

Helping hand for battlers at Balfours site

BELINDA WILLIS

THREE new buildings to house the state's most vulnerable in the city centre are on track to be finished by early next year, including a six-storey apartment block rising from the iconic former Balfours site.

The Tectvs architects-designed block in Mellor St would have 52 apartments, including two-bedroom homes for at-risk, single parent families, Common Ground Adelaide chief executive officer Maria Palumbo said.

"These families, who are already extremely vulnerable, are among those most highly impacted by changes to income benefits," she said. "By helping them into housing, where they are close to services and support, we are putting them in the best possible position to build a better future."

The not-for-profit housing group will open its other two new apartment blocks in nearby Crowther St and Shannon Pl next month.

The seven units in Crowther St will be for vulnerable people struggling to find rentals in the private market, including older people and those with disabilities.

Five new units in Shannon Place will provide stable homes for people on low incomes needing affordable accommodation.

Ms Palumbo said the Mellor St apartments would be ready early next year.

She said the projects were unique in the way they worked to provide safe, high-quality housing, along with on-ground support, to help the homeless change their plight for good.

"There is a real lack of safe, affordable accommodation for single-parent families in the city," Ms Palumbo said.

The group's nearby housing



BABY ON WAY: Sarah Reardon can't wait to move into Mellor St's new affordable housing. Picture: CAMPBELL BRODIE

in Light Square has a free dental and medical service on its ground floor, along with access to social workers.

Common Ground Adelaide was started in South Australia in 2006, based on a New York model, to provide high-quality inner city housing with strong support services.

It has attracted private sector support of \$4.5 million, including a \$3 million contribution from SA energy company Santos over five years.

Former international BP executive Colin Goodall is now the Common Ground Adelaide chairman, replacing former federal foreign minister Alexander Downer.

Mr Goodall said it was important the new properties were in central Adelaide.

"The properties are right where they should be: in the centre of town, near transport, services, work, training and university," he said.

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New home for mum-to-be

BELINDA WILLIS

WHEN Sarah Reardon moved into Common Ground's Franklin St studio apartments, it gave her a feeling of security and a wealth of much-needed support.

The resulting newfound confidence spurred her into completing a certificate in aged care and other courses, and she now has a permanent part-time job in Glenelg.

"Before that I was living in emergency accommodation through the Salvation Army — I came out of guardianship of the minister," Ms Reardon, 20, said. "Moving into Franklin St made me get back on track with my life."

"I found employment close to the city — before that I was down at Seaton and it was in the middle of nowhere."

Ms Reardon is now 16 weeks pregnant and will be

one of the first tenants to move into the new two-bedroom Mellor St apartments next year. She had planned to find a private rental property, but was unable to afford the move as she was ineligible for paid maternity leave, not having worked for long enough.

Now, she has picked the name Sebastian for her unborn boy and is excitedly looking forward to "a brand new baby and a brand new home".