

# The Hartford Courant.



THE OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY  
PUBLISHED NEWSPAPER IN AMERICA

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## EDITORIALS

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### New Course For Elderly Care

Assisted-living facilities, typically the province of the better-heeled elderly, are about to embrace lower-income seniors, part of Gov. John G. Rowland's forward-thinking drive to find alternatives to costly nursing homes.

Using state funding, the anti-poverty agency, Community Renewal Team Inc., broke ground last week on one of several pilot projects for this new concept — a six-story complex on Retreat Avenue in Hartford's South Green neighborhood. A 25-unit facility is being built in Glastonbury. Others are planned for New Britain, Middletown and Seymour.

Although this innovative twist in caring for the elderly will doubtlessly reduce the state's billion-dollar-plus annual nursing home bill, it is best to reserve judgment on whether the program will deliver on its promise of better care, independence, privacy and comfort.

State officials, most notably budget director Marc S. Ryan, say it will. Mr. Ryan argues that

too many seniors are needlessly entering nursing homes when with more appropriate assistance, they could be living independently.

The 100-unit building called "The Retreat" is due to open next fall. Plans call for dining and community rooms, a coffee shop, library and reading room, a beauty salon and barbershop and a convenience store. Services will include meals, housekeeping, fitness programs and transportation to shopping and medical appointments.

The project will be financed, in part, through the sale of Connecticut Housing Finance Authority bonds, a tax-credit investment by Sovereign Bank

and CHFA housing subsidies. The Department of Social Services would fund home care services.

CRT's successful track record sponsoring preschool, day care, housing, literacy and other programs bodes well for The Retreat. If the facility lives up to its expectations, it could change elderly care for those who need it most.

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