentals. They would benefit from shared housing, but that will always be a very limited market. People want to remain independent." She noted, too, that every new development, especially rentals, provoked fears about property values.

According to the United States census, the number of people over 65 in the United States is projected to increase from 37 million in 1990 to 53 million in 2020. Of that population, 17 million are aged 65 and over, and 42 percent were over 75, a 25 percent increase since 1990.

There are 182 legal rental buildings in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, according to a recent study by the Long Island Housing Partnership, a nonprofit group based in Hempstead. Most of the renters spend up to 50 percent of their total income for rent, which is beyond the 35 percent recommended by the federal government, said Jim Morigo, the president. "The median rental on Long Island is now \$1,200 for a one-bedroom apartment," he said.

"The concept of shared living is a good one, and Apex is the kind of thing we need," he said, noting that while there were some small groups with home-share programs, there were not many.

While two low-income rental projects for those 55 and over are currently being built by the Garden City-based Benjamin Development Company, there are no shared units, said Russell Mohr, director of sales and leasing. "We aren't familiar enough with the concept to consider it now," he said.

In Suffolk, Benjamin is converting the 170,000-square-foot, seven-story administration building of the former Central Islip Psychiatric Center into 153 affordable rental units. Financing for the \$26 million project, called Court Plaza, is through the state, with \$15 million through the town's Industrial Development Agency and a \$6 million tax credit equity.

Applicants must have an income below 60 percent of the area's median, which is \$56,400 for a family of two and \$83,000 for a family of four. Rents, which include heat, range from \$900 for a one-bedroom apartment to \$1,050 for two bedrooms. All units can be adapted for the handicapped and Benjamin expects tenants to take occupancy in April.

Further east, Benjamin is building Medford Landing, four buildings with a total of 112 affordable rental units. Rents range from \$815 for a one-bedroom unit to \$1,095 for two.

The New York City-based Sterling Glen Communities, which has built five rental apartment buildings for older people on Long Island, has not included any shared units, said Michael Daly, the president. "We don't find a desire for shared units in independent living on Long Island except maybe with sisters or a relative," he said. "We could do it if the market tells us."

UT, he said, Sterling Glen's parent company, Forest City Enterprises, a publicly traded real estate company based in Cleveland, has built 60 shared-living units for people 55 and over in a 330-unit complex in Florida. The shared units have two bedrooms on either side of a common living room and kitchen. "It's an economy-driven issue and there people share," Mr. Daly said. "But it comes with unusual rules to prevent conflicts, such as not permitting televisions in the common area."

"One of the challenges is to get people to know each other and to like each other," he said. "It's like going to college for the first year."

Apex is the first building being constructed by the Kimmel Foundation, which was formed in 1995 to build housing for those with low income and special needs, according to Mr. Kimmel, who was the administrator of the State Division of Housing Community Renewal for 40 years. The foundation is named after his parents. Those eligible to live at Apex must have an income below 49 percent of the area's median.

There are 27 600-square-foot, one-bedroom units ranging in rent from \$565 to \$710 a month, not including utilities.

In addition, the four-story building has five 950-square-foot two-bedroom units that would be shared by two unrelated people paying \$410 each. These units have two bedrooms, each with a bathroom and a door that locks. There is a common area, including a dining room, living room and kitchen with two refrigerators. A sixth, two-bedroom unit will be occupied by the building superintendent. All units are adaptable for the handicapped.

The Family and Children's Association, a social service agency, and the Rev. John Mulryan, the foundation's executive director and the rector at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Great Neck are selecting the tenants, and screening and matching those for the shared units. They will have offices on the premises to be available to solve problems.

Financing for the project has come from state and federal funds, including \$1.1 million through the state Housing Trust Fund and \$5 million in low-income housing tax credits dispensed through Key Bank and Verizon. Occupancy is expected by February.

Apex is being built in New Cassel, a one-mile-square community of 13,000 people within the town of North Hempstead. It is in an area off Union Avenue that has been designated by the town for urban renewal.

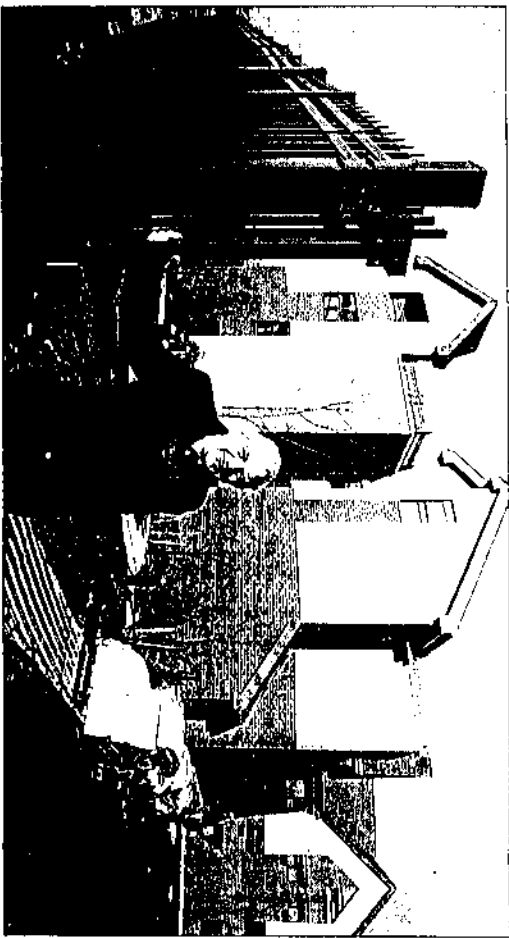
Across Union Avenue is the incorporated village of Westbury, where "there was initial skepticism over the project," Mr. Kimmel said. After two years of meetings with the community, "it was finally accepted as a good thing," he said.

Mamie Sweet, president of the Central Westbury Civic Association, which represents 200 homeowners, said: "At first there were concerns about the need for the place, our property values, how it would be built, and the selection and safety of the tenants. Now we congratulate Mr. Kimmel and the foundation to have the foresight to see the needs of the seniors."

The association, Mr. Kimmel said, "held us up to high standards" and several architectural aspects were changed to satisfy it. These included placing a seven-foot-high wrought-iron fence around the property for security, according to the building's designer, Lloyd Goldfarb, a Great Neck architect.

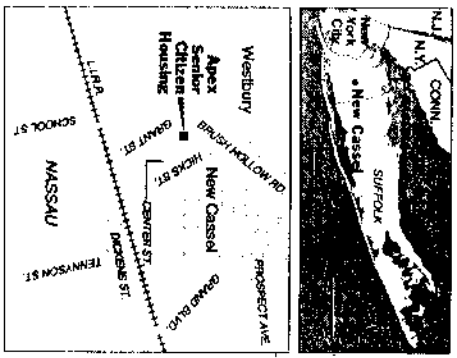
The town has given \$450,000 toward the project, and will probably give \$50,000 more, from its annual allotment of \$1.5 million in federal money for urban renewal, said Neville Mullings, executive director of the Community Development Agency.

"We have supported the foundation because it is a significant contribution to the renewal project and for senior housing, which is desperately needed," he said.



From Superintendent, The New York Times

Howard B. Kimmel, president of the Anna and Philip Kimmel Foundation, outside the rental building for people 55 and over that the foundation is putting up in North Hempstead.



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