

Housing project brings non-profit back home

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By Reggie Ellis



Goshen – Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) is going back to where it all began. The community-constructing non-profit will begin work on another affordable housing project in the unincorporated community of Goshen, northwest of Visalia, where it built its first affordable housing project 52 years ago.

On Sept. 28, the Tulare County Planning Commission approved a final site plan to build 126 apartment units on 6.85 acres on Riggin Road (Avenue 312) between Roads 72 and 76. The “Goshen Village East 1” project will be built in two phases. Phase 1, scheduled for completion in

May 2019, will develop 66 units including 22 one-bedroom apartments, 22 two-bedroom apartments and 22 three-bedroom apartments. Phase 2, which does not yet have a timeline, will include 20 one-bedroom apartments, 20 two-bedroom apartments and 20 three-bedroom apartments. One bedroom apartments range from 500-700 square feet and the three bedrooms range from 900-1,000 square feet

Tom Collisaw, CEO of Self-Help Enterprises, said the project will be 20 units per acre, a higher density than Self-Help’s typical density of 10-15 units per acre in order to satisfy their funding requirements.

The two-story rental project will feature private streets, a covered playground, a community center, park-pond and will be completely energy independent for electricity with solar panels offsetting common area and electric loads. Resident vehicles will be stored in “Tuck under” parking, where the ground floor of the middle of the L-shaped apartment building will be left as parking beneath several units overhead. Collisaw there is also the possibility of providing on-site electric vehicles to improve transportation access and “reduce the need for two-car families.” The community center will include a computer room, kitchen, common laundry room, maintenance area and a computer room.

Commission Chair John Elliott asked if the wireless Internet access would be made available to the entire complex, similar to Self-Help’s project in Woodlake.

“We are committed to providing full Internet wireless access,” Collisaw said.

The project also includes “bio-swales,” a drainage ditch planted with shrubs to remove pollutants from the water before percolating back into the ground

“It’s a more attractive way than just digging a hole,” said Bock.

Commissioner Bill Whitlach, a real estate developer by trade, said he had recently used bio-swales on his Quail Park development. “It’s a nice way to dispose of water, do water recharge and keep the subdivision cooler,” he said.

This is just the first phase of a much larger project for Self-Help to provide high-quality affordable housing in the area. Collishaw said SHE owns the entire 38-acre block on which the project is being built. The area around the apartments is planned for about 50 single family homes and a small park. He said the southern portion is planned for senior housing while the northeast corner is planned for commercial development. "We'd like to bring in some fresh food options to the area."

Goshen is the birthplace of the types of projects that Self-Help Enterprises is now known for. The organization was born when a small group of visionaries helped three low-income families build their own homes in Goshen in 1964. Over the last 51 years, Self-Help has grown to a nationally recognized community development organization serving the eight counties in the San Joaquin Valley, including two additional rental apartment community centers in Goshen.

The community centers within the rental communities like Goshen Village Apartments I and II serve as hubs that strengthen the link between residents and engagement in social action. Throughout the San Joaquin Valley, the community centers are made available to other organizations and nonprofits who offer a variety of programs and services for residents and their neighbors in the community. This includes recreational, educational, social, health, civic and cultural opportunities for students, families and the community that lead to an improved quality of life in the communities they call home.

In the last 50 years, Self-Help Enterprises has helped more than 6,000 families build their own homes, rehabilitated over 6,000 unsafe homes, developed over 1,300 units of affordable rental housing and has provided technical assistance for reliable access to safe drinking water and sanitary sewer infrastructures to more than 160 small communities.