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Antioch: Construction of apartments for low-income seniors to start early September

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By Rowena Coetzee | Eastbaytimes.com

ANTIOCH -- Construction of low-income senior apartments is expected to start in early September, providing this sector of Antioch's population with urgently needed housing.

A Berkeley-based nonprofit is completing loan documents and soon will be obtaining a building permit for the project known as Tabora Gardens, an 85-unit complex that will be going up on the 3.2-acre lot at Tabora Drive and James Donlon Boulevard.

"The people we're serving -- that's the exciting thing about it," said project manager Jonathan Astmann of Satellite Affordable Housing Associates.

Available to those 55 and older, what will be the city's third-largest affordable senior housing development is for those at risk of being priced out of the East Bay's rental market. Of the 85 apartments, 33 will be reserved for military veterans -- 12 of those for individuals who have been chronically homeless. An additional five will be set aside for those with HIV or AIDS; five more units will be for the disabled. Prospective tenants must meet federal income limits: The annual maximum is \$34,150 for individuals and \$39,000 for a couple.

Rents will top out at \$820 per month, and some units might be free to tenants who receive subsidies from the Contra Costa Housing Authority.

But Tabora Gardens will offer more than a reasonably priced roof over residents' heads -- amenities will include exercise and computer rooms as well as raised garden beds, Astmann said.

The apartments are in a "fantastic location," he added, noting their proximity to both Antioch Community Park and Contra Loma Regional Park. In addition, the paved Delta de Anza Regional Trail runs directly behind the site, Astmann said. Although it was uncertain last year whether SAHA would have enough funding to turn artist renderings into reality, the \$33 million project became official in February when the organization was notified that it received a \$6.9 million loan from the state Department of Housing and Community Development.

Additional money is coming from the city of Antioch, the county and, indirectly, from federal tax credits that an investor will receive in return for sinking \$13.1 million into the project. SAHA is estimating that construction will be complete by January 2018.

And when it is, people will be lining up to get in.

City housing consultant Teri House typically receives a couple of calls each week from seniors seeking help because their landlords have opted to rent to tenants who can pay market rates rather than continue accepting Section 8 vouchers.

"They're being priced out of their homes, living on fixed incomes," House said of those who report that their rent is going up by \$200 per month or more.

Although she refers seniors to low-income housing elsewhere in the county, House is all too aware that the waiting lists for these facilities can be as long as two years.

"Everybody's getting hit. There's not enough housing," she said.

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