

[Print Article](#)[Print This Story](#)

Encore housing project dealt another setback

By [CHRISTIAN M. WADE](#) | The Tampa Tribune

Backers of a public-private affordable housing project have been dealt another blow after learning they have been turned down, once again, for a share of Florida's affordable housing credits.

The Encore project is a venture to redevelop the former Central Park Village public housing complex off Nebraska Avenue, between downtown and Ybor City.

Officials from the Tampa Housing Authority and Bank of America, co-developers of the project, had applied for more than \$20 million in tax credits to put toward construction of Ella and Tempo, two of several massive housing complexes envisioned for the site.

But the stalled project, one of hundreds seeking state funding, didn't make the cut in the Florida Housing Finance Corporation's federal tax credit lottery for the third year in a row.

"It's another setback," said Roxanne Amoroso, vice president for Bank of America's Community Development Corporation, told the Tampa city council Thursday.

Jerome Ryan, president and CEO of the Tampa Housing Authority, said despite the setbacks the project's backers are more determined than ever to see it completed.

"I'm still optimistic," he said. "There's no doubt in my mind we'll get this project done."

To qualify for the tax credits, the project must score well in a complicated application process to win number in the housing agency's lottery. The tax credits can be sold to corporations to use as write-offs and the money used to cover construction costs.

"It's frustrating when you submit a perfect application three times," Amoroso said. "We are heartbroken. Bottom line, this means we're going to have to shift some plans."

Backers also have applied to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for \$28 million in stimulus dollars. They want the state to contribute \$6 million in funding, and several weeks ago met with Gov. Charlie Crist to seek his support for state funding.

The Ella and the Tempo were expected to be built simultaneously to help replenish the affordable housing lost when Central Park Village closed and residents had to move.

Two years later, the project which was delayed by a court ruling has yet to break ground. And it still lacks the money needed to cover infrastructure and other costs.

The former housing property had about 1,300 residents in about 380 apartments all of whom were relocated by the authority, either to other public housing or federally subsidized Section 8 homes.

Encore, and its buildings, streets and other amenities, are named after iconic recording legends and

musical terminology, a nod to the area's rich history of showcasing such greats as James Brown, Ray Charles and others during segregation.

Besides Ella and Tempo, eight more buildings — including a grocery store, hotel and condominiums — have been proposed. Most would be built by private developers.

Officials also are refurbishing Perry Harvey Sr. Park and restoring a neighborhood church to serve as a black history museum.

Encore's development is just one piece of the Central Park Community Redevelopment Area, a 143-acre revitalization project from Interstate 275 to Nuccio Parkway between Cass Street and the Interstate 4 interchange.

Tampa officials hope the creation of new streets, such as a proposed Ray Charles Boulevard, and an improved park will spur retail and commercial growth.