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48 new Sonoma affordable apartments aim for small-village look

Posted On: January 21st, 2022

By GARY QUACKENBUSH | The North Bay Business Journal | December 20, 2021

Demand for 100% affordable housing is higher now than ever, evidenced by the way all 48 low-income apartments completed on May 24 were occupied by July 23 in the Alta Madrone development in Sonoma at 1269 Broadway at the southern gateway to the city.

Developed by nonprofit housing provider Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA),

these units are situated in eight residential buildings with one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments centered around a courtyard and community center. The community building features a large meeting room, offices, covered bicycle storage and laundry facilities. The layout of the development resembles a small village with a sidewalk bisecting rows of two-story buildings.

These apartments are for Sonoma County families with income levels between 30%-60% of the area median income (AMI), the midpoint of a region's income distribution. Present occupancy includes some 70 residents. There are more than 40 SAHA developments in the greater Bay Area.

"We witnessed incredible demand for these apartments," said Adam Kuperman, senior project manager for SAHA. "Some 1,400 applications were submitted during a 60-day period followed by a qualification review and finally a lottery to determine who would be accepted."

The site was identified as an affordable housing opportunity site in the city of Sonoma Housing Element. In January 2016, SAHA was selected to be the developer.

Kuperman said a community engagement process took place over a two-year period prior to receiving full approval from city planning officials in February 2018. These sessions surfaced community concerns about the initial design, the size and scale of the project, building lighting, parking locations, overall density issues and other matters.

As a result, these feedback sessions helped shape several final design changes, such as details related to the locations of building entrances and structural heights, etc."

He said extra attention was paid to the landscaping of the site, with open spaces central to the property, a children's playground, bay-friendly landscaping along with mature trees and shrubs to enhance privacy and overall comfort for neighbors.

Financing for this \$29 million project was derived from eight sources, including the City of Sonoma, the Federal Home Loan Bank, the Santa Rosa Housing Authority, the Sonoma County Community Development Commission, Sonoma County Housing Authority, Wells Fargo Bank, the California Community Reinvestment Corporation, and the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee.

SAHA is also the property manager and services coordinator for Alta Madrone. Resident services can include classes in financial literacy, general education and training topics, food and better nutrition, community garden discussions, event planning for youth, counseling programs for those dealing with those coping with alcohol or substance abuse (in cooperation with third-party case managers) and support for those with special needs.

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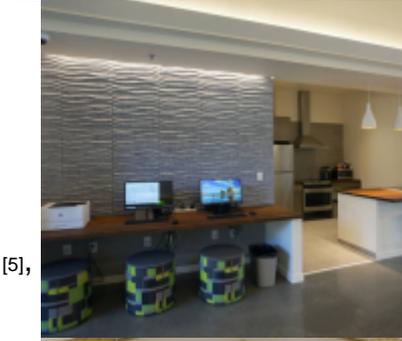
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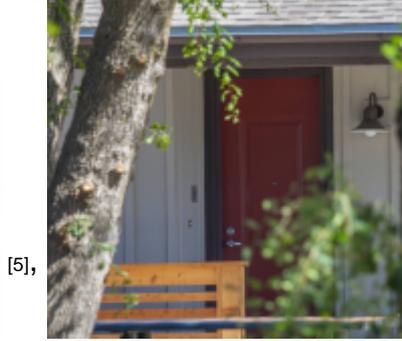
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