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Monteverde Senior Apartments Slated for September Opening

By Laurie Snyder

The Affordable Housing Subcommittee of the Orinda City Council recently received an upbeat update regarding the status of the senior apartments under development across from the Safeway. "The project is coming along great. The color is going on the building now, it's on budget, about 80 percent done and on schedule for completion September 18," said Woody Karp, senior project manager for Eden Housing. "That's when we hope to receive our certificate of occupancy." Reached later by telephone, Karp also broke the news that the facility has also officially been given its name - the Monteverde Senior Apartments. The inspiration came from a moment when he was standing on top of the hill on Irwin Way. Raising his head from the construction and looking out across Orinda, his eyes rested on 'monte verde' - the green hills that embrace the community. "This has been a labor of love for me," he said.

The development will be green in another important way. Planners have built in several key sustainable features, including solar hot water and photovoltaic systems. Karp expects that residents will begin moving into their apartments by late September with the facility completely occupied by October's end.

More than 300 applications were received from prospective residents for the 66 one-bedroom apartments during an intake process that ran from June 9 through June 20. The units will be affordable for senior households earning at or below 30 to 50 percent of the Contra Costa County area median income, with residents paying 30 percent of their household income for rent.

Ninety-six of the applications submitted were received from the Lamorinda area - 57 alone from Orindans, parents of current residents and others with strong ties to the community.

Amenities at the new facility will include a large community room with kitchen, a computer lab with high speed Internet service, an exercise room, and an outdoor courtyard with a barbecue area overlooking the park. Residents will be able to take advantage of computer tutorials - possibly by local students to foster intergenerational interactions. "We're installing large, raised plant beds for the residents to garden. At every one of our senior properties, it becomes one of our most sought after things," said Karp.

"There's also going to be a room that we're outfitting as a salon. This is something that has happened at a number of our properties and our residents really love it." Eden staff are hoping local stylists will be willing to step up to offer their services, and will be reaching out to local proprietors over the next few months.

The manager of Eden's Belle Terre apartments in Lafayette will manage Monteverde. Eden expects to employ an assistant manager and a services staffer to help organize and coordinate activities to meet the needs of individual residents.

"I think that living in an apartment building that provides services, that makes things accessible, allows people to live longer independently, and they don't end up living in nursing homes before they really need to. We've had many people celebrate 100th birthdays at Eden properties," said Karp. Recalling one 92-year-old woman who began organizing dinner parties within months of moving in to another Eden facility in the East Bay, he was clearly thoughtful. "I swear I've never seen an apartment building turn into a community so quickly. It was kind of magical. This woman was quite a go-getter."

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