

THE PORTERVILLE RECORDER

Self-Help Enterprises wins \$5.5 million grant

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Funds to be used for a new affordable apartment complex in Lindsay

Self-Help Enterprises was awarded Wednesday a \$5.5 million grant to fund an affordable housing project and community center in Lindsay.

Lindsay was one of seven Valley communities to be awarded grant funding in the second round of the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program, a program that is run through the Strategic Growth Council, which is administered by the Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department through the state. Other awards were given in Fresno, Turlock, Dinuba, Stockton and Wasco.

Betsy McGovern-Garcia, the director of Real Estate Development for Self-Help Enterprises, said the purpose of the program, which is funded with cap-and-trade dollars, is Greenhouse Gas Mitigation.

"The program targets sustainable development and projects that incorporate transportation improvement," said McGovern-Garcia, adding that the project's main goal is to encourage people to walk and bike to destinations, and use vanpool and other forms of public transportation instead of always getting in their car. "It is really a holistic approach to setting affordable housing near amenities like schools and shopping centers and then building the infrastructure like the bike lanes and the sidewalks to help connect our families with

those amenities in the neighborhood."

McGovern-Garcia said the project, which is being temporarily called Lindsay Village, is an apartment complex that will be located on the southeast corner of Westwood and Hermosa. She said it will have 50 units, 49 of which will be for residents and one for an on-site manager. She also noted that there will be 14 one-bedroom units, 18 two-bedroom units and 18 three-bedroom units.

Additionally, McGovern-Garcia said the project, which is a partnership between Self-Help Enterprises, who put together the application, and California Vanpool Authority, will include bike lanes, sidewalks, on-site vans for vanpool for the residents in the apartment complex as well as those in the surrounding community, and a community center that will have an after-school program, a computer lab, English as a second language classes, financial literacy classes and other services.

"Those are some of the examples of resident services that we offer in our community building so it is not just the typical apartment project," McGovern-Garcia said. "It really is more of a holistic community where there's recreation, playgrounds on site and all of those things that really help families be healthy and successful."

McGovern-Garcia noted that a portion of the funding will also be used to make improvements on the corner of Westwood and Hermosa, an intersection she said has been the cause of a lot of traffic-related accidents.

"There's been a lot of community complaints about children and families crossing that intersection to access Jefferson Elementary on the north side of Hermosa," she said, adding that the city is a secondary partner in the project and has identified the need for a roundabout at the intersection. "There will be some engineering that goes into looking at that intersection and making improvements, and then also putting up additional signage and striping and things of that nature to help make that intersection safer for children and families that are going across the intersection to go to the school."

McGovern-Garcia said Self-Help Enterprises was excited to receive the grant in round two, especially because it didn't get a grant it had applied for in round one.

"The project was not funded, and as a result of that we worked to encourage the state to establish a rural set-aside within the program and they did that for round two," she said. "They set aside 10 percent of the funds for what they call Rural Innovation Project Areas or RIPA projects, and Lindsay was funded out of that 10 percent."

McGovern-Garcia said she expects construction on the project to begin in May 2017 and completed by April 2018, but noted that the project will first have to obtain additional funds in the amount of roughly \$6.2 million, which she said shouldn't be a problem.

"We are actually going in for a non-competitive 4 percent [housing] tax credits, which is the final piece of funding that we need for the project, but they are noncompetitive and so we are confident that there won't be any issues in obtaining those funds, it is just a matter of putting in the application," she said, noting that the additional funding should be available either in January or March of next year. "We will be working over the next six months to finalize our tax credit financing and complete the construction documents for the project in the hopes of completing the project in April of 2018, and that is when families would start moving into the apartments."

McGovern-Garcia said the apartments are unique in that they serve only low-income families who fall in the 30 percent range of area median income up to the 50 percent of area median income. She said the rents will run from \$300 a month to \$698.

"It is going to be extremely affordable and it provides the opportunity for low-income families to live in high-quality housing that really promotes healthy living and education."

In addition to being affordable, McGovern-Garcia said the units will also be extremely energy and water efficient.

"We are designing them to be low impact in terms of water and energy use, and then there will be a solar photovoltaic system on site to offset energy so 100 percent of the energy needed to run the project will be generated on site through solar," she said. "We think it is a great project for the community of Lindsay and we are excited we got funded and we are looking forward to starting construction next year."