



LGBT-friendly Senior Housing One Step Closer in Midtown

A sea of lavender hearts filled City Council chambers as supporters of Mutual Housing California urged councilmembers to fund LGBT-friendly, senior housing at the corner of 16th and F Street.

As hoped for, the City Council voted unanimously to approve \$2.78 million in funding that included nearly \$875,000 from Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA).

“We have a tremendous opportunity to allow our seniors to age in the communities that they have lived in,” said Councilmember Steve Hansen, in whose district Lavender Courtyard by Mutual Housing will be built.

“Many go back into the closet because they don’t know if they will be welcomed and supported anywhere else. This is a tragedy.”

It was not only Hansen’s support, but the support of the LGBT – and the whole

Sacramento – community that moved the dream forward.

Many leaders of the LGBT community stepped up to the plate, including The Sacramento LGBT Community Center which has committed to provide a monthly support group, resource referrals and other services to residents for free.

“We are in a historic era,” said Donald Bentz, the Center’s executive director, at an earlier Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment meeting where Commissioners voted to recommend the City Council approve the full funding request.

“Our Stonewall pioneers are in their elder years,” said Bentz. “They shouldn’t be forced back into the closet to feel safe as they age.

Local non-profit Cares also will be providing in-home, case management to residents, including those who are HIV positive, quarterly health screenings,



Supporters of Lavender Courtyard by Mutual Housing attended the Sacramento City Council meeting March 8, and were able to celebrate a unanimous “yes” vote for the development. Photo courtesy of Mutual Housing California.

Mutual Housing California develops housing that is affordable to a diversity of households. Our housing builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development. For more information, call (916) 453-8400 or visit our website at mutualhousing.com.

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referral to medical providers and transportation to medical appointments.

Statistics show that many LGBT seniors do not have close family, but create their own support networks from friends and community members, this makes them more vulnerable if they are forced to leave the area.

Rents have skyrocketed in Sacramento this past year, up 17 percent in midtown and 10 percent overall, which has priced people on fixed and moderate incomes out of the market. Rents are expected to rise at least eight percent this year.

“Without the proposed 53-apartment community, even more seniors will be displaced by rising rents in the central city,” said Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing California executive director. “Scores of homes selling for upwards of half-million dollars are being developed in the surrounding neighborhood. Our goal should be maintaining diversity and inclusivity as our city thrives.”

The \$16 million development will not only help the gay community, but will help redevelop an area that has many vacant lots. “The investment in this state-of-the-art housing will result in an eye-catching presence at the location,” said Iskow. “There is no doubt other investors will follow suit.”

Local banks also contributed to the progress. Wells Fargo gave a grant to develop a financing package and do community outreach and will be the mortgage lender.

First Citizens Bank gave a below-market-interest, pre-development loan and Bank of America has given two grants earmarked for the project.

Mutual Housing staff recently applied for funding through the state’s Cap and Trade Program, noting that sustainable housing near transit, the housing should reduce greenhouse gases.

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops, operates and advocates for sustainable rental housing for the diversity of the region’s households. A member of NeighborWorks America, Mutual Housing has more than 3,000 residents in Sacramento and Yolo counties.

Through its focus on community, the nonprofit also provides training and mentoring as well as educational programs, leadership-building activities and services for residents and neighbors.

For information on Lavender Courtyard by Mutual Housing or to sign up for future alerts, visit www.mutualhousing.com/future-communities/lavendercourtyard.

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A gay author and former journalist, Dell Richards now runs Dell Richards Publicity, a local public relations firm.