

# Kent Senior Housing Facility Gets \$3.7 Mil. Makeover

**R**esidents of Kent's Harrison House have passed the summer living behind a green construction tent.

A plastic mesh curtain has covered the three-story senior housing building from top to bottom since May and it won't be coming down until at least Thanksgiving.

When it does, the 12-year-old building constructed by the city of

Kent will have a new skin and much more.

The old stucco exterior failed, handing the King County Housing Authority a \$2.3 million headache. The stucco trapped moisture and caused weepy windows and extensive dry rot in the walls. Exterior repairs will include a new roof, windows, decks and railings.

At the same time, the Housing

Authority decided to do \$1.4 million in interior work such as carpeting and painting all 94 units.

The nearly \$3.7 million facelift is expected to be done by mid-December.

The problem was that water intruded into the building and the building's envelope failed.

Dan Watson, deputy director of the Housing Authority, said it's the only failure of its kind in the housing system, though other buildings were built in the same manner by the same contractor at that time.

"We have not done a renovation of this scale before on a 12-year-old building," he said.

He said Housing Authority lawyers looked at making the contractors pay for the fix, but there is a six-year statute of limitations on repair work.

Watson, however, said the Housing Authority was fortunate enough to be able to use the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program to pay for the repairs. The program grants investors tax credits for their participating in the project.

The problem came to light about three years ago when leaks around windows were noticed.

An architect and consultant checked it out but did not recognize the scope of the problem. Windows were caulked, he said, which might have made the problem worse.

He explained that the problem wasn't the stucco material. The

real problem was that the building was made so tight under the energy code standards in the

1980s that the structure itself couldn't breathe. It was so tightly wrapped that moisture that intruded from the outside didn't evaporate.

"It was slow and insidious," he said.

A year ago, he said they finally broke into the skin and discovered the problem.

Watson said there wasn't any health problem because of the dry rot, but it had to be repaired.

"I think we have it solved," he said.

Aside from each apartment being painted and getting new light fixtures, appliances, faucets, countertops and flooring, commons areas also are getting a once-over with new carpet, lighting, ceilings and furniture. Even the kitchen will get new equipment.

