



Commercial Real Estate

# Habitat for Humanity wall-raising ceremony planned for \$7.2M development

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### Story Highlights

- Habitat for Humanity Seminole-Apopka begins construction on a 19-home affordable housing project in Sanford.
- The \$7.2 million Legacy Square development will sell homes below appraised value to qualified buyers.
- The Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford area has a critical shortage of roughly 55,000 affordable units for extremely low-income households.

Habitat for Humanity Seminole-Apopka is hosting a ceremonial wall-raising celebration for its \$7.2 million public-private affordable housing project in Seminole County.

The initial wall goes up at 8 a.m. June 17 at the 19-home Legacy Square community in Sanford. The property is located on 3.23 acres southwest of West 25th Street and Grenada Avenue at 718 Sarita St. The event is open to the public.



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Apopka-based general contractor GSeay Inc. is building the first house. Seminole County-based construction firm Wharton-Smith, which made a \$1 million investment in the project in October, is sponsoring a house later in the build schedule.

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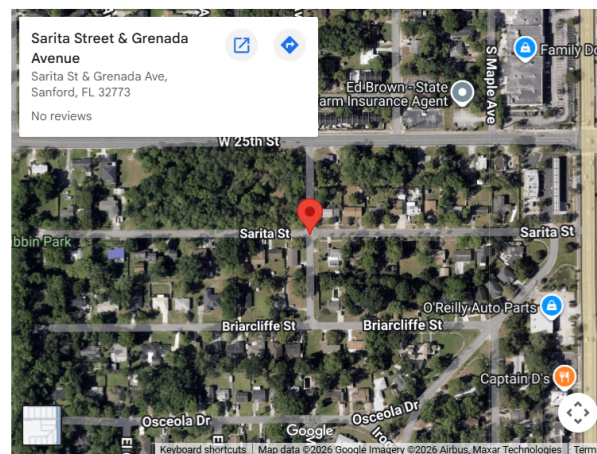
Habitat for Humanity purchased the land assemblage from the Edith Zeuli Trust for \$1 million in 2023. The group received government funding from Seminole County and additional donations from a group led by Publix, Big Nova Foundation, The Galloway Foundation and Guignard Company.

Each energy-efficient home will include a garage and be roughly 1,500 square feet in size. Habitat for Humanity plans to break ground on a new house every two weeks after the city approves the plat.

Habitat for Humanity CEO Penny Seater told *Orlando Business Journal* the goal is to finish the project by June 2027. Additional professional builders could be added in the months ahead.

"It's a great way for builders that are in the profession to give back and house a family," she said.

Vertical construction comes roughly eight months after KMS Construction of Central Florida was awarded the sitework package for lot clearing and installation of underground utilities, paved roads, retention ponds, fire hydrants and sidewalks.



Seater said in an email the development will create lasting homeownership opportunities for local families.

"This special morning will mark the beginning of something transformational," she said.

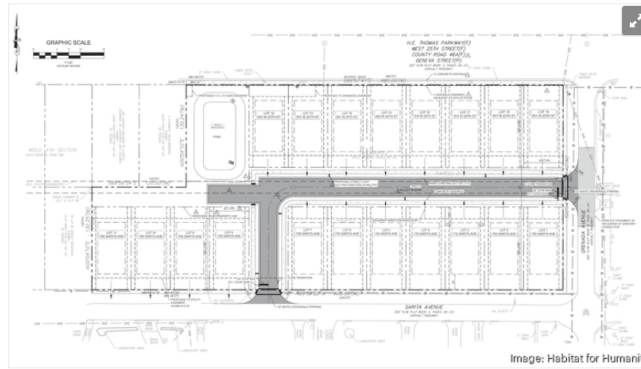
*OBJ* previously reported the development, then called Legacy Point, is estimated to contribute more than \$14 million in all to the region's gross domestic product. The GDP estimates the value of goods and services produced in each area or state, according to U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Wharton-Smith CEO Tim Smith previously said in a prepared statement the company's financial gift "represents more than just financial support, it mobilizes people, skills and resources to uplift lives for generations to come."

The project features 15 homes with rear-loading garages into a shared alleyway in the middle of the development. Four houses west of the property will have access directly along Sarita Street. Model home tours are expected to be open to the public later this year.

Seater said the houses will be sold to qualified homebuyers under their appraised value, and the project "stabilizes the community by taking that underutilized land

and turning it into a tax base for the county.”



Site plan for Legacy Square development in Sanford.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Homeless Services Network of Central Florida CEO Martha Are previously told *OBJ* in an email there is “a critical lack of affordable housing” in the Orlando, Kissimmee and Sanford market, despite efforts to build more developments in recent years.

Are said the region has a shortage of about 55,000 units for households considered extremely low income, “a category that applies to roughly 20% of the population,” due to quick growth of the area and increased rents following the pandemic-era eviction moratorium.

“When people are spending more than a third of their income on rent, they become increasingly vulnerable to homelessness,” Are said. “All it takes is one missed paycheck, one unexpected doctor’s bill or one car repair to leave them unable to pay rent and facing eviction.”

*OBJ* reported in September the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford area has just 19 affordable homes for every 100 extremely low-income renters, ranking it the sixth-hardest housing market in the nation for those most in need.

Marketing materials show the Greater Orlando region has experienced robust growth over the past decade, with its population increasing by more than 20% from 2010 to 2020.

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