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The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority approved \$1 million in gap financing for the redevelopment of two 1960s-era public housing projects in north Baton Rouge.

The board approved \$500,000 each for Autumn Place and Willow Creek at its monthly meeting Thursday.

Both projects, at \$10 million each, are being overseen by the East Baton Rouge Housing Authority and should be finished by late 2012.

Willow Creek will be 42 new condo-style units, each between 1,000 and 1,400 square feet, on the site of Hospital Plaza Apartments, a 95-unit apartment building that will be torn down behind Earl K. Long hospital.

That building has been empty for two years, according to the housing authority.

The second redevelopment will turn Colonial Courts on McClelland Drive into Autumn Place, another 44-unit development in a similar style to Willow Creek.

Both projects were stops on a bus tour of north Baton Rouge earlier this month, when housing authority Director Richard Murray said the efficiency and one-bedroom apartments would be replaced by the two-, three- and four-bedroom condo-style units better suited to families.

“These are much higher quality, more of a neighborhood-type of development,” RDA Vice President Mark Goodson said Thursday when the board approved the gap financing.

RDA President Walter Monsour said there have been indications that Piggly Wiggly is considering making improvements to its store based in part on those two nearby developments coming online.

That led to talk of initiatives to bring better grocery options to north Baton Rouge. Monsour said the RDA is doing a market analysis and has set up a meeting with Associated Grocers and Together Baton Rouge.

Nothing is set in stone, he said, but just getting the right people at the table is an achievement in its own right.

Board Chairman John Noland noted the difficulty of attracting fresh-food options to blighted and abandoned neighborhoods, saying “these things are awful hard to get back once you’ve lost one.”

In other business, the RDA announced member Cheri Ausberry will be leaving the board because the anticipated involvement of her employer, Capital One, in RDA projects will likely lead to too many recusals.

She will be replaced by Rodney Braxton, whose appointment was approved by the Metro Council on Wednesday.

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