

New Davis complex brings more affordable housing for city

Finding an apartment in Davis is a needle-in-the-haystack quest in a city where the vacancy rate is less than 2 percent for rental properties.

But a new affordable housing complex in south Davis – the city’s first in five years – is helping more families call Davis home.

More than 200 people will soon live in the New Harmony Mutual Housing Community at 3030 Cowell Blvd., which opened Feb. 1.

The earth-toned buildings feature solar power to help reduce energy use and utility bills, a garden and play area, a community center and works by local artists. They are also near city transit, and the Davis bike path and greenbelt.

The \$19 million project came together with a mix of redevelopment money, federal home funding and tax credits.

The 69-unit complex should be fully occupied by March, said Rachel Iskow, executive director of Sacramento-based Mutual Housing California, which operates the complex.

Individuals and families who earn 30 percent to 60 percent of the area’s median income of about \$75,000 for a family of four qualify, said Danielle Foster, the city’s Housing and Human Services superintendent.

Affordable housing has long been an issue in the city.

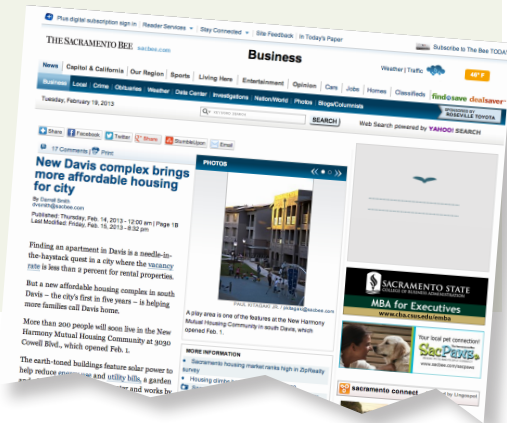
The average monthly rent for an unfurnished one-bedroom apartment in Davis is \$998, Foster said. A two-bedroom place goes for more than \$1,300 a month. Tenants pay nearly \$1,900 on average for a three-bedroom apartment.

Davis appears to recognize the need. A city ordinance requires that 25 percent of all for-sale properties and 35 percent of all rental properties are designated affordable housing.

“Housing prices the way they are in Davis, we have to search for ways to provide affordable housing,” said City Councilman Dan Wolk.

Rents at the new complex range from \$480 for a one-bedroom to \$1,166 for a three-bedroom apartment.

On Wednesday, the movers carried mattresses into the apartment of Mattie Henry and her 15-year-old great-niece and adoptive daughter DorMatte, who moved from the Houston area to Davis.



A play area is one of the features at the New Harmony Mutual Housing Community in south Davis, which opened Feb. 1. Photo by Paul Kitagaki Jr.



New resident Darleane Ross is aided by Bridget McLean, left, while moving books. Tenant eligibility is keyed to incomes below the median. Photo by Paul Kitagaki Jr.

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.

“It’s so nice and quiet,” Henry said. “Everybody has been so helpful – especially when they see me in my wheelchair.”

Learning that her apartment – like all in New Harmony – is adaptable for people with physical disabilities was a relief for Henry, 70.

Doors are wider, shelves lower, the bath easily accessible. Other units are fully accessible. Four others accommodate the visual and hearing impaired.

For DorMatte, it’s the chance to have what all teenagers want.

“I have my own room,” she said with a bright smile, busy over the kitchen sink. “It’s, like, mine. Nobody else’s.”

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops and operates well-designed rental housing for people of modest means. The nonprofit communities have nearly 3,000 residents, nearly half of whom are children.