

THE SUN-GAZETTE

Exeter looks to spruce up senior housing with Self-Help

May 17, 2024

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(Rigo Moran)

EXETER – Self-Help Enterprises and the City of Exeter have partnered up in an effort to secure funding to renovate senior living apartments in town, providing residents with safe and suitable homes.

On March 26, Exeter City Council voted to submit a grant application for Self-Help to start their first Exeter housing project since the late 1980s. The city is partnering with Self-Help to renovate the Exeter Elderly apartments located on 501 N B St.

The funds from the Housing and Community Development for HOME Investment Partnerships Program will provide Self Help Enterprises (SHE) with \$5 million to purchase, facilitate, manage and rehabilitate the Exeter Elderly apartments, which is a 24-unit rental project.

“Preservation of existing housing is one of our primary goals at SHE, along with the development of new affordable housing opportunities,” Betsy McGovern-Garcia, Vice President of Self Help said. “Our goal with this project is to secure resources to acquire and rehabilitate the community, so it can continue to be high quality affordable housing for seniors in Exeter for another 55 years.”

Exeter City Manager Adam Ennis said the project timeline depends on grant funding. If the city’s application is approved and funds are awarded in late summer, the project will apply for federal tax

credits in the fall, with the award expected in early 2025. Then the project would likely be constructed from summer of 2025 to summer of 2026.

“What we do in these types of projects is we try to do a full scope renovation of the community, so that would mean evaluating all the major systems,” McGovern-Garcia said.

She explained that the first renovations usually taken care of outside of the facilities include heating, ventilation, air conditioning, roofing and windows. Renovations inside of the apartments could potentially include new cabinets, countertops, bathroom renovations, paint and flooring.

“The goal really is to make an investment to preserve the units and kind of bring them up to date so that we can operate them successfully for many, many years to come,” McGovern-Garcia said.

She also said the renovations will include updates to make the apartments more sustainable such as solar panels, battery storage as well as irrigation and water flow options to lessen water consumption.

McGovern-Garcia went on to say that if Self-Help is granted the funding, they will try to keep the construction on the building around 14 days in an effort not to disrupt the resident’s lives. During the 14 days of renovations, Self-Help will temporarily relocate all of the residents and their belongings elsewhere while the apartments are being updated.

“We offer a relocation service where we secure either hotels or Airbnb’s and we arrange movers to come and assist the residents. In this case, it’ll be particularly important because it is a senior housing project. So we want to make sure supports are available to the seniors,” McGovern-Garcia said.

She said that Self-Help is dedicated to working with the residents to find a relocation arrangement that works for them.

McGovern-Garcia also noted that Self-Help and their management company, AWI Management Corporation, also provide additional services on site for their senior living facilities, such as health and wellness activities for the seniors, opportunities for social engagement and different programs to really make sure the residents have their needs met.

This is just one of many senior living projects Self-Help is working on. Self-Help has four different senior living facilities around the same size in the works in the Central Valley, including Exeter, Reedley, Selma and Lemoore. They also already own and operate two other senior living facilities, Annadale Common in Fresno and Mount Whitney in Lindsay.

Even though this new development isn’t Self-Help’s first project in Exeter, it is Self-Help’s first rental project in the town. According to McGovern-Garcia the last project they started in Exeter was a homeownership project from 1987 to 1989.

While the construction of those homes was a success, McGovern-Garcia noted that this upcoming rental project is just as important to Self-Help’s mission of providing affordable housing.

“I think a lot of people look at Self Help Enterprises as kind of a new construction, affordable housing developer and really just want to underscore the importance of preservation,” McGovern-Garcia said.

“We really do place an importance on preservation along with new construction to make sure that we retain good quality in our existing housing inventory.”