Family Sharing is here! Subscribe to Premium Access for $1

Advertisement
Lease now for 63 mos. 3.49% APR FOR UP TO 84 MOS.
Or receive $1,000 VISA Reward Card. CLICK HERE TO
2022 Jeep Compass TRAILHAWK 4x4 Manufacturer Certified Pre-Owned
Learn More

CENTRAL NY NEWS

Pioneer Homes residents get early chance to avoid noisy I-81 construction. How many will take it?

Updated Jun 15, 2022; 8:07 p.m. | Published Oct 15, 2020; 8:00 a.m.

Dedicated Tyler Court in Pioneer Homes for seven years and grew up there when she was younger. But she wants to get out before the I-81 demolition begins next fall. Ryann Phillips

By Ryann Phillips | Contributing Writer

On Tuesday, Mr. Marquis Dorthenzius grew up along Carl Admiral Street, the edge of downtown. He lived with his mother in Nelson Court, an area of Pioneer Homes three blocks from Interstate 81. Her mother's cousin lived next door.

Generations later, Dorthenzius and that cousin's granddaughter are living the same way. They share bedroom apartments a couple of stories over inside the public housing neighborhood.

Dorthenzius has already left Pioneer Homes once. She moved away when she was younger, then to North Syracuse for a while before returning in 2018, between the Tyler Court buildings.

"It's just like coming back home," Dorthenzius said. "We look out for one another, we just make sure that we're good."

Now Dorthenzius is moving again, this time to get an early start to avoid two massive construction projects that will disrupt the neighborhood over the next several years.

The elevated portion of I-81 near Pioneer Homes is coming down, starting in 2026. At the same time, there's a $1 billion renovation project underway for the East Adams neighborhood. At some point, everyone living in Pioneer Homes, one of the oldest public housing developments in the country, will move as the East Adams neighborhood is rebuilt.

These moves are temporary. Those who leave can come back, according to Bill Simmons, director of the public housing authority, home of the new apartments she expected to be ready in March 2021.

Advertisement
quality coverage
Guaranteed
Quote Online
PROGRESSIVE
Get a Quote

But they are starting the non-vacant process now, in large part to escape Pre-Holiday and Spring I-81 construction that's coming soon.

Rate of $1 billion Iconic East Adams Project Revitalization is expected to be demolished in 2026. Ryann Phillips

Late this summer, the housing authority announced it received $1 million in new housing vouchers from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to help nearly 170 families living near I-81 move out early.

So far, 50 households plan to use vouchers to move. Another 57 want to stay in an NHA home that's further away from I-81, a decision that allows them to move but remain in public housing.

"We're trying to, give families as much time as possible to find an apartment, as hard as it is to be in Onondaga County," Simmons said. "But you don't get anything accomplished without deadlines."

There is a sense of urgency. These new vouchers must be distributed by the end of the year, otherwise HUD will reclaim the money, Simmons said.

Advertisement
BUSH WANT MORE LOWER WITH INSURANCE THAN PROGRESSIVE DOES?
PROGRESSIVE
Get a quote

At the same time, there's a sense of loss for residents like Dorthenzius, whose current neighborhood is near a small city park, an elementary school, three hospitals and the region's main bus hub.

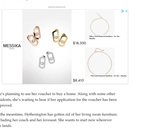
Some residents would have to change their daily routines that they've been following for years. Place if moves away from family and friends, work and school. On a recent Sunday evening, a few kids played outside in the Tyler Court parking lot while their parents sat on the front steps. A woman grabbed groceries from a neighborhood market across the cobblestone to take them down.

Once residents choose to pack up, they leave this community behind.

"It's just a tough thing to get people to move," Simmons said. "A variety of reasons why people will decide to stay in place."

Dorthenzius, who helps others through this neighborhood transition, joked that she might need counseling because of all the stress.

She said she will miss her home and her neighborhood, but she wants to leave before the I-81 demolition begins, partly because of her allergies.



Pioneer Homes is one of the oldest public housing projects in the country. Some residents will be leaving a lifelong neighborhood. Ryann Phillips

Once that decision is made, then there's the money to think about. Those who move would have to find a new apartment with the voucher and pay a security deposit.

In a letter sent to residents, NHA said that they will ensure that they can get money to help them move their belongings in place, and the authority is working to get the money through other partners. As of now, Simmons said the NHA doesn't have money on hand to help.

It's not easy to pack up and go at a time when the typical rent in Onondaga County is more than $1,100 a month.

The Section 8 voucher will cover part of the rent. Typically, a family pays 30% of its monthly income towards rent, and the voucher covers the rest. But the rent must pass a safety inspection and cost a "reasonable" amount as determined by the federal housing system.

Advertisement
MESSIKA
$8,410
$8,660

The NHA said an agency representative would help each family find a home in the rental letter sent to them.

But it's a challenge to find quality affordable housing in Syracuse, the executive director of CNY Fair Housing, Sally Santangelo, said. Some properties cost more than what the voucher will cover, she said.

"Don't definitely challenge," Santangelo said. "Rental prices have been increasing significantly and at a much faster pace than the HUD adjustments to fair market rent."

Plus, tenants could face discrimination because they have a housing voucher, Santangelo said. Landlords do discriminate against a tenant with Section 8vouchers, she said. Or they can lowball the tenant, knowing that the voucher will cover right above the amount that the voucher will cover, Santangelo said.

Dorthenzius knows these challenges well. She works for Blueprint 15, a nonprofit that teaches residents ways to improve their credit scores and helps them understand their options if they move.

The residents also can use their vouchers toward mortgage payments to buy their own home. Dorthenzius facilitates a homeownership class about the program. Earlier this year, she helped Carl Admiral Street resident reach her dream of owning a home, one of two who've taken that option so far.

Now, it's Dorthenzius's turn.

Advertisement
MESSIKA
$8,300
$8,410

She's planning to use her voucher to buy a home. Along with some other residents, she's waiting to hear if her application for the voucher has been approved.

In the meantime, Dorthenzius has gotten rid of her living room furniture, including her couch and her loveseat. She wants to start over wherever she lands.

"Finally leaving this place, I don't know how I'm going to feel," Dorthenzius said. "I'll probably cry."

Stories by Ryann Phillips

Upstate movers two statues honoring pioneer female doctors

Attention TikTok users: Syracuse University launches a new center for content creators

Onondaga nonprofit expands effort to feed children in honor of Eric Maxwell

Ryann Phillips
Contributing Writer
rphillips@syracuse.com

If you purchase a product or register for an account through a link on our site, we may receive compensation. By using this site, you consent to our User Agreement and agree that your clicks, messages, purchases, subscriptions, banking information and Social Security number may be provided to third-party partners in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

Around the Web

Americans Over 50 Are Ditching Flooring Kits for This New Device
Shop Now
Read More
Brought to you by
adsystem.com

What should a new 2 pole breaker cost installed in your home?
Get Quotes
Zinno
Zinno nine summer gutter placement deals on LeafFilter
15% off installation and replacement
LeafFilter Inc. | Sponsored
Learn More
Car trouble? AAA is here to take charge
Are you missing out on GEAR?
AAA
Sign Up
Sponsored
This may be of interest to you!
sponsored.taboola.com

Cognitive Decline Has Been Linked To a Common Habit. Do You Do It?
Healthy Living Trends

Figure skater Oksana Baiul's century-old Dressupat...
Antiques and Collectibles

$28 Shower Head Is Becoming 2023's Most Viral Beauty Hack
Amazon Finds | Sponsored

U.S. Cardiologist Warns Aging Seniors About Blueberries for Breakfast
Blueberry | Sponsored
Learn more

Strong winds knock down scaffolding at Syracuse construction site
syracuse.com

Syracuse mayoral debate at Syracuse University
syracuse.com

The neck and shoulder healing pad is taking New...
Healthy Living Trends
Shop Now

People in Syracuse are Loving Martha Stewart's Meal Kit
Martha Stewart Living | Ad

Don't pipeline anymore!
Contact us today for a free quote!
Contact us!
Free Quote
sponsored.taboola.com

Click here for more information
sponsored.taboola.com | Sponsored

Famous singer dumps wagon but transformation is the reaction: "You look wonderful..."
syracuse.com

After construction shutdown, a downtown Syracuse pub reopens at just the right time
syracuse.com