

THE SUN GAZETTE

Tulare County funds affordable housing projects

July 21, 2021

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Tulare County Board of Supervisors approves \$3.5 million in state housing funds to build 170 units of affordable housing in Visalia, Goshen

TULARE COUNTY – As millions of dollars are flowing out from state and federal government to curb homelessness, Tulare County is also investing in projects that not only house the homeless but help prevent people from becoming homeless.

At its July 13 meeting, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the use of \$3.5 million in state housing funds to invest in two affordable housing projects which will provide a combined 170 units of housing for low-income residents in the Visalia area. Both projects are being developed by Self-Help Enterprises, the Visalia-based nonprofit which specializes in affordable housing projects and community infrastructure projects. Known as the Permanent Local Housing Allocation Program (PLHA), funding for the two projects was created by Senate Bill 2 passed in 2017 to address the shortage of affordable housing in California. The Building Homes and Jobs Act established a \$75 recording fee on all real estate documents. Seventy percent of the funding goes to cities and 30% goes to the state.

The Lofts at Fort Visalia is an 80-unit apartment complex at 300 E. Oak Ave. The project combines art lofts with homeless housing and affordable apartments for low-income families. The three-story building is composed of 29 lofts, 28 one-bedroom units, 23 two-bedroom units, and 4,078 square feet of commercial uses including office and gallery space, laundry facility, and computer lab. The commercial space will offer a new home for the Arts Consortium and will allow for various community and resident services, including behavioral health services and onsite case management supports.

The Lofts are within walking distance of the Visalia Transit Center, Family HealthCare Network Clinic, banks, schools, supermarkets, and other amenities. The city of Visalia has also committed \$2 million of its PHLA funding toward the project.

“I’d like to thank Self-Help Enterprises for all they are doing throughout Tulare County to help with the affordable housing situation,” chair Amy Shuklian said, who represents most of Visalia on the board. “I’m excited about The Lofts at Fort Visalia.”

Self-Help Enterprises is also building an 89-lot subdivision on the southwest corner of Riggin Avenue and Road 76. Goshen Village East is a two-story rental project featuring 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. There will also be a community center with a computer room, kitchen, common laundry room and maintenance area.

“It is partnerships like these that really transform communities and provide opportunities to eradicate homelessness as well as other issues,” Supervisor Eddie Valero said, who represents the Goshen area. “I think this partnership is beautiful and will grow.”

The 169 units of affordable housing is critically needed as rents continue to rise in a low supply housing market. Since 2014, Tulare County has only built 7,300 units of new housing, well below the 26,000 units it needs by 2023, according to Tulare County’s most recent Regional Housing Needs Assessment.