

THE FRESNO BEE

Housing that works: Low-income people get to build their own homes

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By: Tim Sheehan



Self-Help Enterprises expects to begin work on a \$16.4 million project to develop 26 single-family homes for first-time, low-income buyers, as well as a 40-unit apartment project for low-income seniors in southwest Fresno.

The Fresno City Council recently approved a deal negotiated between the city and the Fresno-based nonprofit for Self-Help Enterprises to acquire the property on Annadale Avenue just west of Elm Avenue. The land is owned by the city's Housing Successor Agency. The property is next to Clinica Sierra Vista's Elm Community Health complex at Elm and Annadale avenues.

Marlene Murphy, executive director of the housing agency, said the city is contributing the western four acres to Self-Help for the single-family lots, which will be made available to families to build their homes with "sweat equity" serving as their down payments. Self-Help will buy the eastern four acres, which will be used for the senior apartments.

"We're extremely excited about this site," said Betsy McGovern Garcia, director of real estate for Self-Help. "We think the site has great connectivity. We've got a walkway that we're planning from the senior housing directly into Clinica Sierra Vista so they can access those resources. We're planning services in conjunction with Clinica to help our residents age in place and remain in their units." The apartments will also be less than a block from the city's Mary Ella Brown Community Center, which offers a lunch program for seniors in the neighborhood.

City Councilman Oliver Baines, whose council district covers southwest Fresno, praised the project as something the community desires. "Since my time in office, I've always been trying to find a way to do meaningful senior development integrated with regular single-family development," Baines said.

The development agreement calls for construction to start on the apartment portion of the project in the spring of 2018 with completion a year later. Construction of the single-family homes is expected throughout 2018 and 2019.

