

# The Sun Gazette

---

## New housing developments reflect greater homeownership in Woodlake

May 12, 2022  
By: Sam Moore



**Five new subdivisions are making their way to town, some with families already moved in to Valencia Heights**

WOODLAKE – Several new housing developments are making progress in Woodlake, reflecting the city’s growth over the past several years.

Five new subdivisions in the city are currently in different stages. Some are just starting the planning and permitting process, while others already house multiple homeowners and their families.

Of the latter is Valencia Heights, a 70-unit affordable housing subdivision operated by Self Help Enterprises. The project is part of a program that gives low-income, first-time homeowners an opportunity to build their own houses with onsite guidance from skilled construction staff.

“We have 50 units that have been completed and 20 that are in construction currently, and those are the last 20 homes in the project,” said Tom Collishaw, president and CEO of Self Help Enterprises. The first families to move into Valencia Heights arrived close to three years ago, Collishaw added.

The city of Woodlake partnered with Self Help Enterprises to begin the project in 2017, as a way to combat a lack of homeownership opportunities for the city’s large population of low-income agricultural workers.

“Without that sweat equity piece and other kinds of resources that Self Help Enterprises can bring to a program like Valencia Heights, homeownership is unattainable right now,” Collishaw said. “If you make \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year, with the house prices as they are today, you cannot buy a home. This is one way you can. That’s why it’s essential that it’s available to people.”

Collishaw said he believes that a strong housing market should have a variety of housing types, and that’s what’s coming to Woodlake – four other market-rate housing developments are making their way to the city, and several more have shown interest.

One of these developments is Hillside Estates, a 75-unit subdivision run by developer Yanez Homes that has been fully approved by the city and is currently under construction. The homes range from \$400,000 to \$600,000.

Another development that has been approved and is under construction is the Greenwood Subdivision, a 125-unit project being built by construction company DR Horton.

“They’re currently grading and constructing their infrastructure portion,” said Woodlake’s Community Services Director Jason Waters.

Kaweah Homes, a subdivision aimed to be built just south of Hillside Estates, is also being proposed by Yanez Homes.

“I haven’t pulled permits to construct the homes yet, but we do have a map that we’re working through with them,” Waters said.

Another subdivision to have submitted a map to the city is Mulberry Estates. The proposed 65-unit subdivision is awaiting approval.

Waters said that the city is anticipating that an increase in sales and property taxes will come with the influx of new homes, and is preparing for the shift by constructing new water, sewer and road projects.

“We want to make sure that we have capacity to accommodate new housing,” Waters said. “We’re doing our best to look out several years into the future because we don’t want to be put in a position where we don’t have the infrastructure.”

Collishaw said that feedback from the first residents to move into Valencia Heights has been “incredibly positive.”

“It’s a great neighborhood of folks that share a common goal,” Collishaw said. “And that is to have a great, stable housing option for them and their children.”