

Farmworker Housing Project Comes To Woodland

Ground has been broken for a new apartment complex for agricultural workers, as part of the Spring Lake development in southeast Woodland.

The non-profit Mutual Housing California says the new complex is part of its push to create affordable, year-round housing for five-thousand agricultural workers in Yolo County.

Rachel Iskow with Mutual Housing California says Yolo County doesn't have enough housing for the 5,000 seasonal farm workers who live in the county. Apartment rent will be subsidized and the apartments will be solar-powered.

"Staff and volunteers went out to the farms and packing houses and processing plants to interview people," says Iskow. "And one of the things we found was in addition to being highly-concerned about housing costs, the next was utility bills."

Vanessa Guerra is the project manager. Her parents were farm workers.

"We lived in substandard housing. That made it very difficult for my siblings and I to really feel stable because there were a lot of issues that came up with the home."

Iskow says some of the existing housing for farmworkers leads to health problems.... "You see things like diseases like asthma and allergies that come from living in substandard housing with leaks and lack of heat and vermin."

If a worker's income is 30-to-50 percent of the area median income, that person will qualify for one of about 60 apartments or town homes.

A combination of city, state, and federal grants and loans helped make the project possible. The loans will be repaid using rental income or federal tax credits.

The apartments are scheduled to open in March of 2015.

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops and operates well-designed rental housing for the diversity of the region's households. The communities have 3,000 residents, nearly half of whom are children.

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



Using yarn-decorated shovels, people break ground for Mutual Housing at Spring Lake on December 5, 2013. L to R: Vanessa Guerra, Mutual Housing California; Merle Malakoff, Citibank; Melanie Matthews, Pioneer Investment Management, Inc.; Mindy Romero, Mutual Housing California; Don Lieberman, Sunseri Construction, Inc.; Natasha Mata, Wells Fargo Bank; Khalid Elias, Wells Fargo Bank; Donald Terry, Wells Fargo Bank; Nadine Ford, State of California Dept. of Housing and Community Development; Sean Denny, Woodland City Council; Tom Stallard, City of Woodland Vice-Mayor; Stephen Nnodim, USDA Rural Development; Bob Kuchman, Kuchman Architects; Bernard Keck, Sunseri Construction, Inc.; Paul Ainger, Sacramento Housing Alliance; Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing California; Judy Moran, USDA Rural Development; Bill Streng, Pioneer Investment Management, Inc.

Photo by Amy Williamson

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.