



Housing authority purchase of Virginia Way apartments final

By [JESSICA CEJNAR](#), staff writer

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BARSTOW • Residents of Scenic View and Virginia Village apartments are now the tenants of the local housing authority.

The Housing Authority of San Bernardino County Friday became the new owners of Virginia Village, at 501 East Virginia Way, and Scenic View Apartments, at 755 East Virginia Way. It purchased the properties with funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Neighborhood Stabilization Program and intends to refurbish them and increase the number of renters in order to decrease crime.

The Housing Authority now owns 300 units at Scenic View and Virginia Village Apartments. Before it purchased them, the occupancy rate at both apartments had been as low as 70 percent, said Ana Gamiz, Housing Authority spokesperson.

As a requirement of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, the Housing Authority must make 25 percent of the apartment units available to low-income residents. The rent for both apartment buildings already falls within those guidelines, Gamiz said.

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors loaned the Housing Authority about \$9.05 million Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds in March to purchase the properties. The owner of Virginia Village and Scenic View Apartments had defaulted on his or her property loans. A court-appointed receiver, Beacon Property Management, was brought in last fall to manage the property.

According to Mitch Slagerman, director of the county's Community Development and Housing Department, without good property management, crime rates at apartment buildings increase. County officials hope this will force owners of neighboring apartment complexes to make their properties attractive in order to compete with the Housing Authority, he said.

“Crime is manifested because of a lack of good property management,” he said. “There won’t be any crime emanating from those apartments. Other landlords will have to do something better in order to attract renters.”

Beacon will continue managing the property. In order to increase renters, Housing Authority staff will repair water damage and siding at both facilities. It will replace the roof at Scenic View Apartments and the wooden stairs at Virginia Village, Gamiz said.

Contact the writer:

(760) 256-4123 or jcejnar@desertdispatch.com