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## Local News

### Neighbors welcome Bay Point housing project

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The Bay Point community is welcoming its newest development, a 180-unit affordable housing project, with open arms -- much to the surprise of its developers.

The De Anza Gardens project is the second-largest affordable housing development under construction in Contra Costa County.

The \$39 million complex at Alves Lane and Medanos Avenue will include apartments and condominiums with one to four bedrooms each. It will be built by a nonprofit developer that is leasing the land from the Contra Costa Housing Authority.

While low-income housing is scarce in the Bay Area, many developments come under fire from would-be neighbors worried that their property value will decrease and crime will increase.

That was not the case with the De Anza Gardens project.

Buzz Cardoza, project manager with the Contra Costa Housing Authority, said residents and politicians in the Bay Point area have been incredibly supportive.

"I've been in development all my life, and it's a rather painful experience sometimes," Cardoza said. "But everyone thought De Anza was wonderful. No one complained, no one objected and no one appealed -- I thought I must be on a different planet."

When Cardoza sent notices to neighbors of the project site, as the county requires, he received no objections. "That's just unheard of," he said.

Federal Glover, county supervisor for District 5, which includes Bay Point, said De Anza is a project that the current community and future residents can be proud to have in town.

"Bay Point is a community that has continued to try and find its identity in many ways," Glover said. "This is a base in which a community can agree on how they grow. It has united folks and allowed them to do more to think of the greater community."

The 180-unit affordable housing development is second only to Richmond's 520-unit public housing project known as Easter Hill, which replaces an older public housing project.

The plan for De Anza was conceived and proposed by the Contra Costa Housing Authority in 2001. The authority owns the property in northern Bay Point and is leasing it for 75 years to the De Anza Housing Corp., a community-based nonprofit corporation.

Nearly 75 percent of the project's \$39 million cost will be financed by selling federal low-income housing tax credits to investors. The rest comes from a market-rate loan and two soft loans, which are similar to second mortgages, Cardoza said.

De Anza is geared to serve households making 30 to 60 percent of the median income in Contra Costa, which is \$80,100 per year, according to the Association of Bay Area Governments.

That translates to a household income of \$24,000 to \$48,000 a year. Rents at De Anza will range from about \$400 a month for one-bedroom units to \$1,300 for four-bedroom units for those who qualify.

The complex will have a community building where classes could be held. There already is a Head Start child care center at the site.

The property has held affordable housing since World War II, when public housing was built on the site.

Gloria Magleby, a member of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Committee, said the area had fallen into disrepair and become a drug haven.

She and other members of the committee welcomed the De Anza project as a way to spruce up the neighborhood, while providing housing that's affordable to its working-class residents.

"I'm very pleased with the project," Magleby said. "The MAC is totally behind it; it was never even a question. It's good for the community and I love it."

De Anza's first 20 to 30 units will be finished and available for occupancy in April, Cardoza said. The project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2004.

The housing authority will begin accepting rental applications in January, but how tenants will be selected has yet to be decided. Cardoza said officials are considering a random lottery similar to the one used for the West Rivertown Apartments in Antioch.

That 54-unit, low-income development opened in downtown Antioch in February. The management company for the property received 344 rental applications in just two weeks last fall, demonstrating the county's dire need for more affordable housing projects.

"That's a big desire, and I think we'll be able to showcase De Anza Gardens as a premier project and be able to look for more opportunities of this kind," Glover said.

#### **MORE INFO**

Rental applications will be accepted in January, but how tenants will be selected has yet to be decided. Officials are considering a random lottery similar to the one used for the West Rivertown Apartments in Antioch. Housing officials plan to set up an office and phone number for applicants.