

RDA OKs loans for apartments, shopping center

by **ted griggs**

Advocate business writer

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority on Thursday approved a \$500,000 affordable housing loan for work at Elm Street Apartments, a 60-unit complex for seniors, and awarded a \$120,000 grant for improvements at the Colonial Park Shopping Center.

Colonial Park, on Airline Highway, will be anchored by a new Piggly Wiggly grocery store.

IDP Housing, the Elm Street Apartments developer, is spending a total of \$5.87 million to restore the complex, said Mark Goodson, the redevelopment authority's vice president.

"They're redoing the walls, the floors, all that stuff, plus they're putting in new energy-efficient windows and appliances, new lighting fixtures, new cabinets and fixtures in the bathrooms and kitchens, new flooring, new exterior stucco, a new roof," Goodson said. "It's really a total rehab of the property."

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development asked IDP to make the repairs to the complex on Elm Drive, Goodson said. The complex has awarded project-based Section 8 vouchers.

According to HUD, the vouchers pay the complex owner the difference between 30 percent of family income and the rent for the unit.

Meanwhile, the redevelopment authority awarded a business improvement grant to JHJ Inc. for the shopping center, Goodson said. The grant can be used to offset the cost of anything that improves curb appeal.

In the Colonial Shopping Center's case, that could mean helping build a new facade, new signs and new landscaping. Goodson said there is no timetable yet on when the Piggly Wiggly will open, though it will likely be next year.

The shopping center lies a little over two miles from the Scotlandville area, which has been described as Baton Rouge's largest "food desert," a community without a grocery store. An estimated 89 percent of Scotlandville's 18,000 residents live at

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