

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Lake Elsinore OKs \$4 million funding for affordable apartments

By Aaron Burgin

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Lake Elsinore's campaign to provide more than 800 units of affordable housing citywide kicked off Tuesday with the signing of an agreement between the city and one of the nation's leading affordable housing developers.

The city also pledged \$4 million toward the building of the partnership's first apartment complex, Pottery Court.

"This was a major step," said Lake Elsinore Redevelopment Agency Chairman Thomas Buckley. "It is also not one that you could call an optional step."

That's because the state requires cities to use 20 percent of their redevelopment agency funds toward creating affordable housing, and also requires cities to have a minimum number of affordable housing units.

The city fell behind in those requirements during the

most recent housing boom, when the development of market-rate homes and apartments outstripped that of affordable developments.

The city started the process in March, when it chose San Francisco-based BRIDGE Housing Corp. to spearhead the effort of fulfilling the state requirement. That partnership was made official Tuesday night when the City Council, sitting as the Redevelopment Agency, approved a memorandum-of-understanding between the two groups.

The 90-unit complex, of which 88 units would be considered affordable housing, is to be located on a 3.8-acre plot near the corner of Pottery and Langstaff streets. It would satisfy more than 10 percent of the city's affordable housing need, redevelopment officials said.

BRIDGE representatives asked the city to contribute up to \$4 million of

redevelopment agency funds for the \$23 million project.

Officials said the \$4 million commitment, coupled with a \$1 million federal grant the city recently secured, will give the city leverage in finding other funding sources, such as federal tax credits.

Lake Elsinore finance officials had the Pottery Court proposal vetted by an independent auditor, which supported BRIDGE's request as being necessary to make the project feasible.

The City Council did not hesitate to oblige the request.

"This is an absolutely wonderful opportunity for the city," Mayor pro tem Genie Kelley said. "It is also part of our vision of revitalizing downtown."