

VALLEY VOICE

Self-Help working to bring housing to Tulare County communities

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By: Nancy Vigran

Two residential developments are ready to break ground in Woodlake. Valencia Heights, a Self-Help Enterprises development has pulled its first 10 building permits, said Woodlake City Manager Ramon Lara. The other, a Castlerock extension, is ready to start the first of 54 single-family homes by a private developer.

These developments are on the heels of the recently completed Majestic Homes project of 35 homes, Lara said.

“There’s a huge demand for single-family homes [in Woodlake],” he added.

The Castlerock extension homes are three to five bedroom custom-built homes that will range in the \$200,000-\$250,000 price range.

“That’s what the market is in Woodlake,” Lara said.

Valencia Heights is part of Self-Help Enterprises’ Mutual Self-Help Housing Program.

Self-Help Enterprises is a non-profit agency that works, in part, with potential first-home owners. The total development site is for 70 homes – 10 of those are ready to be built.

Those approved into the program actually help build all of the homes in their phase of the development, dedicating 40-hours per week from each homeowner family until the entire development is completed, said Betsy McGovern-Garcia, real estate development program director.

Their work equals the down payment on their home. The first 10 families have filed all of their paperwork, qualified and are ready to dig in.

A ceremonial groundbreaking took place in December; however, the real work is actually just beginning. No one moves in until all 10 homes are finished.

A development of 70 homes is really larger than the average norm for Self-Help projects, usually projects are more like 40-50 homes.

“It really makes sense in a city like Woodlake, where there is a tremendous demand,” McGovern-Garcia said. “The City of Woodlake is a really great partner – we’re really excited about the project.”

The Valencia Heights homes will be valued at \$170,000-\$190,000 when completed, she said.

Dinuba apartment complex

In Dinuba, work is heading toward completion for the first phase of 44 affordable rental multi-family apartment units, projected to be ready for move-in by July..



One of the Self-Help Enterprises renderings for Valencia Heights Homes.

These are one, two and three-bedroom units, located at the corner of East Davis Dr. and North Crawford Ave., and the Sierra Village project includes a 3,000 square foot community building and a playground.

According to a Self-Help press release, "Sierra Village is being financed through a combination of HOME funds, Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) program funds, and low-income housing tax credits. The AHSC program is administered through a partnership between the Strategic Growth Council and the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) and is funded by Cap-and-Trade proceeds.

"Sierra Village is a highly energy efficient and transit-friendly project. Sustainable features include solar PV, water conservation measures, and a vanpool program in partnership with the California Vanpool Authority that will transport residents from Sierra Village and the surrounding community to and from work."

Self-Help will start accepting applications for Sierra Village apartments in mid-February. To qualify for affordable rental units, a family must earn 60% or below of the median area income.

A second phase of the Sierra Village project will include another 64 units for a total of 108 units.

Lindsay apartment complex

Similarly, in Lindsay, an apartment complex called Palm Terrace started last fall. Here, there are to be 50 units in the first phase, comprising of one, two and three bedrooms of affordable rental multi-family units at the corner of Westwood Ave. and Hermosa St.

Financing is similar to that of Dinuba's Sierra Village and so are the efficiencies including bike lanes and sidewalks, and the partnership with the California Van Pool Authority.

According to Self-Help, "In addition to securing \$4.4 million of Cap and Trade Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) funding for the housing project, Self-Help Enterprises secured \$1.4 million in grant funding for the City of Lindsay to construct a roundabout, sidewalks, and bike lanes at the intersection of Westwood Avenue and Hermosa Street. The roundabout will calm traffic and improve the safety for students accessing Jefferson Elementary School, located north of the site. This intersection is a documented safety concern in the community, and the improvements will promote non-motorized transit to access the school, shopping center and bus stop, which are all located within a quarter mile of the site."

Palm Terrace is the first affordable rental community built by Self-Help Enterprises in the City of Lindsay.

The second phase of the project will include 54 more units for a total of 104, expected to be completed in the fall of 2019.

The project will include Energy-star appliances, a playground, community room, computer lab, and resident services.

Goshen and beyond

Self-Help has just submitted an application for another affordable rental complex in Goshen consisting of 66 units in the first phase and an additional 60 units in a second phase.

This is in coordination with Tulare County, the Tulare County Association of Governments and the California Van Pool Authority, McGovern-Garcia said. The location is at Riggan Ave. and Road 76.

Self-Help currently owns and operates 29 rental communities. in seven counties, up and down the Valley from Oildale and Arvin to Modesto.

The focus is affordable rental units with onsite residential services including after-school programs.

"It is an opportunity to be comprehensive in providing housing," McGovern-Garcia said. "Some families are looking to rent, others are ready for ownership."