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Groundbreaking held for affordable senior/vet housing in American Canyon

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Photo by Rachel Raskin-Zrihen

By Rachel Raskin-Zrihen, Vallejo Times-Herald
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Officials broke ground Thursday on a project that will offer affordable housing and important services to seniors and veterans in American Canyon.

Valley View Senior Homes on Theresa Avenue will have "a high level of amenities, partnered with on-site social services for older adults with modest financial means," a news release said.

Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA) is behind the project, which will include 70 apartment and cottage-style homes, all of them affordable to very low and extremely low-income seniors and veterans aged 55 and over, officials said.

Some 100 city and regional dignitaries and others attended Thursday's event, and most expressed excitement over the project that they agreed was a long time in the making. American Canyon City Councilman Mark Joseph said city officials have hoped to make something like this project happen on this spot, ever since the city bought it. "Once the city acquired the land, the idea was always going to be affordable housing," he said, fixing the time frame to some "eight-ish" years. It is expected to be ready to inhabit sometime next year, he said.

"I was in on the ground floor with this one, and I'm happy it's happening," former City Councilwoman Joan Bennett said. "It is going to be a godsend to those living in sub-standard housing." Valley View Senior Homes is one of 17 projects statewide to receive funding through Proposition 41 and the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Program. Of the project's total units, 22 will be set aside for veterans with incomes at 50 percent of the area median income or below and of those, 17 will serve homeless veterans through the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program administered by the City of Napa Housing Authority, officials said. An additional 17 units will be project-based Section 8, also administered by the City of Napa Housing Authority, they said. Residents for three of the homeless units will be referred through Napa County's coordinated entry system, and the Veterans Health Administration (VA) will provide medical treatment, substance abuse and mental health counseling, and on-site case management for the project's veteran households, they said. Financing for the \$26.5 million project comes from a mix of local and state funds as well as tax credit equity and private debt. The city contributed the land, and the financing plan includes funds from the city, the Federal Home Loan Bank AHP program, 4 percent tax credit equity, Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Program, Napa County, Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, The Home Depot Foundation, Gasser Foundation, and a Section 8 increment loan and conventional mortgage.

Once complete, project residents "will enjoy a beautifully landscaped community that incorporates the highest standards of green building and sustainable design as well as a robust selection of on-site services and activities to support wellness, independent living, and aging-in-place," SAHA Executive Director Susan Friedland, said. "It's not just dense cities that need affordable housing. Suburbs like American Canyon offer a great environment for aging seniors and veterans. Valley View will be a vibrant community that complements the character of the existing single-family neighborhoods while achieving a density that promotes financial feasibility and long-term operational sustainability." Garcia noted that this project has taken some time "but is worth the effort. We are so appreciative that so many regional partners stepped up to provide affordable housing options for seniors and veterans in American Canyon." Garcia said that like the rest of the Bay Area, his city's population of residents aged 65 and over is increasing at a faster rate than other age groups, creating a critical need for senior housing. "The Valley View project is the first of its kind in American Canyon - our first affordable housing project available only to seniors and veterans," he said. "I, and the city council, are very excited to see this project break ground."

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