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REDLANDS: Construction to begin at affordable housing site

An aging project in Redlands is being torn down to make way for modern units



JAN SEARS/STAFF PHOTO

Shovels and hard hats await a groundbreaking ceremony at the Housing Authority of San Bernardino County's Lugonia Avenue site in Redlands.

BY JAN SEARS
 STAFF WRITER
jsears@pe.com

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Demolition is about to begin at an aging Lugonia Avenue housing project, which will be torn down and rebuilt to provide modern affordable housing in Redlands.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held Thursday morning, Aug. 2, at the 70-year-old site, which has been emptied of tenants in preparation for the work.

The Housing Authority of San Bernardino County, which is partnering with Housing Partners I Inc., a nonprofit developer, has raised \$29 million for the project, said Dan Nackerman, the authority's president and CEO.

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- No. Regardless of cost, we need to make certain that pedestrians and motorists cannot veer into the paths of trains.
- Yes. Millions of dollars have been spent to bolster divert traffic and warn motorists and pedestrians.
- Perhaps. Sure, we can spend more and buy more safety. However, the only sure-fire solution is to stay away from the tracks.
- I don't know

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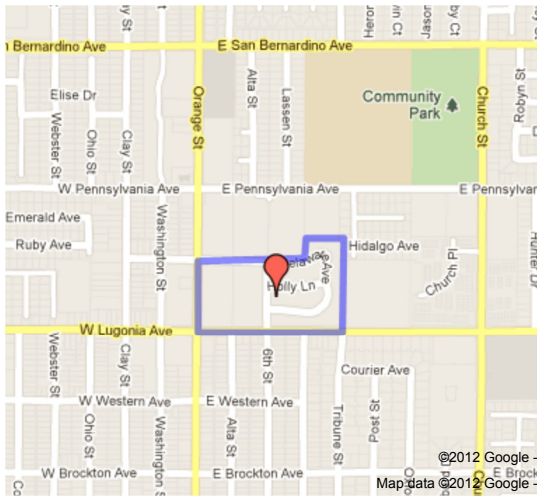
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Factory-built units will be used to speed construction, which is expected to take about 16 months, Nackerman said.

The project, built in 1942 and last expanded in the 1960s, will be rebuilt in several phases. The first phase will include 13 buildings with five to nine apartments each and will house 85 families, officials said. A later phase will offer single-family homes along Lugonia Avenue to first-time homebuyers.

Nackerman said the project will include a recreation center, a pool, a community garden, landscaping along Orange and Lugonia and better security, including lighting and fencing. It will bring jobs and other forms of economic stimulus to Redlands, he said.

Ray Brewer, the Los Angeles field office director for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, said studies show that the opportunity to live in modern, energy-efficient homes encourages residents to achieve better health and higher education levels.

Redlands Mayor Pete Aguilar recalled that one of his first jobs was working as a teacher's aide at a Head Start preschool at the site while he was a University of Redlands student.

"This location is very strategic in the city of Redlands," Aguilar said.

It is bordered by Highway 39 on the south and Orange on the west.

The project, previously known as Lugonia Apartments, has been renamed Valencia Grove, Nackerman said.

He joked that he had wanted the name to recognize a type of citrus other than the ubiquitous orange.

"I was rooting for the limes, who never get their due," he said, drawing laughter from the audience.

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