

VISALIA TIMES DELTA

66 families find homes at new affordable housing complex in Goshen

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By: Kyra Haas

Sixty-six families moved into new, affordable homes in Goshen last month.

Self-Help Enterprises, its partners and community members gathered Friday at the new apartment complex, Sequoia Commons, for a ceremonial grand opening.

"This kind of project shows how drastic the (housing) crisis is, not just in the Bay Area or in LA," said Tom Collishaw, Self-Help Enterprises CEO. "The problem here is people can't afford the housing that's available, and what they can afford is either horrible and in need of repair, or they're on the street."

Self-Help is a non-profit that works with low-income families to build and maintain homes and communities. Residents at Sequoia Commons have to be between 30% and 50% of the area median income.

'A safe, affordable place to call home'

Goshen is growing both residentially and commercially, according to Tulare County Supervisor Eddie Valero, who represents the unincorporated community. However, that growth can be accompanied by growing pains that are felt disproportionately by the working class, he said.



Self-Help Enterprises CEO Tom Collishaw accepts a certificate recognizing Self-Help's "vital role in providing housing to the Goshen community" from Tulare County Supervisor Eddie Valero. Sequoia Commons, an affordable housing complex in Goshen, had its grand opening Friday, Feb. 14, 2020.



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"With the help of Self-Help, we are investing in our economy, collaborating across sectors, creating jobs and providing beautiful spaces where families can call such spaces their home," Valero said. "We need to ensure that everyone — yes, everyone — has a warm, safe, affordable place to call home."

Monthly net rents at the complex range from \$331 to \$766 and are based on both the unit and resident incomes. Six of the 66 units are permanent supportive housing for people who have experienced homelessness in the past two years.



Tulare County Supervisor Eddie Valero speaks during the grand opening of Sequoia Commons, an affordable housing complex in Goshen, on Friday, Feb. 14, 2020.

The complex will have an additional 60 units once its second phase is complete. Collishaw said there won't be any trouble filling those spots. About 30 families are already on the waitlist.

Resident Donna Esparza said she loved her new apartment. Before moving to Sequoia Commons, she lived with her son and took care of her grandchildren. She said this was her first time living alone.

"I want to thank all of you for being able to afford something this nice," she said during Friday's event. "I could never have done that without you."

'This is what we need to do'

Collishaw said building more affordable housing was the answer to many housing-related issues, from homelessness to overpaying for housing.

"It sounds obvious, but this is what we need to do," he said.

As Self-Help continues work on Sequoia Commons, it's looking into addressing another issue in Goshen: access to fresh food.

"Goshen is a food desert," Collishaw said. "It's something like a 7-mile ride for someone from Goshen to get fresh fruits, vegetables and meat."



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Self-Help is eyeing six acres adjacent to the complex for a future grocery store.

"We haven't quite figured that one out yet since we're not grocery store owners or developers," he said. "But we're trying to figure out the answer to that question."