

THE SUN GAZETTE

Self-Help celebrates new housing community in Visalia

March 11, 2026
By: Sun Gazette Staff



VISALIA – Self-Help Enterprises has announced the opening of a new community in Visalia, offering families and farm workers an affordable place to stay.

On March 6, Self-Help Enterprises hosted the grand opening of Rancho Colegio, welcoming community members and residents to celebrate the new affordable rental community in Visalia. The new site is located on the corner of North Court Street and East Glendale Avenue, near the Visalia Navigation Center.

“Housing costs have risen significantly across the Central Valley, and many working families are feeling that pressure,” said Marlene De La Garza, communications and outreach manager for Self-Help Enterprises in an email. “Rancho Colegio helps address that need by creating high quality, affordable

homes right here in Visalia for families who live and work in the community, including farmworker households who play such an important role in the region's economy."

The development brings 80 energy-efficient homes to Visalia, giving locals expanded access to housing options, including farmworker households. The development also utilizes solar power and energy-efficient appliances, providing clean, sustainable energy while helping families reduce utility costs, according to the announcement.

"Communities thrive when families have a stable place to call home," said Tom Collishaw, president and CEO of Self-Help Enterprises in a statement from Self-Help. "Rancho Colegio shows what is possible when public and private partners align around a shared vision. This community strengthens Visalia not only by expanding housing, but by creating a foundation for long-term resilience and opportunity for all."

Rancho Colegio offers one-, two- and three-bedroom apartment homes that are designed for working families. Twenty of the units have been specifically set aside for farmworker families. As noted in the announcement, Self-Help recognizes the essential role that farmworkers play in the region's economy and works to ensure them access to safe, stable housing close to employment opportunities.

"Rancho Colegio reflects a thoughtful approach to meeting real community needs, and the City of Visalia was committed to helping make this happen. We were proud to invest \$1.3 million in federal HOME funds to help make this development a reality," said Mayor Brett Taylor in a statement from Self-Help. "In fact, of the 80 units, 11 are City of Visalia HOME-assisted units, ensuring long-term affordability and expanding access to quality housing for our residents."

Beyond housing, Rancho Colegio will provide residents with on-site services and amenities that support educational growth, wellness and community connection. These will include a free after-school program, adult education and fitness classes, a community center, computer lab, laundry facilities, outdoor multi-sport recreation area and barbecue and picnic spaces.

In the announcement, resident of the complex Shonna Salter noted her gratitude about moving into her new home, and shared some insight about how this development has helped her.

"Before this opportunity I lived in room and board for years. It was a very toxic environment that didn't feel safe or peaceful," Salter said. "Today I stand here in a different place, physically, mentally and emotionally. This apartment is priceless to me. It is stability, peace and a fresh start. I am so excited to be a part of this amazing community. I don't take this opportunity for granted."

As explained in the announcement, this project was made possible by a land donation from Colegio de la Tierra, a historic farmworker education institution rooted in the Chicano Movement of the 1970s. Founded to expand educational access for farmworker and low-income communities in the Central Valley, the institution later chose to honor its mission by donating its Visalia property for affordable housing and establishing a scholarship program for local students.

And Rancho Colegio honors that legacy of service. The celebration included the unveiling of the name of the new community center, which will be known as the Colegio de la Tierra Community Center in honor of the site's history.

"Colegio de la Tierra inspired me to get an education, now Rancho Colegio will provide families with better living conditions and guide their children to get a higher education through a computer lab and an after school program," said Bea Hernandez, board member of Colegio de la Tierra and past student, in the announcement.

As housing costs continue to rise throughout California, developments like Rancho Colegio play a critical role in ensuring that families can remain in the communities where they live and work, as said in the announcement. It stated that targeted investments in agricultural regions help address housing shortages and expand access where the need is greatest.

De La Garza explained in an email that Self Help Enterprises is always looking for new ways to partner with communities to create more affordable housing in Tulare County. There are three affordable housing developments in the funding phase to be created.

"The Foundry in Porterville is planned as a 71-unit community that will provide high quality, affordable homes for working families. Adelaide Gardens in Dinuba is designed for seniors aged 62 and over and will include 93 units.

"In Visalia, we are advancing Camino del Rio, a 94-unit development located west of Rancho Colegio and near the Visalia Navigation Center, which is also in the process of securing financing," said De La Garza.

She added, "Projects like these are part of our broader effort to make sure people at different stages of life have access to safe and stable housing in the communities they call home."