

Senior housing co-op breaks ground in Oakland

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OAKLAND -- The first senior housing cooperative of its kind in the Bay Area moved closer to completion Thursday when city officials joined the developer behind Phoenix Commons and broke ground along the Oakland-Alameda Estuary.

The 41-unit retirement community, which is expected to open in about a year, will be built on a vacant lot near the Park Street Bridge and will allow seniors to enjoy the privacy of living in their own home, while still offering a co-housing lifestyle that promotes social interaction.

"Friends and family are the way to success," said Chris Zimmerman of Elder Village Development, which is behind the \$21 million project. "I think that is what co-housing is all about, developing new friends."

Among the amenities of the future building at 340 29th Ave. will be a patio and a private dock, plus it will have a 7,000-square-foot shared space with a communal kitchen and a dining room that overlooks the waterfront. Some residents will have views of the San Francisco skyline.

The four-story building in the city's Jingtletown neighborhood will have about an equal number of one- and two-bedroom units, each with a private kitchen and bathroom, from 630 to 1,100 square feet.

The price will range from \$350,000 to \$560,000, Zimmerman said. The residents, who will be age 58 and older, will take part in maintaining the property, including gardening.

Homeowner association dues are expected to be about \$450 a month.

What helps make the future retirement community unique is that residents will purchase a share of the building and its communal spaces and they will have a say in what amenities are on offer, according to those behind the project.

Lauren Zimmerman Cook, the project's chief financial officer, described it as "a combination of both a building and a community."

"This is going to be very interactive, a place for people to live together," Zimmerman Cook said.

The building will promote sustainability, she said, including through using recycled water and vegetation screens to cool temperatures during the summer.

Elder Village Development is a part of Alameda Elder Communities, which has been providing senior housing and skilled nursing facilities for more than 40 years in the Bay Area. Its facilities include the Elders Inn and the Waters Edge Lodge in Alameda.

Phoenix Commons will be built on the site of Tiki Tom's, a waterfront restaurant and bar that burned down in October 2010.

Mayor Jean Quan, who was among those who donned a hard hat for Thursday's groundbreaking, said the

future retirement community was part of the ongoing revitalization of Oakland's waterfront, including the 3,100 residential units planned at the Brooklyn Basin project near Jack London Square.

Quan also said the cooperative was part of a trend of seniors moving from suburbs to urban areas, and of baby boomers like herself getting older and wanting to keep an active lifestyle.

"I think we will redefine retirement and how people live as seniors," she said.

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