

Sugar Pine Village hosts ribbon cutting



By: Tyler Takeda/The Madera Tribune

Development partners and community leaders gathered at Sugar Pine Village (203 E. Lewis St.) for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a tour of the new 52-unit facility.

The Sugar Pine Village community will feature 52 apartment-style homes to Madera, including 16 units for individuals and families struggling with housing insecurity and homelessness.

"We have a lack of affordable housing in Madera," said Madera Mayor Santos Garcia. "It's really drastic conditions where people are living in. We have up to three families living in a two-bedroom unit. You have no privacy there. It hurts the mental health. By building this facility, it will help alleviate, but it won't solve our problem. We still need more units. We are going to do future partnerships to provide more housing."

Developed by Self-Help Enterprises, the \$25 million community is located off State Highway 99 and convenient to grocery, retail stores, schools and public transportation.

"This was a wonderful opportunity to integrate people within a single project," said Tom Collishaw, president/CEO of Self-Help Enterprises. "This kind of integrated approach provides people with the services they need to be successful in their lives is a model we are using in the valley. We are hoping to use this model in Oakhurst in the next years. Rent will be as low as \$200. It will be affordable to the folks that live here."

The project features 20 one-, 16 two- and 16 three-bedroom apartments with fully equipped kitchens, energy efficient appliances and laundry hook-ups. Sugar Pine Village is focused on connecting health and housing and in partnership with Madera County Behavioral Health Department will provide residents access to wrap-around supportive services that include on-site management and counselors to assist residents with health, wellness, and other socio-economic needs.

"Low affordable housing is great for the community here," said Madera City Councilman Steve Montes, who is also on the Board of Directors for Self-Help Enterprises. "This project is not only going to have short-term impact, it's not going to be about the housing. It's going to be about the services they provide. It's going to set people up to be successful and live safer and healthier lives."

UnitedHealthcare, a UnitedHealth Group company, is the largest private investor in Sugar Pine Village, providing \$11.2 million in equity through a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit partnership with Enterprise Housing Credit Investments.

"This has been a vacant lot for many years," Garcia said. "Because they are willing to invest in our community, we now have a vacant lot that has 52 units of affordable housing."