

FREMONT BULLETIN

Affordable housing project opens

64 units in Irvington occupied by very low-income individuals and families

BY WES BOWERS

A major affordable housing project officially opened this week in Irvington. City of Fremont officials, along with Alameda County and state leaders, celebrated the grand opening of Main Street Village Wednesday afternoon.

The affordable rental apartment project, located at 3615 Main St., offers 64 units to very low-income individuals and families, including those who have been homeless or have faced mental health challenges.

Officials from Allied Housing and Mid-Peninsula Housing, the joint agencies responsible for the project's development, said more than 2,300 applications were received from prospective tenants.

According to officials, more than 4,000 people in Alameda County are homeless, and nearly 30 percent of those are families with children.

The apartments will serve families with incomes of \$27,000 to \$45,000 for a family of four. Single-person households are expected to earn less than \$18,000 a year. Rents will range from \$200 to \$1,000, depending on the number of bedrooms and the income level of the resident.

Features at Main Street Village include a landscaped courtyard, community garden, tot lot, basketball court, barbecue area, computer lab, community room and rooms where residents can meet privately with social services staff.

There is 3,500 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor that will be used by Abode Service's Greater HOPE program offices and a Tri-City Health Center satellite health clinic. The latter provides primary medical care for Main Street Village residents regardless of their health insurance status.

Louis Chicoine, executive director of Allied Housing and Abode Services, said the Main Street Village helped kick off the

Irvington Concept Plan, a project to redevelop parts of the district, originally approved by Fremont City Council in 2006.

Chicoine added the Main Street Village was completed on time and under budget.

"Developments like this are really representative of an idea and vision," he said. "Main Street Village comes from the idea that homelessness in a community is unacceptable, but also solvable."

Chicoine said many residents of the development were either homeless one month ago, or on the verge of homelessness, like Sharon Rhinehart.

Born in Oakland and raised all over the East Bay, Rhinehart said she had been in 11 different foster homes by the age of 18.

She was transferred into Project Independence by that time and became pregnant.

"I was on the verge of being homeless," she said. "I was living with my mom, and one day I got a call from Main Street Village telling me I had been accepted. I was very excited. I didn't want to be homeless, and now I am very happy to be here."

Fremont Mayor Bob Wasserman said he is happy to see a manifestation of the Irvington Concept Plan become the Main Street Village.

But he said projects like this are in danger of being delayed or never completed, as Gov. Jerry Brown has proposed eliminating redevelopment agencies throughout California.

Fremont's redevelopment agency helped build the Main Street Village.

"We have no idea what the future will be," Wasserman said. "If funds go away, we will not see projects like this in the future. If we do, it will be through a different mechanism that hasn't been born yet."

Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty praised Chicoine's efforts and the work he has done with Allied Housing



Sharon Rhinehart, among the new residents of Main Street Village, grew up in East Bay foster homes and was on the verge of being homeless before being accepted.

Photo by James Sakane

and ABODE services.

He added he was glad not only to be helping 75 youngsters find homes, but a total of 85 families in Fremont as well.

"You really hit the target with families," he said. "Making sure we have healthy families is what defines a community. If there was a word to define Fremont, it would be 'caring.'"

Main Street Village also employs green technologies and scored a 218 from Build It Green, a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote healthy, energy- and resource-efficient homes in California.

The 218 score is Build It Green's highest GreenPoint rating for any multi-family development in California.

Green amenities in the development include energy efficient water heaters, 438 photovoltaic solar panels which provide 154,995 kilowatt-hours a year, high-performance windows, Energy Star appliances, water-efficient fixtures and bay-friendly drought tolerant landscaping.

On-site support services at Main Street will be provided by Abode Services in conjunction with Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services and include independent living skills classes, mental health services, computer and financial literacy training, and an after-school program for the youth residents.

Funding for the \$28-million project was provided by the City of Fremont and its redevelopment agency, Alameda County HOME funds, Section 8 funds from the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda, State of California Mental Health Services Act funds, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, CalHFA, Wells Fargo Bank, Sobrato Family Foundation, Opportunity Fund and Corporation for Supportive Housing.

This is the second joint venture of Allied Housing/Abode Services and MidPen Housing in Fremont. The two partners have provided formerly homeless families with permanent housing at the Rotary BridgeWay apartments since 2005.