

## **Gateway Place Tour - March 15, 2011**

Margarine “Ms. Margie” Benham stopped in her tracks to give “thanks to the Lord” as she walked through her future living quarters at Gateway Place on Gallatin Street.

Ms. Benham, former treasurer of the Councill Courts Resident Council, has watched the project from inception, through controversy over its proposed existence and finally, into construction. As a former resident of Councill Courts, Ms. Benham will be a resident of the new mixed-use facility.

She was among a group which toured the maze of studded walls with SKT Architect Frank Nola. He painted verbal pictures of what the finished product will look like. Other housing residents on the tour included Barbara Lee, former president Councill Courts Resident Council and Dorothy Ford, who also serves on the Huntsville Housing Authority’s Board of Commissioners.

Neither Ms. Lee nor Ms. Ford plan to move into Gateway Place right away. But they were also happy about what they saw on the tour, Tuesday, March 15, 2011. The tour was held after the authority’s Redevelopment Advisory Board meeting. All three women serve on the board.

Ms. Benham said the location is perfect. “It’s close to the doctor, dentist, bank, the hospital,” she said. “It’s all right there and it’s such a blessing.”

Looking at the future, the residents could not help but reflect on the past.

After the tour, Ms. Lee thought of all the families who lived in Councill Courts. The vacated property was built in 1952, with an addition in 1965. The remaining property west of Gateway Place is up for sale.

“A lot of generations lived there,” Ms. Lee said.

Ms. Ford said seeing Gateway Place at this stage makes her mindful of the days the authority’s Executive Director Michael Lundy, went searching for the funding to make the development a reality.

“He kept on, he was determined to find the money to make it happen,” she said.

And on this day, the women were among the group of housing and city officials who saw the beginning of the final construction phase. A groundbreaking for the facility is tentatively set for late July.