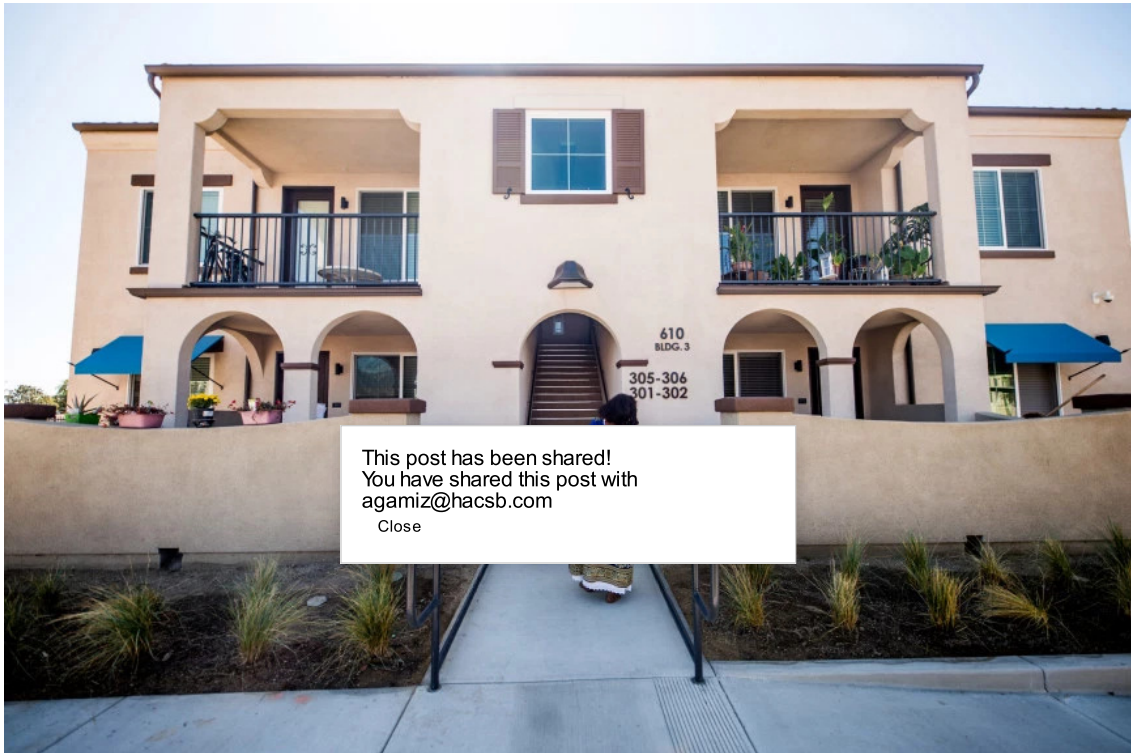


LOCAL NEWS

# Waterman Gardens transformation continues with first 62 new apartments on site



The grand opening of Olive Meadow at Arrowhead Grove, the housing project formerly known as Waterman Gardens in San Bernardino on Thursday, Sept. 28, 2017. The community provides 62 high-quality, affordable apartment homes for low- and moderate-income families. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

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SAN BERNARDINO >> Omekia Candelaria was afraid to let her children out of her sight during the 15 years she lived at Waterman Gardens.

Drugs and other crime were endemic in the 252-unit public housing complex. And although she was thankful for the relatively good condition of her apartment, it was built in 1943 and showed its age.

That's all changed now for her and the residents of 61 other apartment units on Olive Street, southeast of Base Line and Waterman Avenue.

Those new apartments were unveiled Friday – the first built on the site of Waterman Gardens as part of a project that will eventually transform the site into 411 new units, community centers and supportive services designed to end the cycle of poverty.

The change is apparent inside Candelaria's scrupulously clean apartment, where her family has lived since Aug. 17.

“They were jumping up and down when we moved, it was so exciting,” Candelaria said of her daughters, 18 and 15, as she showed off her new apartment Thursday. “Now we’re getting to know our neighbors, and it feels so different. It’s a real blessing.”

Thursday’s ribbon cutting came about a year after [workers knocked down the first building](#) for the phase, known as Olive Meadow at Arrowhead Grove.

Arrowhead Grove is the new name developers are using for the complex known as Waterman Gardens ever since the San Bernardino County Housing Authority built it 74 years ago. The new project also includes 76 off-site units at the northwest corner of Valencia Avenue and Ninth Street, which were [opened in December](#).

The impact isn’t meant to end at the project’s borders, said Steve PonTell, president and CEO of National CORE, the Rancho Cucamonga-based nonprofit group leading the multi-agency revitalization effort.

“The transformation that is occurring in and around Arrowhead Grove is a great example of the power of collective impact and how a well-planned, well-designed and well-managed housing community can be a catalyst for change for an entire community,” PonTell said.

As an example, he pointed to the doughnut store that for years had attracted long lines on the northeast corner of Baseline and Waterman, across the street from the apartment complex.

“We saw a Yelp review saying, ‘I don’t know how long it’s been since they sold a doughnut, but there are a lot of people there for something else,’” PonTell said. “We worked with law enforcement and the city to get that place closed.”

And stable housing can help in many other areas, such as academic success, truancy and behavior problems, said San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales.

“This project that we’re celebrating today is part of a complete rehabilitation that will affect so many areas,” Gonzales said.

Each of the Arrowhead Grove apartments is occupied, and many of the residents used to live at Waterman Gardens. Residency requirements at the new complex include an income between 30 percent and 60 percent of the area median income. The median income in San Bernardino County is \$63,200, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Housing is urgently needed in San Bernardino County, which will require another 69,000 new homes just to meet its anticipated growth — not counting housing to take care of others such as those who are currently homeless — Gonzales said, citing the Building Industry Association.

Support for residents will extend past the complex itself to support services, said Gregory Bradbard, president of the Hope Through Housing Foundation.

“We’re going to continue helping with tutors, with financial literacy, with other services to help lift them up,” Bradbard said. “The idea is that this isn’t a landing pad, it’s a launch pad. For the children who are here now, we’re going to break the cycle.”

The total cost of Arrowhead Grove was estimated in 2014 at \$150 million to \$200 million.

An end date for the entire transformation isn’t clear, as it depends on lining up funding sources for each successive phase, said Maria Razo, executive director of the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino.

“We can see from where we are the work that still needs to be done,” Razo said, nodding toward the still-occupied units of the rest of Waterman Gardens. “And we’re looking forward to continued redevelopment for the residents. It’s all about helping them.”

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