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Altamira Breaks Ground in Sonoma

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CHRISTIAN KALLEN | INDEX-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER | December 16, 2019

Four years after the Satellite Affordable Housing Associates got the nod to develop the 2-acre lot at 20269 Broadway for affordable housing, and almost two years since the City of Sonoma signed off on the proposed 48-unit housing project, construction equipment has shown up on the site at the corner of Clay Street to begin work.

“Construction has started with a completion date targeted for spring of 2021,” said senior project manager Adam Kuperman of the Berkeley-based low-income housing developer

Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, or SAHA.

The first stage is "site clearing and grubbing," according to Kuperman. "Clearing" refers to the removal of all vegetation, primarily grasses and brush and a few small trees; "grubbing" is the removal of any roots that may remain in the ground, including stump grinding where necessary.

Once that initial stage of site preparation is finished, said Kuperman, "additional site work leading into building construction will continue in throughout the winter." He said the completion date for the project is targeted for spring of 2021.

The project will be composed of 100 percent affordable housing, most in the low-income bracket, some reserved for homeless veterans and the disabled. The proposal is for eight residential buildings with one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments as well as a single community building with community room, offices, covered bicycle storage and laundry facilities.

The Sonoma Community Development Agency initially purchased the site at 20269 Broadway for about \$2.5 million in 2007. It used state redevelopment dollars to buy the nearly 2-acre plot, which it earmarked for affordable housing. When Gov. Jerry Brown and state legislators did away with redevelopment districts in 2012, the city turned over the property to the Sonoma County Housing Authority, operated by the Community Development Commission.

Although the projects cleared the city council in February of 2018, construction did not start that year because it was too late in the granting cycle to apply for low-income housing tax credit funds. The low-income housing tax credit is a federal subsidy used to finance the construction and rehabilitation of low-income affordable rental housing, which gives investors dollar-for-dollar reduction in federal tax liability if they finance affordable housing.

SAHA and other affordable housing developers rely on the tax-credit program to provide them with the funding for construction. Another element of the program is that the projects they support are deed-restricted as "affordable" for 30 years.

"The City is excited to see the SAHA affordable housing project getting ready to break ground for much needed housing in our community," said Sonoma's City Manager Cathy Capriola.

The project is named the Altamira Family Apartments, after the Franciscan priest who founded the Mission San Francisco Sonoma in 1823. The mission was the last of 21 missions the order established in Alta California starting in 1767.

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