

Long wait officially over for Landis Square

Anthony V. Coppola, @AVCoppola Published 5:05 p.m. ET March 27, 2018 | Updated 8:23 a.m. ET March 28, 2018



VINELAND - It seemed almost fitting that Hans Lampart encountered a stubborn ribbon Tuesday at a ceremony to celebrate the opening of Landis Square Senior Apartments.

After all, it took Lampart 10 years to see his vision through for the affordable housing complex at the corner of East and Landis avenues.

So, in the grand scheme of things, what was 30 more seconds of frustration for Lampart as he tried to

break through the tape with a dull pair of scissors?

"It only took us 10 years, four administrations and eight amendments to our redevelopment plan to get to where we are today," Lampart told a large crowd gathered at Landis Square for the event.

"Out of all the projects I've done over the last 40 years, this project is one that I'm most proud of," Lampart continued. "I still get chills every time I drive up."

Lampart referred to the project as an "odyssey" given all the hurdles he had to overcome before finally breaking ground in October 2016.

He thanked many people — too many to mention — for their help along the way. Those same people on Tuesday praised Lampart for his persistence.

"This was no small feat getting this done," Vineland Mayor Anthony Fanucci said. "You're working with state government, county government, and to take on a project like this, it takes an awful lot ... I'm very proud this is here. It is a wonderful view, it's a great corner and you're starting to see life revitalized here."

Residents actually began moving into the three-floor, 74-unit facility in February.

Lampart said Tuesday 40 rooms are occupied at the 55-and-older apartments. The waiting list sits at about 300 people, he said.

Throughout the duration of the project's life cycle, talk of the need for senior housing remained consistent.

"It's easy for an elected official to plow roads and fill potholes, and do those things, but the most important things that we do are to help the residents that need our help and our assistance the most, and you've addressed that with this project," Cumberland County Freeholder Director Joe Derella said to Lampart. "You've tried to establish a place that's safe, that's beautiful and convenient for the seniors of this community.

"This is one of those projects that goes and reaches out to those most vulnerable. We need to do more of these things, we need to get behind these things more and more, because that's what's going to change the face of Cumberland County."

In addition to the apartments, the site also features 10,000 square feet of yet-to-be-filled retail space on the ground floor.

Landis Square boasts a common area, game room, small fitness center and more for its residents.

A plaque displayed in one corner of the common area dedicates the community center to the late Francis Reilly, a longtime newspaper columnist; founder of The CEO Group; former Vineland economic development director; and close friend of Lampart's.

Lampart gifted books of Reilly's newspaper columns, 'Wryly Writ,' which appeared in The Daily Journal, to members of Reilly's family and The CEO Group in attendance at Tuesday's ceremony.

Several officials on hand pointed to the boost in visual appeal Landis Square provides when entering Vineland's downtown.

Many, including state Sen. Jeff Van Drew, believe the project will have a positive ripple effect on not just Vineland, but also the rest of the county thanks to Lampart.

"This project, this corner, is really reaching its full potential because of the people who were involved," Van Drew said. "To just think of the housing, to think of the retail and commercial aspect of it, to think of the improvements that have been made with the (Landis) theater, and to know that for Cumberland County that we should never, ever, ever give up. That we have to keep fighting to make Cumberland better and better, and it can be, because it doesn't require anything more than an individual's vision to make that reality come true, and that's where we are today."

Anthony V. Coppola: @AVCoppola; 856-563-5258; acoppola@gannettnj.com