

FRESNO BEE

Sweat Equity will be Down Payment for Homes in Southwest Fresno

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By: Juan Esparza Loera

Sweat equity – meaning families will pour the cement foundation, nail the frames and apply the roof shingles, among other tasks – will result in nearly 40 single-family homes becoming a reality in southwest Fresno.

More importantly, according to Fresno City Councilmember Miguel Arias, the nearly \$10 million development will put a dent, albeit small, on skyrocketing housing costs and apartment rents that have put home ownership out of reach for low-income families.

“Home prices are off the chart right now. Rents are off the chart,” said Arias at a Tuesday morning press conference to announce the partnership with Self-Help Enterprises for the Ivy-Annandale division.

“The reason I like Self-Help so much is it’s proven to work for farmworkers in rural areas, and it’s going to work effectively well for our poultry workers,” said Arias.

“Our Amazon workers who have limited income; and instead of spending the additional hours, maybe working overtime on the weekends or a side job, will spend it building their own home and giving them permanent equity into the future of their families.”

Arias said Fresno “is committed to addressing the housing crisis.”

The first 11 of the 22 homes – 2- and 3-bedroom homes with two bathrooms – in the Ivy-Annandale subdivision are expected to begin construction in September, said Self-Help Enterprises CEO Tom Collishaw.

Families qualify if they earn less than 80% of the area median income, which comes out to \$56,000 for a family of four. The subdivision offers 2-bedroom, 2-bath and 3-bedroom, 2-bath homes.

Collishaw said families qualify if they have stable income, good credit and commit to putting in at least 10 hours of home construction work per week. An onsite construction superintendent will provide oversight.

“We know that home ownership not only provides a real stake in the community for the homeowners themselves, but we know that it provides a launching pad for their family, their children to really achieve and increase their economic status through the stability of their housing payments,” said Collishaw.

Self-Help, which began in 1965, has helped more than 6,500 families build their homes, said Collishaw.

State and federal funds are being used, and Arias has asked the council to approve \$800,000 to help with the second phase of another nearby subdivision.

“The city is committed to addressing the housing crisis,” said Arias. “This is one part of that solution for one small group of folks. They’re going to benefit from a multi-million investment.”

Arias said the Ivy-Annandale site, which is currently being graded and prepared for streets and sidewalks, “was a vacant dirt field for decades with homeless encampments, and law enforcement coming in to clean up the trash every day.”

“It had zero value to the neighborhood and to the City of Fresno,” he said. “Now, it will be 22 homeowners that pay property taxes, maintain their own neighborhoods, add value to the school across the street, and to the housing project next door.

“This is a perfect example of how you can restore 100-year-old neighborhoods, by reinvesting back into the basics of infrastructure and housing.”

Details: (559) 651-1000.