

LAKE ELSINORE: Affordable-housing project pact approved

Development would bring more low-income units to city

By MICHAEL J. WILLIAMS | Tuesday, May 26, 2009

LAKE ELSINORE ---- A redevelopment project providing apartments for low-income earners edged closer to being built Tuesday with action by the City Council.

The council, acting as the city's redevelopment agency board, voted unanimously to approve an agreement with Bridge Housing Corp. Under the pact, Bridge will build the project's 113 apartments on land purchased by the agency for the project.

The site consists of 4.3 acres bordered by Pottery Street to the north, Langstaff Street to the west, the outflow channel from Lake Elsinore to the east, and Sumner Avenue to the south, according to an agency staff report.

The complex will consist of eight buildings with one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, including two reserved for on-site managers. The rest of the units will be restricted to households that are defined as "very low income" by federal standards.

The redevelopment agency is contributing \$4 million, largely for costs in acquiring the property, according to city officials. The entire project is expected to cost \$27 million, the report states.

The agency's contribution is helping to attract federal housing subsidies that would enable Bridge to finance the project and helps fulfill the city's legal mandate for providing balanced housing opportunities, including places for lower-income residents to live.

The project is the first of its kind tackled by the agency, said board Chairman Thomas Buckley. He said the project is well-designed and attractive, with plenty of landscaping.

"It will be a real nice addition to the neighborhood," he said. "It's something the city will be proud of."

The only public speaker to comment on the project was former Lake Elsinore city Treasurer Dick Knapp, who contended the project is costing much more than it should.

Buckley, agency attorney David Mann and Bridge representative Betsy Wilson each responded that the cost is in line with other similar affordable housing projects built recently or now being built. The costs were reviewed by the real estate economic consulting firm of Keyser Marston Associates and found to be acceptable, officials said.

As a result of the council's action, the project is expected to go before the Planning Commission next month for a design review, followed by consideration by the City Council.

Buckley said construction is targeted to begin next spring.