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Alameda: Affordable housing project for the disabled officially opens

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San Jose Mercury News. 05/16/2014. By Peter Hegarty

ALAMEDA -- Housing advocates and city officials celebrated the grand opening Friday of Alameda's first affordable housing project for adults with developmental disabilities.

A certified green building, the Jack Capon Villa on Lincoln Avenue has 18 apartments and allows residents to live independently by combining on-site case management with access to

outside services, such as for health care and other needs.

Just as important, resident Paul Archuletta said, the building offers a sense of community for people who are often excluded or pushed to the margins.

"Most of us have grown up being teased about being disabled," said Archuletta, 53, who works at Safeway and goes by the name, Elvis Paul. "People think we are dangerous or violent. That's not true, and this place is not like that."

Each apartment is one or two bedrooms and fitted with energy-efficient ceiling fans and other green features. The building itself has a community room, a water system heated with solar power and an enclosed back yard.

"The city of Alameda is proud to be a partner in this amazing project," Mayor Marie Gilmore said. "But we are more than thrilled that this is the first project of its kind in the city."

Named after Jack Capon, who founded the Special Olympics program in Alameda and was its volunteer director from 1973 to 1999, the building was constructed on a former city parking lot and is just two blocks from the Park Street shopping district. Each unit is already occupied.

To get one of the apartments, at least one person in the household must have a disability and the total household income must be at or below 50 percent of the area median income. The city's Housing Authority provides Section 8 vouchers, which means residents pay 30 percent of their adjusted monthly income for rent.

Along with the Housing Authority, Satellite Affordable Housing Associates and the Housing Consortium of the East Bay are behind the landmark project, one of the few of its kind in the Bay Area with its expensive property market.

"It's a new beginning for our residents, as well as a culmination, which is what makes this special," said Darin Lounds of the housing consortium.

Another aspect of the project, Lounds said, is that it addresses the concerns of parents of adults who have developmental disabilities, and their fear about their children's long-term housing when family members will no longer be available to support them.

Cedric Johnson from the Creative Growth Art Center, an Oakland nonprofit that serves artists with disabilities, created the ceramic tiles that are in the building's front walkway and porch columns.

More than 500 people were on the waiting list for one of the 18 apartments, said Susan Friedland, executive director of Satellite Affordable Housing Associates.

Jack Capon Villa was the last project developed in Alameda with redevelopment agency funding, which was eliminated statewide in 2012. Along with the \$1.4 million in redevelopment money, the funding included a \$4.8 million construction loan from Bank of America Merrill Lynch and \$5.83 million in low income housing tax credits.

Reach Peter Hegarty at 510-748-1654 or follow him on [Twitter.com/Peter_Hegarty](https://twitter.com/Peter_Hegarty).

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