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Tower Park Residents Celebrate Senior Apartments? Grand Opening

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By Deke Farrow - Modesto Bee - June 8, 2016

As Tower Park resident Lee Crown spoke at the grand opening of the downtown Modesto senior apartment complex Wednesday, he recalled the three-day period a few months back when most of the residents moved into the 50-unit, three-story building.

Hallways were congested with friends and family helping residents move in. The few elevators

were packed and in constant use. But everywhere he looked, he saw "the happiest people you could ever imagine in your lives."

Folks were greeting and helping one another "and trying to remember names," he added, to laughter from Wednesday's audience of residents, friends, relatives and representatives of the partners that made the project happen. Among those partners are Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, Beacon Communities and its parent, American Baptist Homes of the West, and the city of Modesto.

Ancel Romero, president of Beacon Communities, which will manage the day-to-day operations of the apartments, also spoke. He said he enjoyed seeing residents' relatives turn out for the grand opening, as well as many of the people who had a hand in transforming the land at 17th and G streets from a shabby park whose old water tower was demolished a few years back to attractive, affordable housing.

Romero likened the gathering to a family reunion, "and we're all here to see the baby. Isn't she beautiful?" he said of the building.

FINANCING FOR THE NEARLY \$14 MILLION PROJECT CAME FROM A CITY OF

MODESTO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT, THE MODESTO NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM, FEDERAL HOME LOAN BANK (WITH BANK OF THE WEST), WELLS FARGO BANK AND THE CALIFORNIA TAX CREDIT ALLOCATION COMMITTEE.

Tower Park has 49 one-bedroom units for tenants and one two-bedroom unit for the manager. All the tenant apartments are rented, but an exact occupancy count was not available. While the apartments accommodate two people, it's most common in senior complexes for them to be single-occupancy, said Eve Stewart, director of housing development with Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, the project developer.

To qualify for Tower Park, tenants need to earn 30 percent to 60 percent of the area's median income. A SAHA representative said rents range from \$250 to about \$560.

PROJECTS LIKE TOWER PARK APARTMENTS ARE SO IMPORTANT BECAUSE THEY STRENGTHEN NEIGHBORHOODS BY PROVIDING THE AGING MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITIES WITH QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOMES AND SERVICES THAT EMPOWER THEM, AND HELP THEM AGE WITH DIGNITY.

The complex ? designed by the Dahlin Group and built by Huff Construction ? includes a community room, lounge, fitness center and raised vegetable garden planters. Beacon Communities says it will offer on-site services free of charge to residents, including computer classes, exercise classes, transportation services, health education, advocacy regarding entitlements, as well as access to food bank programs and healthy aging groups.

SAHA officials tout the complex's green building features, including solar water heating, environmentally sensitive interior finishes, green label carpet, low-flow faucets and shower heads, and Energy Star-rated appliances.

TOWER PARK IS THE FIRST MAJOR HOUSING PROJECT IN DOWNTOWN SINCE THE 11-STORY RALSTON TOWER SENIOR APARTMENTS OPENED IN 1974.

In addition, ?wayfinding? features have been incorporated into the design of common areas to assist seniors who may experience forgetfulness or balance problems. Each floor has its own color scheme, for example. Hallways are lined with waist-high decorative molding that's about the depth of a windowsill, so residents can use it as they would a handrail.

And outside each apartment door is a small alcove with a ledge. The initial idea is that the waist-high ledge is a spot to set a bag of groceries or a purse while opening the door, but the SAHA and Beacon staff recognized there's also space for residents to decorate in a way that would remind them which apartment is theirs.

Councilwoman Jenny Kenoyer, urging the seniors of Tower Park to visit Tenth Street Place to share their thoughts and concerns with city officials and staff

Outside Angeliki Voltsevits' door, for instance, is a collection of decorative items that were her mother's.

Voltsevits moved to Tower Park in mid-April, after living for about 10 years with others in a large house near Johansen High School, she said. ?There's nothing like having a place of your own,? Voltsevits said. ?Dance to own music, so to speak.?

She said she appreciates the building's security ? residents use a key fob to enter doors from the outside, and there's a gated parking lot ? and peace and quiet.

?Dream come true ... wonderful people,? she said. ?I could not be happier from any point of view.?

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701 17th Street

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