

## Berkshire Place opening eyed for late fall

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PITTSFIELD -- Despite some harsh weather earlier this year, construction of a \$10 million retirement home is on track, officials say, and the new facility could open before the snow flies again.

Construction on the 54-bed Berkshire Place began early last November at the site of the former St. Teresa's Church on South Street.

"The crew that's been working on this project has been fantastic," said Berkshire Place Executive Director Edward Forfa.

He said he expects the construction to be completed around October and that the facility could open soon thereafter.

"Before the winter is the goal," Forfa said. "Probably November."

The new 44,000-square-foot facility at 290 South St. will enable Berkshire Place to expand the services that it already offers and provide them in a more modern setting, Forfa said.

The new complex has 10 more beds than Berkshire Place's current facility at 89 South St., which was built in 1888. It contains more private rooms for patients, and allows Berkshire Place to provide care for each patient by need instead of having those services congregated in one place.



*Work continues on Berkshire Place on South Street in Pittsfield. Allegrone, the company in charge of the project, aims to finish construction in October.*

"The goal is to improve on what we do now," he said.

Both the church and a former office building were razed on the 3.51-acre site so that the new retirement facility could be built (St. Teresa's was one of several Berkshire County churches that were closed by the Diocese of Springfield in 2008).

This is the second time a large construction project has occurred on this site since the mid-1950s.

St. Teresa's opened as a mission of St. Joseph's Church in September 1926, but services were originally held in a 19th century mansion known as the Redfield homestead, which that was built for Dr. Timothy Childs, the organizer of the Berkshire Medical College. The first floor was used as a chapel, while the second floor served as a rectory.

The house was torn down shortly after the church building itself opened in September 1954. Construction on the church building had begun in 1951 during the parish's 25th anniversary.

Leading the transformation of the property from a religious use to a health care facility is being overseen by Allegrone Construction Co. of Pittsfield, which has employed a number of local subcontractors.

"We've tried to use as many local folks as we could," Forfa said.

The exterior of the entire complex has been erected, and contractors are now concentrating on interior improvements.

"They've done the foundation, the roof, the exterior shell, poured the concrete floors and done internal framing," Forfa said.

Forfa said Berkshire Place isn't sure what it plans to do with its current building: "We may elect to sell it," he said.

But the organization is interested in using that structure to reconnect with its roots as a place that provides independent living for seniors, he added.

Berkshire Place originally began as a retirement home for women -- it was known as the Berkshire County Home for Aged Women until 1960. It didn't accept men for treatment until 2006, according to Forfa.

"I think our primary goal right now is repurposing this building for some kind of senior living downtown," he said.

"Everything is within walking distance."

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