

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Rebuilding, renaming of Waterman Gardens housing complex begins

By Ryan Hagen, The Sun

Wednesday, June 29, 2016



SAN BERNARDINO >> Waterman Gardens, which for much of its 73-year history kept a reputation as a hotbed of crime and poverty, has been replaced — technically as of Wednesday, and in effect within years.

The groundbreaking for the first on-site phase of construction for the 252-unit public housing project southeast of Base Line and Waterman Avenue comes as work nears completion at the adjacent Valencia Vista project, at Ninth Street and Valencia Avenue.

The entire complex will be replaced in phases over six years, building to an eventual size of 411 housing units. The project is slated to cost \$150 million to \$200 million — paid for mostly in a series of federal grants — and will increase economic output in the county by \$81.8 million, according to a 2014 study by the Center for Economic Research and Forecasting.

And along with the new buildings comes a new name, said Ciriaco “Cid” Pinedo, president of the Hope through Housing Foundation. That name, Arrowhead Grove.

“The Great Spirit used an arrowhead to say, ‘This is where you should live,’” Pinedo said. “This is a new place, a place for hope, a place for opportunity.”

The team behind the project — Rancho Cucamonga-based master developer National Community Renaissance, in partnership with the city of San Bernardino and the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino — faced a lot of skepticism when it first promised that hope, said Steve PonTell, National CORE president.

“One of the challenges we had at the beginning was a little thing called trust,” PonTell said. “The community didn’t trust us.”

A series of dinner meetings convinced many of the skeptics, and the San Bernardino City Council [gave unanimous approval](#) to the project in 2014.

Then Mayor Carey Davis was elected, with his own questions about the project.

“My indoctrination came over breakfast — omelets as (PonTell) had to answer a lot of questions,” Davis said Wednesday.

All of his questions were answered, Davis said at a Wednesday ceremony attended by elected officials, including Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-San Bernardino, and by a dozen residents of the complex.

It’s an OK place to live, said Dolores Carrillo, 75. There are a lot of happy memories there, including the birth of her son, some 40 years ago. But she’s excited about coming improvements.

“I think it will be a lot more safe, first,” Carrillo said. “I think it’s good that they are improving it in so many

ways.”

And the 76 apartments of Valencia Vista, which officials expect to open around October, is a huge improvement, said Councilwoman Virginia Marquez, whose ward includes the complex.

“I’ve toured it, and I think you’re going to be pleasantly surprised,” Marquez said. “And after all you, the residents, are what it’s all about.”

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