

## Officials break ground on Waterman Gardens redevelopment project

By Jim Steinberg , The Sun

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SAN BERNARDINO >>Work has begun for what officials hope will grow to a \$200 million redevelopment project that officials say is a major stepping stone to this city's future prosperity.

"This is a hot spot where rays of change come in and out," Dan Nackerman, president and CEO of the Housing Authority of San Bernardino County said during the formal groundbreaking for the approximately \$25 million Phase I of the Waterman Gardens redevelopment project.

The 76 units in this first phase should be complete sometime during summer 2016, Byron Ely, senior vice president of National Community Renaissance, the master developer of the project, said in an interview.

Officials said they hope to eventually build 411 more units, as financing is lined up.

The original 252 units were built in 1943 — before the invasion of Normandy in World War II, and was the first public housing project in the area, Mike Gallo, president of the San Bernardino City Unified School District, said in an interview.

Earlier, Gallo, as a groundbreaking speaker, said the project would help many move "from dependency to prosperity."

Phase 1 received a major boost last fall with the awarding of nearly \$12 million in tax credits from the state of California. In addition, the city is investing \$2.3 million of federally allocated HOME-Investment Partnership Funds into the project, with the balance of the \$25 million first-phase funding coming from the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Rental Assistance Demonstration program and a permanent loan from PNC Real Estate.

"This is a project that truly will transform a community and bring economic opportunity to the city as a whole," Dan Nackerman, housing authority executive director said, in a statement.

The Valencia and 9th Street site will feature one to four bedroom units. Subsidized units will be available to households earning 30 percent to 60 percent of the area median income, which for San Bernardino County is \$60,700 for a family of four.

Amenities include a community center, featuring community meeting rooms, after-school program facilities and a computer lab. There will also be a children's play area and swimming pool.

Pat Clancy, who works with National CORE, said it is anticipated that the Waterman Gardens redevelopment project will act as a magnet, allowing other organizations to pull in funding to upgrade houses on the west side of Waterman Avenue.

Ely, who runs construction projects for Rancho Cucamonga-based National CORE, said the recently begun project has already hit a snag — a very heavy one.

Some 16,000 cubic yards of concrete were found buried in a trench on the project site.

"Records show the land had always been vacant," Ely said.

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But Ely said he believes the huge, formerly hidden, mountain of underground rubble, was likely the remains of WW II-related structures that had once been on the site.

The cost to remove all that is unknown at this point, Ely said.

“We are looking at three alternatives,” he said.



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