

Multihousing News » *By Keith Loria | May 10, 2012*

## Grant Awarded to Build Zero-Energy Community for Agricultural Workers



Woodland, Calif.—The Yocha Dehe Community Fund awarded a \$30,000 grant to Sacramento/Yolo Mutual Housing Association to help in the design of Spring Lake, the first zero-net energy community in Woodland, Calif., that will be made available to agricultural workers and other low-income families.

Spring Lake will feature 101 two-, three- and four-bedroom apartments at the corner of Pioneer Ave. and Farmer's Central Road in Woodland. Each unit will include Energy Star appliances and the site will include a community garden, a computer learning center and sports field.

"This is a small town in the north-central valley and is surrounded by lots of farm land, so it's an agricultural-based economy," Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing's executive director, tells MHN. "There is a huge need for safe housing for agricultural workers. Developing a community for agricultural workers has been a long-term goal of ours."

Mutual Housing estimates that approximately 5,000 agricultural workers in Yolo County need housing, and this grant will go a long way in providing that, as nearly 60 percent of Spring Lake apartments will be set aside for farm workers and their families.

"People are having children and raising families here and they need a permanent place to stay, but they are finding it really difficult to afford safe housing," Iskow says. "We see a lot of doubling up on families or people living in deteriorating or unhealthy places, so this is going to be the town's first permanent housing targeted for agricultural workers and families."

Residents will be able to participate in creating a sustainable community thanks to the inclusion of a zero-net energy program, where the community will produce as much energy as it uses with a variety of energy systems for the residential and

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common areas. This includes staff offices and laundry rooms as well as community rooms for financial education, leadership training and other workshops.

“For people low on the income scale, the whole green revolution is passing them by, so this is going to really benefit them,” Iskow says. “We found that utility bills were a big problem, so this is a way to combat a major affordability issue in their lives. They can even earn rebates that can help their family budgets.”

Research by Mutual Housing shows that to afford a typical two-bedroom apartment, a person must earn \$19.08 an hour, or nearly \$40,000 annually in Yolo County, but more than half of Yolo County renters cannot afford to pay rent for a typical apartment without working more than one job.

Funding for the multifamily development is from the City of Woodland, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Housing Service, the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development Joe Serna, Jr.,

Farmworker Housing Grant Program and the California State Treasurer’s Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program as well as NeighborWorks America.

Financing for Spring Lake is on-going and they hope to have all the pieces in place for construction by the beginning of 2013.

The Yocha Dehe Community Fund was one of the first to be established by a Native American tribe in California and is a recognized leader in local charitable giving.

“We are pleased to be a partner in this wonderful project that will help individual families in need and, at the same time, will contribute to our entire community,” said Marshall McKay, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Tribal Chairman. “This project fits very well with the Yocha Dehe Community Fund mission, which includes providing support to programs that help people help themselves as well as efforts to promote responsible stewardship of our natural environment.”